

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 1 October 1980

The **SPEAKER** (Mr Thompson) took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

ACTING PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATIVE INVESTIGATIONS

Oath of Office

THE SPEAKER (Mr Thompson): I desire to announce that Mr William Leslie Higgins did this day before me take and subscribe the oath of office as Acting Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations in accordance with the Parliamentary Commissioner Act and Rules thereunder.

EDUCATION: PRE-SCHOOL

Four-year-olds: Petition

MR MacKINNON (Murdoch—Honorary Minister Assisting the Minister for Industrial Development and Commerce) [2.20 p.m.]: I present a petition signed by 451 residents of Western Australia relating to the levy on children who attend a pre-school centre in the year of their fourth birthday. This petition is similar to the petition presented yesterday by the member for Dianella.

I certify that the petition conforms with the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

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

(See petition No. 21.)

DRAINAGE

Kelmscott-Westfield Area: Petition

MR PEARCE (Gosnells) [2.21 p.m.]: I have a petition signed by 401 citizens of Western Australia 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, wish to protest at the levying of an additional drainage rate in the Kelmscott/Westfield area on top of the already large annual rates charged by the Metropolitan Water Board.

In our view, this levy is not warranted and should be withdrawn.

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

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

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

(See petition No. 22.)

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATIVE INVESTIGATIONS AND AUDITOR GENERAL

Reports: Tabling

THE SPEAKER (Mr Thompson): I have for tabling the report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations for the year ended 30 June 1980, and also the report of the Auditor General for the year ended 30 June 1980.

The reports were tabled (see papers Nos. 280 and 292).

TRAFFIC: DRIVERS

Random Breathalyser Tests: Tabling of Report

MR HASSELL (Cottesloe—Chief Secretary) [2.22 p.m.]: I table, for public information, an interim report on random breath testing and the introduction of associated legislation prepared by Inspector F. A. Phillips, of the Road Traffic Authority of Western Australia. I point out that at the time this report is released for public information and discussion, it does not represent either the policy of the Road Traffic Authority or the Government of Western Australia.

ELECTORAL

Election Propaganda: Grievance

MR TONKIN (Morley) [2.22 p.m.]: I wish to draw a matter to the attention of the Parliament because it has been revealed that fanatical followers of the Premier and of the Prime Minister—who seem to stop at nothing—are treating voters like prostitutes and are attempting to buy them for \$10 an hour. This scheme has the approval of the Premier because it is the job of the director of propaganda (Mr John Leggoe) whose position is to prop up this Liberal Party Government at the expense of the taxpayer.

What has happened is that so-called market researchers have been knocking on the doors of

the residents of the metropolitan area and asking them how they intend to vote at the forthcoming election. If it is found that the people are swinging voters and have not yet committed themselves to how they will vote, they are then asked whether they are prepared to take part in a research operation for a payment of \$10 an hour.

The person who drew this matter to my attention was required to call at the Sheraton Hotel and ask for the quantum group. When he was admitted to the room he was met by a person called George.

Mr O'Connor: Who was the person who went there?

Mr TONKIN: It was a Mr Ian David of Fremantle. Now, George would not give his surname, neither would the woman who approached Mr David at the door. These people would not give the name of the firm for which they work. It turns out that this George is Mr George Cammakaris who has always been associated with the director of propaganda in Western Australia (Mr John Leggoe).

The 10 people present in the suite at the Sheraton were then treated to a series of scandalous lies about the Australian Labor Party. Untruths were stated about the party and about what would happen if a Labor Party Government were elected in October.

Mr Williams: What did they say?

Mr TONKIN: These lies are a form of brainwashing. They have nothing to do with research—nothing at all! So, we have operating in this State—and I would imagine all over Australia because we are not the most important or crucial State with respect to the October 18 election—a rumour and lie-making machine. The idea was to turn out 10 people an hour from these sessions. That would add up to 60 people a day and 300 people a week who had been chosen because they were not very well versed in political matters and who would swallow the kind of rumours and lies being spread by these propagandists.

It was hoped that they would wander about the streets of Perth telling lies about the Australian Labor Party. It was hoped that those 10 people would tell another 10 people and as a result of one week's work, 10 000 people—

Mr Young: Will you answer a question?

Mr TONKIN: No, I have only 10 minutes and when I see members on the other side of the House—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr TONKIN:—failing to answer questions, I will not answer their questions.

Mr Young: You are obviously frightened of the question.

Several members interjected.

Speaker's Ruling

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. The practice of the House has been that grievances can be raised only where they come within the province of a Minister of the State Government. There was a case in 1970 when the Speaker prevented a member from raising a question which was not directly related to the ministerial responsibility of a Minister of the Western Australian Government.

It seems to me that the matter the member seeks to raise in this grievance debate is not something which comes within the responsibility of any one of the Ministers of the present Government. Therefore, I rule that it is not within the member's power to speak on the matter.

Mr TONKIN: I would have liked to continue to tie up Mr John Leggoe with the Liberal Party. On a point of order, the person concerned with this, Mr John Leggoe, is on the State Government's pay-roll.

Mr Young: What connection?

Mr Davies: Let him continue and tell you what connection.

Mr TONKIN: Are Government members denying—

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! In order that I may hear the member for Morley's point of order, I would ask that interjections cease.

Mr TONKIN: It has been denied by the Government that Mr John Leggoe is on the Government pay-roll.

Mr Young: Are you going to allege that he is directly connected with it?

Sir Charles Court: Tell us how.

Mr TONKIN: This is a matter which comes within the direct control of the Premier of this State because it is part of the propaganda apparatus that is administered by the Premier through his director of propaganda (Mr John Leggoe).

Mr Young: Make the connection!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I cannot accept that the matter which the member for Morley seeks to

raise in this grievance debate is one which comes within the practice of this House. I therefore rule, as I have said, that he may not raise the grievance.

Dissent from Speaker's Ruling

Mr TONKIN: I move—

That the House dissent from the Speaker's ruling.

Several members interjected.

Mr TONKIN: It is absolutely disgraceful that you sit up there—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Morley will resume his seat and the House will come to order!

Mr TONKIN: It is absolutely disgraceful the way in which you, Mr Speaker, continue to protect this Government.

Mr Bryce: Hear, hear!

Mr Young: You are a shame to this Parliament.

Several members interjected.

Mr Young: He won't make the connection because he cannot connect Leggoe with his allegations.

Mr Davies: You are embarrassed about it.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask members to cease interjecting.

Mr TONKIN: The Minister for Health is very worried because he realises that this kind of dirt which is being released to the public during an election campaign in this State would be very damaging to the Liberal Party. We are concerned with what is going on.

Mr Sibson: You are always concerned.

Mr TONKIN: I believe that subverting voters from being able to vote is the business of Parliament. We maintain, and we allege, that this campaign is part of the propaganda machine of this Government. Of course if you, Mr Speaker, are not prepared to allow the debate to continue—and you have already decided on that matter—there is no way in which I can connect my remarks to this State Government.

Mr Young: Go on.

Mr TONKIN: But, I can assure you that when we are able to continue this debate I will be able to show a very clear connection.

Mr Young: Well, go on.

Mr TONKIN: I am speaking to the motion, which is a motion of dissent as the Minister for

Health would know. I will not canvass the subject which I properly raised as a grievance, and which I will continue to debate at a later stage.

Mr Williams: Your grievance is improper.

Mr TONKIN: Of course, that may be so from the point of view of the member opposite. The present Government subverted democracy in the Kimberley in 1977. The Government succeeds in subverting the course of democracy with respect to the Electoral Districts Act; it will stop at nothing.

Several members interjected.

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

Mr TONKIN: The Government will not even allow free speech in this place. If there is one place where we should be able to air these matters, and draw to the attention of the people of Western Australia the insidious filth that is being used, surely it is in the Parliament of Western Australia. Where else can we speak?

When I am permitted to continue my remarks I will make it quite clear that Mr Leggoe is part of the whole propaganda exercise.

Mr Young: That is untrue.

Mr BRYCE: I rise to support the member for Morley in his motion of dissent from your ruling, Mr Speaker. To those of us who sit on this side of the House it is patently clear that this is a subject which is very sensitive and, might I say, a subject which ultimately will be damaging to this man—the “propaganda supremo”—appointed by the Premier at a fabulous cost to the taxpayers.

Mr Barnett: A fabulous cost to the taxpayers of Western Australia.

Mr BRYCE: The details relating to this matter were being brought to the attention of members in this place, but members from the Government side have sought to divert the member for Morley with points of order and interjections knowing full well he had only 10 minutes during which to put his grievance. Then, of course, just before his 10-minute period was about to expire you, Mr Speaker, ruled that the substance of the grievance brought forward by the member for Morley was out of order.

The Standing Orders of this place provide members with an opportunity to raise grievances. During the time I have been here a fantastic variety of matters have been raised by members of this Parliament when they felt concerned about certain happenings. They have chosen the opportunity to raise those matters during the grievance debates.

The Standing Orders relating to grievances do not prescribe that a grievance should fall within the scope of the portfolio of a particular Minister, as is the case with questions. On numerous occasions precedents have been laid down and they have become perfectly clear in this place. On numerous occasions matters of concern—internationally and nationally—have been raised at grievance time.

The bulk of grievances are directed specifically at individual Ministers, and the Minister concerned frequently undertakes to follow up the grievance with his department, and provide a reply. But, there have been numerous precedents where members of this House have chosen the opportunity afforded to them through the grievance debate to raise a matter of general concern to the community.

Standing Order No. 226 sets out that after the Address-in-Reply has been dealt with, and after questions have been dealt with, on such a day, grievances shall have precedence over other business. Standing Order No. 227 states—

On every second Wednesday, in accordance with Standing Order 226 the Speaker shall call for "Grievances" at which time any Member may address the House.

The Standing Order does not state that a grievance must specifically and in the clearest of terms relate to a particular Minister. It does not say that at all. Standing Orders Nos. 228 and 229 state—

228. No Member shall speak more than once on "Grievances" on any one day.

229. There shall be a limit of two Members from each side of the House.

By virtue of the Standing Orders of this place, and by virtue of practice in this place, the member for Morley is entitled to raise a matter of importance to the State, given the tactics being employed by this propaganda supremo who is paid for by the taxpayers of Western Australia—a man appointed by the Premier of this State. The member for Morley has every right to raise the matter.

Mr Young: He has not been able to make any connection in his remarks.

Mr O'Connor: What he has said is not true.

Mr BRYCE: Whether or not what the member for Morley said is true, at this moment we are debating a motion to dissent from the Speaker's ruling.

Mr Young: You are doing the same thing.

Mr BRYCE: We are debating the right of the member for Morley—not the substance of his

grievance. We are debating his right at grievance time to raise in this place a subject which he believes the Premier, on behalf of the Government, has a genuine responsibility to answer.

Mr Young: If a connection can be made between the Press officer and the organisation. Would you say that was fair?

Mr BRYCE: For the information of the Minister for Health, there have been numerous occasions in this place over the years when even that tenuous link has not applied. I can remember well when the Whitlam Government was in office that that tenuous link never applied. Democracy did not prevail in this place. Even if that was the case on the one hand, on the other hand the member for Morley has a time limit of 10 minutes to establish his concern and put forward his argument in support of his grievance. Members from the Government side have sought to subvert him and destroy, in effect, a significant part of his speaking time.

Mr Young: We were terribly concerned he was not going to make a direct connection.

Mr BRYCE: What has happened in this Chamber today is that firstly, Government members, and secondly, you, Mr Speaker, by virtue of your authority in the Chair, have effectively tried to prevent the member for Morley from actually putting to this House the substance of his grievance. Certainly, I support the member for Morley in his motion of dissent from your ruling.

Sir CHARLES COURT: If members will reflect they will realise that what the Speaker has ruled today is consistent with rulings of the past, and rulings which have been accepted. I will mention one case in particular. Going beyond the case I will quote I have an idea that the present Minister for Health was, at one stage, sat down over a matter of this kind by a Speaker. I am not fully aware of the particular occasion and perhaps the Minister for Health may be able to recall it.

I draw the attention of members to pages 932 and 933 of *Hansard*, 19 April 1978. On that occasion the member for Vasse was speaking on the question of copyright and the Federal Government's legislation. He sought to grieve on the matter, but he was interrupted fairly soon after he commenced to speak. On that occasion the Speaker said—

Order! I ask the member to resume his seat. It appears to me that the matter raised by the member is one for the Commonwealth Government to consider and, in accordance with the Standing Orders, the member does

not have the right to raise the matter in this House. Is it in fact, in the member's view, a matter that is under the control of the Commonwealth?

The member for Vasse then made a valiant effort to retain his right to continue. The Speaker interrupted further and said—

I do not think the member can continue, because the matter is clearly one for a Minister in the Federal Parliament and the whole rationale behind the grievance provision is to enable members to raise a grievance which concerns a Minister of the Crown who is responsible to this Parliament.

I emphasise: The whole rationale behind the grievance provision is to enable members to raise a grievance which concerns a Minister of the Crown who is responsible to this Parliament. The Speaker concluded by saying—

I believe, in the circumstances, the grievance is out of order.

The member for Vasse was not amused about it but, as a good member of the House, he accepted the ruling of the Speaker.

Several members interjected.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The member for Ascot seeks to read into the words about grievances that they are absolute and that the rest of the Standing Orders of the House do not prevail; but if he studies the Standing Orders of the House thoroughly and rulings on matters of grievance, he will find the Speaker's ruling is quite consistent. The member for Morley quite scurrilously and, I believe, in a despicable way sought to impute that a person who is not here to defend himself was involved in a practice—

Mr Bryce: What about your attacks on union officials?

Several members interjected.

Sir CHARLES COURT: —which the member for Morley regarded as being reprehensible. I presume he intended to say this was a reprehensible thing. In point of fact, it has nothing whatsoever to do with the Government and it is nothing over which the Government has any control. I believe it is an abuse of the privilege of this House. Quite apart from the Standing Orders on matters relating to grievances or anything else, I think the member for Morley has sought to do a despicable thing; but leaving that aside, I must say that based on the Standing Orders themselves and also on the practices of the House and the precedents—and I have quoted one very appropriate example involving a member on

this side of the House—your ruling is consistent, Mr Speaker.

So, Mr Speaker, I oppose the motion to dissent from your ruling and I hope the rest of the House will realise that the ruling has been given in all sincerity and in all consistency, not only with the Standing Orders themselves but, more particularly, with the practices of this House.

Government members: Hear, hear!

Mr DAVIES: Mr Speaker, I think I should first congratulate you on your psychic powers, because the member for Morley had been speaking for only four minutes when you sought to interrupt him and you then wasted two minutes of his time on explanations and points of order, which left him only four minutes to develop his case before he sat down. He had been speaking for only four minutes; I took careful note of the time and if you check with the Clerk you will find he did not stop the clock. So, not having heard the argument, you decided no Minister could possibly answer it.

I read about the case; I heard it reported on Channel 7; I read a transcript of the debate in the Victorian Parliament; and I am able to say without fear of contradiction that what the member for Morley intended to say and tried to develop ties up with the actions of the man who is now maintained in the position of "propaganda supremo" for the Government at a cost of \$34 000 a year to the taxpayers and who was aware of what was going on. He had had associations with George Cammakaris on earlier occasions. In fact, both of them had received favours from the Liberal Party because of work done for the Federal Government on other occasions.

Sir Charles Court: What favours?

Mr DAVIES: The Premier will hear.

Sir Charles Court: What has that to do with the motion before the House?

Mr DAVIES: Do not they cry and scream and squirm and become unhappy when they think someone is putting the thumb on them for an escapade with which they have been associated?

Mr Sibson: You are wandering through history trying to find a point.

Mr DAVIES: At least I get on my feet and do not make speeches while sitting down. I do not think we have heard on any occasion this session from the member for Bunbury.

Several members interjected.

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

Mr DAVIES: I have 18 minutes yet.

Mr Sibson: You fell for my trick.

Mr DAVIES: I want to talk to this fellow because it is nice to see him awake and taking an interest for a change.

The point I make is that the case had not been developed. Six minutes had passed; only four minutes of the member's time had been used; and with four minutes remaining you, Mr Speaker, decided what he was going to say was not answerable by any Minister in the House and therefore he had to sit down. Where is the justice and fairness in that? Surely it is not a repeat performance of the toadying to the Government's demands which we saw on a previous occasion.

Mr Young: Do you think you can go for 17 minutes without making the connection?

Mr DAVIES: I will not make the connection. Here we have the Minister for Health debating the subject matter of the member for Morley's grievance rather than the motion before the House. The motion before the House is that the Speaker's ruling be disagreed with, and it should be disagreed with because it was given before the Speaker had even heard the substance of the member's case. I do not have to make out the case. I know what the substance of it is and I know the member for Morley is right. But who else in the House knows this?

Mr Young: With 16 minutes left, you will not tell us.

Mr DAVIES: Of course I will not, because we are talking about the Speaker's ruling. I will say once again that we are debating the Speaker's ruling, not the subject matter of the member for Morley's grievance. Surely the Minister for Health has been here long enough to know that.

On the other hand, if the Minister for Health had any fairness or decency in him, he would have picked up the Premier when he started to debate or took it upon himself to answer what the member for Morley had said. This, of course, destroys your ruling, Mr Speaker. You let the Premier stand up and answer the member for Morley when he should have been discussing whether or not your ruling was a fair one.

Mr Young: On the off-chance that the member for Morley will not be able to continue, you have 16 minutes left, so why don't you tell us?

Mr DAVIES: I will debate the matter before the House.

Mr B. T. Burke: What are you so frightened about?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! I hope the Leader of the Opposition does not accede to the request of the Minister for Health and debate a matter which is not before the Chair, but that he will get on with the business of dealing with the matter that is before the Chair.

Mr DAVIES: The only comment I would like to make is that when your ruling was given I thought I heard the Minister for Health say "Saved" to the Premier. So far, the member for Morley has mentioned John Leggoe, the "propaganda supremo" of the Government who, on his first day in office, told the other journalists that his job and their job was to keep this Government in office—at \$34 000-plus a year.

Mr O'Connor: He told them that?

Mr DAVIES: He told them that and it has never been denied. We brought that matter up in the House and it was not denied.

Mr Sodeman: How does that relate to the Speaker's ruling?

Mr DAVIES: It relates to John Leggoe, and if he has done something—

Sir Charles Court: He is not involved in the matter raised by the member for Morley.

Mr DAVIES: How does the Premier know that? Here is another man who says John Leggoe is not involved, but he does not know what the member for Morley was going to say.

Several members interjected.

Mr DAVIES: We are still trying to debate—

Mr Young: How pathetic the whole three of you are up to date.

Mr DAVIES: I would have thought that, irrespective of the earlier ruling given, Sir, you might have decided on this occasion, even if you thought the association was most tenuous, to let him proceed. I want to remind you that we dissented from an earlier ruling of yours and you said then you did not think it was proper for decisions of the House to be forevermore binding on the Parliament. Now you are saying it does not matter what the decisions were previously, they are forevermore binding on this House. You cannot have it both ways; it is as simple as that.

The Premier seems to think that because on one previous occasion the member for Vasse was asked to sit down on what was considered to be a Federal matter and no member challenged that decision, forevermore we are not allowed to raise any similar matter. Surely you do not think, Sir, we were going to jump and challenge your decision on behalf of the member for Vasse. Surely it would be up to his own members to disagree with your ruling, or he could disagree

with it himself. Because the member for Vasse did not disagree with your ruling, it does not mean that forevermore we are not allowed to raise such matters. How do you know that the member for Morley was not intending to say that false pretences were involved, and therefore the grievance was not one for the Premier to comment on, but rather, it was one for the Minister for Police and Traffic?

Mr Blaikie: He did not say that.

Mr DAVIES: The member for Morley did not have a chance to say it. How do you know, Mr Speaker, that the member for Morley did not intend to refer to a breach of the Electoral Act—a matter for the Chief Secretary?

Point of Order

Mr BLAIKIE: I rise on a point of order, Sir. I draw your attention to Standing Order No. 133 and I ask that this Standing Order be drawn to the attention of the Leader of the Opposition because I believe he is digressing.

Mr Bryce: You just asked him to digress.

The SPEAKER: I ask the member to read Standing Order No. 133 as I do not have it before me.

Mr BLAIKIE: Standing Order No. 133 reads as follows—

No Members shall digress from the subject matter of any Question under discussion

Mr Bryce: You have been asking him to that.

Mr BLAIKIE: If I can continue with my point of order, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition does not have the right to presuppose what a member is thinking or what a member may be going to say.

Speaker's Ruling

The SPEAKER: I rule that the Leader of the Opposition is endeavouring to confine his remarks to the question before the Chair. He is receiving a certain degree of invitation to introduce other matters, and I would ask him to desist from introducing other matters. I ask him to confine his comments to the matter before the Chair.

Debate (on dissent from Speaker's ruling) Resumed

Mr DAVIES: The point I was making was that we do not know what the member for Morley was going to say. He had not finished his argument, but you had decided that what he had said related in no way whatever to the responsibility of Ministers of the Crown. As I say, he could have

been referring to a matter of false pretences, or a State-Commonwealth electoral matter which needed attention. However, Mr John Leggoe's name was mentioned and then as soon as the name "George" was mentioned—and his second name is Cammakaris by the way—Government members became agitated.

Mr O'Connor: Not at all.

Mr DAVIES: Government members decided they did not want the matter to go on any further. They seemed to be embarrassed, and they wanted to interrupt, and you decided, Mr Speaker, it had gone far enough and that it would not go any further. As you are the "chairman supremo"—with due respect, Sir—you can say what can and cannot go on in this Chamber.

Mr Young: If you use your memory, I said, "Can I ask a question?" The member for Morley said, "No", and then the Speaker stood up.

Mr DAVIES: There had been some shifting of bottoms on the seats before that.

Mr Young: No there had not.

Mr DAVIES: Perhaps the Minister can see sideways as well as straight ahead, but we have a better view, I regret to say, of the Ministry than has the Minister for Health.

The position remains that my point is you prejudged what the member for Morley was going to say. You did not hear him out and you did not know how he intended to develop the argument. As the member for Ascot said, nothing is laid down in the Standing Orders as to the content of a grievance. If you want to make a decision about a question, you are quite entitled to do so and on many occasions you have ruled that the content of a question does not come within the responsibility of a certain Minister. Once you have given such a ruling, of course the Minister is then not required to give an answer. Very often the Minister does give an answer despite the fact that you have said he need not do so. The Premier or a Minister may elect to give an answer because he feels he should rebut what is in the question. If you want to use that criteria as a basis for your argument, I can say only that you should have at least heard the member for Morley out until his time expired. That would have been the kindest course for you to follow.

Because the Standing Orders are silent on the content of grievances, because of what has happened when questions are ruled out of order, because of your earlier decision—and a very famous decision that the House should not be bound at all future times by rulings that are given at one time or another—I believe the very least you can do is to allow the member for Morley to

finish what he has to say, remembering also that he has lost two minutes of his time. Then, when he has finished what he has to say, you should rule whether or not his grievance is in order and whether or not there is any need for a Minister to answer it.

Mr COWAN: An examination of the Standing Orders shows quite clearly that the member for Morley may have some justification in moving to dissent from your ruling, Sir. There is no requirement that a member should confine his remarks in a grievance debate to any particular subject which relates to a Minister. However, to my way of thinking there is a certain amount of distastefulness about the matter raised by the member for Morley and I believe the precedent you have quoted is relevant. Also, it is your responsibility to ensure that the business of this House is conducted with some dignity.

We are aware that there are precedents which you do not necessarily follow, Mr Speaker, but such an argument does not relate to this debate. We are very concerned about the prospect of some reduction of the right to free speech in this House by the determination you have made in this case, but we believe there should also be some restrictions placed upon members of this House so that they speak with a degree of dignity and taste.

Mr Tonkin: Taste! So we should be quiet about the disgraceful type of thing which is going on! We should be quiet about criminal activity!

Mr COWAN: If the member for Morley feels so strongly about this matter, he should make use of the normal resources available to him, and those resources are outside this Chamber.

Mr Tonkin: This is a normal resource of a member of Parliament.

Mr COWAN: I believe in this instance, Sir, your determination is correct. We do not support the motion to dissent from your ruling.

Mr Tonkin: A conspiracy of silence! In other words, if it is distasteful you don't say it.

Mr BLAICKIE: I desire also to say a few words, and at the outset to indicate support for the ruling you made, Mr Speaker.

As the Premier indicated earlier, I was the member who came under your scrutiny just over 12 months ago. At the time I was raising as a grievance a matter that I believed it was appropriate to raise in the Parliament of Western Australia because people of Western Australia were being affected by a Commonwealth Act. However, you gave a ruling, and although I was not delighted with that ruling, I accepted it. If you have played cricket, Sir, no doubt you were

not very happy on occasions when the umpire gave you out. The ruling you gave on that occasion conformed with the general set of standards that we, as members of the Western Australian Parliament, have come to appreciate and accept. Members of Parliament must be very careful that they are not attacking the institution of Parliament when they are attacking you.

Mr Tonkin: So you would allow this type of thing to go on?

Mr Bryce: It is all right to turn your back on this type of scurrilous nonsense, is it?

Mr BLAICKIE: We are faced with the situation of an umpire having made a decision, and I believe the umpire's decision was right. Certainly, it is the function of the Leader of the Opposition to protect his members where he can, and he indicated what he believed the member for Morley may have been attempting to say. However, when the member for Morley moved to disagree with your ruling, he had ample opportunity to state then what he was attempting to say, but he made no attempt to give reasons why he should be allowed to continue with the grievance debate.

Mr Bryce: Do you remember the substance of Standing Order No. 133, which you quoted?

Mr BLAICKIE: He made no attempt at all.

Mr Bryce: You have forgotten that you took that point of order. You know he was not supposed to do that.

Mr BLAICKIE: The sad fact of the matter is that the whole basis of the point of order by the member for Morley was a character assassination of the office of the Speaker and of you, Mr Speaker. He did not give any indication to the House of the reason that he should be permitted to continue with his grievance. Therefore, Mr Speaker, I believe the decision you have made is the proper one and that the members of the Parliament should uphold your ruling. I believe the very institution of Parliament makes your ruling correct.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Today's little flurry is just a part of the continuing dissipation of the dignity of this place.

Mr Young: Go steal a document.

Sir Charles Court: This is the member for Morley's stunt for the week.

Mr B. T. BURKE: It is funny to hear the member for Vasse talking about the institution of Parliament and the attacks made upon it, because a quick reading of the Standing Orders reveals to me that there appears to be no Standing Order which directly empowers the Speaker to decide

upon the substance of a grievance. The member for Vasse and the Premier referred to a general set of principles but did not go on to say what those principles are and did not justify their argument by reference to the basis upon which they made their claims.

As far as I am concerned, there can be no greater attack on this institution and its dignity than that which we have seen in respect of at least one Minister who has told lies, and nothing has been done about it. There is nothing to say that was not a monumental attack upon the dignity of Parliament.

When we listen to the member for Merredin—the Leader of the National Party—and hear him talk about the ability to talk of these things outside this House, we hear another denial of the privileges of this House, which constitutes an attack upon the dignity of this place; because it is right and proper that the privileges of this place should be used when matters such as this are to be raised.

I have yet to see a contradiction more evident than the one in which we saw the Minister for Health calling upon the Leader of the Opposition and other speakers of the Opposition to depart from Standing Orders by delineating the substance of their grievance during this move to dissent from the Speaker's ruling, while the member for Vasse was taking points of order to stop the Opposition from doing just that.

Mr Young: I thought they might like to take the opportunity to do so, that is all.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Whether the Minister for Health thought the Opposition might like to take that opportunity is hardly relevant to the contradiction that is evident within the ranks of the Government.

Mr Young: Then as long as you are a member of this place you will never again interject because it is against Standing Orders.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am not talking of a breach of Standing Orders; I am talking about a contradiction within the ranks of the Government. The Minister for Health was urging that we break Standing Orders, while the member for Vasse—thick and dull though he may be—was taking a point of order to prevent that happening.

As I said, if the member for Vasse and the Premier want to talk about the dignity of this place, let them talk about Ministers telling the truth; and when they do not tell the truth, let the member for Vasse and the Premier bring that Minister or Ministers to book. That is the way to uphold the dignity of this place.

Sir Charles Court: Are you making an allegation that a Minister has not told the truth?

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am making an allegation that a Minister has not told the truth, and that allegation will be firmly founded in fact in due course. I hope the Premier is here in his seventieth year to hear it.

Mr Watt: Are you wishing him a happy birthday?

Mr B. T. BURKE: But let us not be distracted, because the points I want to make once more are these: Firstly, there is no Standing Order that gives credence to the Speaker's decision in this case. The reference of the member for Vasse to general principles was a reference to those general principles alone and not to the details of them. It seems to me that if there is any greater attack upon the dignity of this place than this attempt to silence members that we have witnessed today, I have yet to learn the details of it. Quite obviously the Government has a very tender hide on this issue, and it is a crying shame that some of the more serious attacks upon the dignity of Parliament were not turned to for first reference before attempting to silence the member for Morley on this subject.

Mr PEARCE: I rise in support of my colleagues, and I would like to draw the attention of the House to the Standing Orders which relate to grievances. I refer to Standing Orders Nos. 226 to 230. It is quite clear from those that although it may be the normal or usual course for a member to direct his grievance to a specific Minister and to relate the grievance directly to a portfolio, that is not, in fact, the way in which grievances are laid out in the Standing Orders; nor is that an accurate reflection of the historical evolution of grievances in the British parliamentary system many centuries before.

Members will appreciate that the historical evolution of grievances goes back many years. The system gives opportunities to members of Parliament to state a grievance about anything to do with the state of affairs within the kingdom. Of course, being in the kingdom, such grievances were in essence a way of drawing the attention of the King to things that were occurring about which members of Parliament did not approve. In fact, in that sense grievances pre-date considerably the ministerial system in the Westminster Parliament. Grievances are a very ancient and historical device of Parliament to allow members, free of Standing Orders in a sense, to air a particular matter which has come to their attention and is causing them some concern as members of Parliament, and about

which they think the King or other people in the kingdom should have some knowledge.

To suggest that a grievance needs to be directed to a Minister shows an ignorance of the historical development of the system and role of grievances. In fact, our Standing Orders reflect that historical background, because Standing Order No. 227 states—

On every second Wednesday, in accordance with Standing Order 226—

Standing Order No. 226 has to do with grievances having precedence. It continues—

—the Speaker shall call for “Grievances” at which time any Member may address the House.

There is no restriction on what they may talk about. Standing Order No. 230 says—

The Leader of the Government or Member deputed by him—

It does not say “Minister”. It could be any member of the Parliament—any back-bench member, and even a member of the Opposition if the Leader of the Government so wished. The Standing Order continues—

—shall have the right to reply to each of the Members who has spoken under Standing Order 227.

Ministers do not have to reply; there is no incumbence upon them to do so. In fact the grievance may not reflect directly on any of the portfolios of the Ministry. That is not merely a let-out for any Minister who cannot cope with his portfolio; that is a recognition of the fact that a grievance need not be aimed directly against a Minister. It would not be outside the Standing Orders for a member to come into this House and to grieve about the weather if he thinks it is particularly obnoxious at the time.

Mr Barnett: The Premier thinks he could fix that.

Mr PEARCE: He may well think so too.

Mr Sodeman: The logical extension of what you are saying is that we should pay no heed to precedents whatsoever.

Mr PEARCE: The member for Pilbara has not been listening. Have I not said to the House that the evolution of grievances is one of the earliest precedents in the Westminster system which has evolved over several centuries and in fact pre-dates the ministerial system? Is that not what I have said?

Mr Sodeman: Of course it is.

Mr PEARCE: I wish the member had paid attention.

Mr Sodeman: You will appreciate that the argument on this side of the House is based upon a precedent set by the Speaker.

Mr PEARCE: The argument from the Government side of the House has been based upon a single precedent to which the Premier referred and to which the member concerned then said, “I disagreed with that ruling at the time because I thought it was wrong, but nobody did anything about it. We must abide by the umpire’s decision.”

Does that mean that if the member for Vasse is hauled before a magistrate on some minor matter and the magistrate hands down a decision which the member for Vasse thinks is wrong, he will go quietly off to gaol and do nothing about it? Of course it does not. The member for Vasse would rely on any umpire system supported by laws of appeal. The laws of appeal against a Speaker’s ruling in this House is by way of motion of dissent; that is to say, the appeal lies with the House if the House believes the Speaker has not done the right thing.

Mr Blaikie: The very point I made was that the member for Morley did not raise a particular objection or grievance. He simply abused the Speaker and the Speaker’s role in this place.

Mr PEARCE: The point about the speech of the member for Vasse—

Mr Blaikie: What about the way the member for Morley blackguarded the Speaker?

Mr PEARCE: I am not discussing that.

Mr Blaikie: I am.

Mr PEARCE: The member for Vasse also discussed whether or not people should abide by the umpire’s ruling. He mentioned that in 1978 he disagreed with the Speaker’s ruling on his own motion, but that he accepted the ruling.

If the member for Vasse seriously and honestly believes that, he will vote with the Opposition today because if the Opposition can upset the Speaker’s ruling it will lay down the proper precedent which subsequently will be followed. That will be a precedent of considerable force because it will not be a Speaker’s ruling, but a ruling of the House; in fact, it will be the ultimate ruling the House can lay down.

In the course of this debate we have demonstrated conclusively that we understand the precedents involved in grievance debates, and that those precedents go back centuries; they pre-date the office of Minister but not, of course, the office of Speaker. It is fundamental to the role of Parliament that members of Parliament ought to be able to raise grievances. Yet Standing Order

No. 230 is a recognition that on some occasions—perhaps even on the majority of occasions—a particular Minister or person deputed by a Minister may reply to a grievance, perhaps to disabuse a member of Parliament on some mistaken notion or to reply to a specific matter which has been raised.

In speaking in support of this motion of dissent, Mr Speaker, I maintain you should allow any member to speak during a grievance debate on any matter to do with the kingdom with which he is aggrieved. That principle dates back many centuries, and I would be sorry if the Western Australian Parliament moved away from it.

Question (dissent from Speaker's ruling) put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes 18

Mr Barnett	Mr Harman
Mr Bertram	Mr T. H. Jones
Mr Bridge	Mr McIver
Mr Bryce	Mr Pearce
Mr B. T. Burke	Mr Skidmore
Mr T. J. Burke	Mr Taylor
Mr Carr	Mr Tonkin
Mr E. T. Evans	Mr Wilson
Mr H. D. Evans	Mr Bateman

Noes 26

Mr Clarko	Mr O'Connor
Sir Charles Court	Mr Old
Mr Cowan	Mr Rushton
Mr Crane	Mr Sibson
Mr Grayden	Mr Sodeman
Mr Grewar	Mr Spriggs
Mr Hassell	Mr Stephens
Mr Herzfeld	Mr Trethowan
Mr P. V. Jones	Mr Tubby
Mr MacKinnon	Mr Watt
Mr McPharlin	Mr Williams
Mr Mensaros	Mr Young
Mr Nanovich	Mr Blaikie

Pairs

Ayes	Noes
Mr Jamieson	Mr Shalders
Mr Parker	Mr Coyne
Mr Grill	Mrs Craig
Mr Hodge	Mr Laurance
Mr Davies	Dr Dadour

Question thus negatived.

Grievances Resumed

SEWERAGE: SEPTIC TANKS

Fees: Grievance

MR HERZFELD (Mundaring) [3.16 p.m.]: I hasten to say at the outset that my grievance relates to the Minister for Health.

The **SPEAKER**: In this House?

MR HERZFELD: Yes. The matter I wish to bring forward relates to the fees payable for the inspection of the installation of new drainage and

sewerage facilities. Section 107 of the Health Act requires the local authority to be responsible for the quality of materials used for plumbing facilities in a home or other place and to ensure those facilities are not a nuisance, dangerous or injurious to health. In addition, the same section provides for the Commissioner of Public Health to be responsible for the design of the facilities.

The same section also provides that regulations may be made fixing a fee for such inspections; currently, the fee shall not exceed \$10. The regulation relating to this charge was made in 1968, and the fee established at that time was \$6.

If the situation since 1968 had been one of static taxes and charges, I would not be concerned; but alas, that is not the case—except, it appears, in this instance.

The amount of work involved in the inspection of these facilities is quite onerous, and the costs have increased considerably. I ask the Minister urgently to review this matter, hopefully with a view to revising the legislation.

I should explain for the Minister's benefit that the regulation requires the fee to be shared equally between the municipality concerned and the Commissioner of Public Health.

It also is of some interest to outline the procedures involved in inspecting these facilities, so that some understanding may be gained of the amount of work required by the two respective authorities in the checking and approving of new installations. Under the Act, the owner is required to submit to the relevant local authority three plans of what is proposed.

The local authority makes a preliminary check to ensure that the regulations are being met, and then passes the application to the Department of Health and Medical Services. The details are again checked by the department. If the department authorises the installation, it returns one copy of the application to the owner and one to the local authority. If the decision by the department is for a review of the application, the procedure is repeated until the department is able to authorise the plans.

At that point, it appears the responsibilities of the Department of Health and Medical Services end. It files one copy and then leaves the matter to the local authority, in accordance with the Act, to ensure that the work is carried out according to the plan submitted and to appropriate standards.

The local authority is required to carry out at least three inspections, if not four, of the site. As previously stated, for this the local authority is paid a fee of \$3. There is an initial inspection of the site, even before the plans are sent to the

Department of Health and Medical Services to ensure that what is proposed is practical. After the plans are sent to the department and approved, and once the work is under way, the local authority has to make an inspection of progress to ensure that the work is proceeding in the way it is intended. When the work is completed and before the installation is covered up, the health inspector of the council is required to test the system. Before the council gives final approval for the house or premises to be occupied, it conducts a final check.

The Shire of Mundaring has done quite a bit of work in analysing the time involved and the costs incurred on this type of work in its municipality. I am advised that the procedures I have outlined take, on average, something like three hours. Not only does the officer concerned have to carry out the inspections, but also he has to travel to the site. In that shire, travel time can be anything up to half an hour. I know of other municipalities where the travel time on each visit could be more than half an hour. The council has estimated that each application takes an average of three hours to service. That means that the council is being paid \$1 an hour for the service provided.

When the regulations were brought in in 1968, the council recouped 66.8 per cent of its costs. In 1979-80, it recouped only 9.8 per cent of its costs. In the meantime, the wages of public health inspectors have risen by between four and five times. For instance, the wage of a health surveyor with five years' experience rose from \$3 760 in 1968 to the current level of \$17 025. Of course, other costs have risen as well.

I have said enough to indicate that a review is needed. Currently the ratepayers subsidise a service which is applicable to an individual and his family, or a business organisation. That seems to me to be inequitable and unjust. This is one area in which payment for service should be the appropriate principal.

If the figures I have given are any indication, the costs to the council are in the order of \$30 or \$40 for each application. Under present circumstances, ratepayers are expected to find between \$27 and \$37 per application.

I raise with the Minister three requests for him to consider. Firstly, I ask for a review of the section which places a limit of \$10 on the fee, to bring it up to a more reasonable level that reflects the current costs incurred by municipal councils.

The second thing I ask the Minister to consider is whether the 50-50 arrangement for sharing the fee is a fair and equitable one. I believe what I have said earlier indicates that the amount of

work done by the council is far in excess of the work required by his department, and therefore the fee should be structured accordingly.

The third matter I ask the Minister to consider is whether there is any need for his department to be involved in the process of issuing licences at all.

MR YOUNG (Scarborough—Minister for Health) [3.26 p.m.]: Mr Speaker, the member for Mundaring has raised a matter during the course of this grievance debate which has been raised by other members in writing. One of those other members is yourself, so I understand you have more than a passing interest in the answer I have to give the member for Mundaring.

Firstly, I do not think it is particularly valid for the member for Mundaring to make the claim, as unequivocally as he did, that the local authority health inspectors are obliged under the Act to do more work than the Department of Health and Medical Services is required to do, although I must confess that in individual cases that may well be so.

There is quite an amount of work to be done in the granting of permission for the installation of a septic tank, in this case, by the Department of Health and Medical Services. Some of the work to be done by the local authority could be offset by some other work that the officers of the department have to do, such as advising and doing a lot of research in respect of appeal matters, and a general assessment of the overall siting of the on-site disposal prior to permission being given.

The member for Mundaring made reference also—I think he used the word "shall" rather than "may"—to the fact that 50 per cent of the fee that might be prescribed under the regulations shall be paid to the local authority. It was my recollection of the Act, and I have confirmed it by checking, that subsection (7) of section 107 prescribes that the regulation "may" provide that half of the fee be paid to the local authority; so it is not automatic that half of the fee be paid to the local authority under that subsection.

Mr Herzfeld: The regulation does provide for that at the present time.

Mr YOUNG: The Act provides that \$10 is the maximum; and the regulation provides, at the moment, that half of the fee be paid. The regulation may be drawn to provide that half the fee may be paid to the local authority but that is not obligatory. That is something which could be looked at in the overall reassessment of this situation.

One of the things the House has to remember is that anything charged for under the regulations made under this Act has to relate to the service

given. Therefore, in making any assessment of where we might go from here, that particular matter also has to be remembered, otherwise any fee that might be in excess of an amount charged reasonably for services rendered could be deemed to be *ultra vires*. That is something which would have to be taken into consideration. Regard ought to be had to that by the local authority when it assists the Department of Health and Medical Services with what I would hope would amount to a complete review of the whole fee structure.

I give an undertaking to the member for Mundaring that, because of the matters raised by himself and the Shire of Mundaring, and because of the fact that obviously the fees charged under the Act are insufficient to cover costs, regardless of who shares in the recoup of those costs, I will have the whole matter reviewed. But I could not guarantee that any amendment could be made to the Act in this session of Parliament.

DRAINAGE

Kelmscott-Westfield Area: Grievance

MR PEARCE (Gosnells) [3.31 p.m.]: My grievance is one to which the Leader of the Government might look to depute the Minister for Water Resources to reply. I indicate in passing that I was intending to grieve about the weather, but in accordance with the deplorable ruling of the House a moment or two ago, I will not do so in case I am considered to be out of order. My grievance does concern a meteorological question as to whether or not the Water Board ought to be imposing additional levies on people who are already paying water and drainage rates.

The situation concerns some 2 000 residents in the Kelmscott-Westfield area in my electorate. In response to a query by me on 10 September I was informed 2 000 people in the area have been levied an additional charge on top of their normal drainage rates for work to main drains which has allegedly been carried out.

The area of which I speak is a mixed old and new development. It was a brand new development 10 or 11 years ago and some people have lived in the area for that period. Many homes are newish, having been built during the last year or two. Some of the homes which are to be drained by the additional drains have not appeared at all because two developers in the area, with Mansard Homes being the main one, have opened significant new developments in the area.

It appears the pressure of development has been such that the originally installed main drains can no longer cope with the amount of water they are

receiving, mostly from storm water drains and those carrying the run-off from roofs which in that area has to carry off into the main drain. Because additional works have been done in the area, each householder has been charged an additional drainage rate varying from \$15 to \$30. This has caused a storm of protest in the area. Indeed, I have presented to this House a petition carrying in excess of 400 signatures from people in the area protesting about the imposition of this levy.

This additional levy has stunned people for two reasons. One reason is that most people in the area have had water rates recently imposed which represent the 50 per cent maximum increase on water rates in any one year. Many people in my area received water rates which were in excess of the 50 per cent increase. I gather they have not had to pay as much after all and some people may be lining up for a refund. Nevertheless, they had a hefty increase in their water rates and now, without any additional work being done, they have received an additional levy.

In these days of astronomical Government charges it might be wondered why these people are complaining about an additional bill for \$15. However, they feel they are justified in complaining. It seems this could be the straw which might fracture the camel's spine.

I want to make two points. The first is that it is tactless of the Water Board to levy this charge in the way it has done. Those people who have chosen to pay their original water rates in two moieties have received a bill for an additional levy, phrased in such a way that they believe they would be paying the outstanding moiety with that additional levy. The Minister has clarified the point and I have done so with as many residents as I have been able to reach, but many people have paid thinking they were obliged to do that.

Secondly, it ought not be a policy of the Water Board to impose additional levies of this type. The board ought to structure its charging system so that all main drain works are covered by the levy which everyone pays each year. These people are saying that if they have to pay separately for drainage work done in the area, why are they paying a water, sewerage, or drainage rate. They are asking what do they get for the significant sum they are paying into the board every year.

Considering the amounts allegedly involved—and \$46 000 is to be raised by this additional levy, which is not a large sum in terms of the boards overall budget—there is no indication that this \$46 000 is the complete cost of the work. It is possible that the amount of

drainage work done is less than that. The people in this area are upset that this charge system is not a general tax on everyone.

Another point which is involved in this matter is that the people who are paying the levy are those who really did not need the extra drainage work to be carried out at all. Some of the pipes which are to be enlarged are in fact to cater for the need of Mansard Homes, the firm to which I have already alluded. Additional blocks are being opened up and people already living in the area are being asked to pay for the drainage works for the people who will move into the area some time in the future.

To put it in the bluntest possible terms, the residents of the Kelmscott-Westfield area are paying for the developers—Mansard Homes—in Westfield Park to have their blocks available at a cheaper price. I believe the additional costs ought to fall on the developers initially and then subsequently upon the new block buyers because they are the ones for whom the work is being done.

Many of my constituents already have paid for the additional drainage work by buying their blocks with drainage systems already established, which were adequate to cope at the time they bought their houses.

It is becoming more of a practice for the Water Board to levy this particular sort of rate on small areas where specific work is being done. Only 18 months ago this happened in an area of Armadale. It has happened all over. People pay their water rates, the Water Board men move in to do work, and people find themselves paying an additional levy.

That seems to be an unfair and unfortunate practice which imposes an additional charge on people who are already overburdened by Government charges. It is tactless for the Water Board to be charging in this way. It is causing unpleasantness and unhappiness. These charges have been levied at a time when 140 employees of the Water Board are receiving department lessons. I do not really have anything against these lessons, but it did strike me and many of my constituents that, directly or indirectly, they were paying for the lessons with this additional levy.

I ask the Minister publicly—I have already done so by mail—to consider this policy of the Water Board of charging for additional works with these spot levies, area by area, with a view not only to discontinuing it as a practice in the future but also to having the imposts charged on 2 000 of my constituents in Kelmscott-Westfield withdrawn.

MR MENSAROS (Floreat—Minister for Water Resources) [3.40 p.m.]: The member's grievance relates to a general question of policy and concerns the manner of charging carried out by public utilities. It relates to the question as to whether charges should be levied on the basis of work undertaken or, taking the situation to the extreme, on a tax per head basis.

I believe those are the two alternatives covered by the member's grievance. I do not understand fully the terminology used by the Water Board, but it refers to a "catchment area" for drainage purposes. If work is carried out on the main drain in a particular catchment area, the people who reside within that area are levied for the work.

If we accept the principle that public utilities such as the Water Board must be self sufficient and must charge their customers a realistic rate for work carried out and necessary expenditure made, the alternative form of charging would be that all the customers of the board, whether they are supplied with sewerage, drainage, or water services, should be levied at a rate sufficient to cover all expenses incurred by the board. Presumably the rate levied would be the same for each property.

I do not believe that method of charging would be accepted as an equitable solution, because even today a number of people do not pay drainage charges as they do not reside or own property in the catchment areas. Of course, a number of people do not pay sewerage charges, because the area in which their property is situated is not provided with a service.

I should like to point out the board does not exercise a policy, but simply implements the Statute under which it works. If we were to change the Statute and implement a policy which would distribute the charges for services supplied by the Water Board equally amongst all the users—or even amongst all taxpayers—I do not believe it would be acceptable.

I do not think such a system of charging ought to be, or indeed is, put forward as the policy of any political party or body which suggests policies for the board.

Therefore, we must return to the situation in which we find ourselves, that parallel with complaints about higher rates—and I do not criticise those who complain about higher rates—is the complaint that the services are either of inadequate quality or insufficient quantity. We find ourselves in an untenable situation when the demand is made for a high-quality, large-quantity service, at a lower cost.

It must be pointed out that costs increase in real terms not only because of inflation, but also because it is more expensive to provide services once the initial source has been exhausted and it is necessary to turn to another source of supply. For example, we utilise the cheapest source of water first, but it then becomes necessary to use a dearer source, such as underground water. Of course, this situation does not necessarily apply in regard to drainage costs but even there it could well be so.

The member mentioned he has written to me. I recall receiving one piece of correspondence from him. I can only assume the second letter is still on its way, because I have not received it yet. However, when I receive it, I shall give him a detailed answer in regard to this matter.

I hope the member did not confuse local authority charges for drainage, which is not covered by—

Mr Pearce: No, I have not confused things.

Mr MENSAROS: It is clear the Water Board charges a levy for additional services provided. The member did not say he considered the services to be superfluous.

As I have mentioned already, the argument is simply whether we charge the people affected by the additional service, or the potential users, or whether we initiate a different system and charge everyone, when in fact a number of people who would be paying for the service would not in fact benefit from it.

I shall reply to the member in writing in connection with the particular case he referred to in his electorate.

IMMIGRATION

Development Projects: Grievance

MR SIBSON (Bunbury) [3.45 p.m.]: I wish to direct my comments to the Minister for Immigration. The points to which I should like to refer concern recent announcements in this State regarding such projects as the Alcoa and Worsley alumina refineries—developments which have taken place already—and the signing of the North-West Shelf development contracts yesterday, which will have a beneficial effect on a number of associated industries.

A matter has been exercising my mind for some time. I know it has also concerned a number of people in the community, particularly those who are responsible for employing large numbers of people and it relates specifically to particular industries. The matter to which I refer is, that with the obvious increase in activity which will

become evident throughout the State and as a result of an upsurge in the economy throughout Australia—I believe the Prime Minister indicated in his policy speech that the economy is lifting—there will be an ever-increasing demand for labour.

Several members interjected.

Mr SIBSON: I have only nine minutes in which to complete my speech and I intend to direct my remarks through you, Sir.

The particular areas to which I refer—and they have been pointed out to me by a number of people in the community—concern professional and management positions and also the fields of trades and labour.

I know a very extensive programme is being carried out in this State in conjunction with the Federal Government in an endeavour to stimulate trade training, youth training, and to offer various incentives to encourage unemployed people into the work force.

However, despite all those programmes, it is time to look again at the immigration guidelines and ensure they are adjusted so that, when necessary, we can bring in the correct people in order that the various projects to which I have referred may be carried out efficiently.

As we all know—I am sure members opposite will agree—there are times when, despite unemployment, areas of need arise particularly for people trained in special occupations. This, in turn, throws open jobs to people who have not been able to obtain employment.

Mr Bryce: Are you talking about British or European migrants?

Mr SIBSON: I would prefer to debate this one aspect of the immigration policy of this State. We have to analyse the matter and establish where we can get the people we need.

We have always had a very efficient immigration scheme at both the State and Federal levels in Australia. I believe the people we have brought into this country in the past have been processed and assessed very accurately. However, that is not a matter for debate at the present time.

I am sure the member for Collie will agree with me—

Mr T. H. Jones: No, I don't think I would agree with you.

Mr SIBSON: If the member for Collie waits a moment, he will realise he does in fact agree with me on this issue, because it has been raised by him in the House previously.

During the 1970s Collie experienced a great upsurge in the mining industry. A problem was experienced by a particular company in that town. People were brought in to meet the need, but because of the situation in the mining industry, those people were drained off from the positions they were intended to fill. I believe the same situation may occur again, not only in Western Australia but also throughout the whole of Australia.

In his speech on the Budget the Premier referred to the fact that a number of migrants had come to this State from the Eastern States and New Zealand. When the economy of Australia takes off, as it is obvious will occur, the flow of migrants, which is approximately 7 000 per annum at the present time, will slow down.

Many people coming to Western Australia from the Eastern States are specialists in the trade areas. I met quite a few of these people during my last trip to Sydney. Many of them have specialist training in energy production, manufacturing and many other fields.

However, that source will not continue to supply Western Australia's demand. I urge the Minister to respond to my request to look very closely at our immigration guidelines and to enter into discussions with the people and industries concerned to ensure that the floodgate is not opened, and that we are able to bring to Western Australia those people who will be required to meet the challenge of the great development of this State.

There is a need for specialists in the commerce field and in the mining field. There is a need for specialists in the commercial field, because the North-West Shelf project and the alumina smelting project will require these people.

The agricultural industry is expanding, as the figures show quite readily, and we need to employ people to meet that demand also. The agricultural industry will be in danger of being without labour. This matter also will require close attention. The food industry, and particularly the vegetable industry, is in trouble. The member for Whitford will agree with me on that matter, because it takes a very special type of person to be proficient in the vegetable industry. Not only does he have to be a specialist, but he has to be dedicated also.

The low birth rate in Australia and Western Australia will substantiate what I have said. It has been evident, from the statistics over the last few years, that almost all our population increases have been as a result of immigration, not only from overseas, but also from the Eastern States and New Zealand.

It is essential that with the greater demands on labour, and tradesmen particularly, the matter of immigration should be taken care of. The Minister for Immigration should undertake—if he has not already done so—to approach industries to ascertain their ideas so that he may meet the demands of the future.

We should be bringing into this country the right people for the right industries. The right job and career schemes will in fact decrease unemployment and increase employment at a faster rate than at present. By bringing in the right kind of people we will be able to create other jobs for the people unemployed now, despite the fact we have sufficient training and retraining programmes at present.

MR O'CONNOR (Mt. Lawley—Minister for Immigration) [3.55 p.m.]: The grievance brought forward by the member for Bunbury is indeed an important one as far as the future of our country is concerned. I acknowledge that projects such as Wagerup, Worsley, and the North-West Shelf will place a great strain on the tradesmen in this State.

Last week I was in the Eastern States at a Labour Ministers' Conference. All Ministers present, with the possible exception of the Minister for South Australia, expressed grave concern about the shortage of tradesmen in their States at the present time. They also expressed concern that some of their tradesmen were likely to be drained off to Western Australia because of the developments proposed.

We are fortunate in this State that for approximately two years we have had a manpower planning committee to prepare for the problems in this area. That committee comprises members of the Government, members of the Confederation of Western Australian Industry (Inc.), and members of the Trades and Labor Council. Meetings have been held on this issue to ensure that the right type of people will be brought to Western Australia, because if the labour cannot be imported we will have to look at other ways in which this work may be done; such as sending the work out of Australia. That would not be palatable to anyone in this State.

The State Government made approaches to the Commonwealth Government for the training of 1 100 people for some of the jobs involved in this area. There were 114 who commenced work in June of this year, and 150 on 23 September. So, the second intake has already commenced work and it is evident we will receive more co-operation from big industries in this area because they are

already starting to feel the pinch as far as the lack of tradesmen is concerned.

A number of firms have indicated that they are short of tradesmen and are battling to keep them at this stage.

The \$13 million input from the Commonwealth Government and the State Government will train 1 100 people in the trades required, but that will be insufficient.

We have had our people at West Australia House in London looking into this matter. A Mr Brown has been to Western Australia and conferred with the Confederation of Western Australian Industry (Inc.), the unions, and the Government to ascertain the problems which may arise. Also people have been to Europe to ascertain the tradesmen available there so that when they are required moves can be made quickly in that regard.

We have already spoken to the Federal Minister about these matters and have indicated our concern that we will be short of tradesmen. That Minister has indicated that he is prepared to co-operate with Western Australia and when the people are required he will bend over backwards so that they will be able to come to Australia. Of course, there is the problem that the average tradesman overseas is usually a stable and settled person in his own area and often it takes up to six to 12 months before he arrives in Australia.

The member for Bunbury mentioned the number of people who have come in and gone out of the State during the last 12 months. In the last 12 months to the end of June this year, we have created an extra 28 000 jobs in Western Australia. The fact that our unemployment level is still the same percentage as other States would indicate that this is because there has been an influx of people into this State. Some of them are people we will need in the trades area, and they will make very good citizens.

The Federal Minister for Immigration has advised me that in recent times a great number of people from overseas have sought to migrate to Western Australia. In the past we have had an intake of about 9 per cent, and it has been indicated that during the next year or two this will go up to about 15 per cent. In fact, we expect an intake of between 12 000 and 15 000 migrants over the next 12 months against an intake of 7 000 to 9 000 during the last couple of years.

The comments of the member are noted. He can rest assured we have taken action in this area because we know we will be short of tradesmen. We are attempting to train as many as possible in an endeavour to ensure the work remains in this State. If we are not able to train enough people, we will bring them in from overseas.

Mr Harman: On a permanent basis, not indentured?

Mr O'CONNOR: On a permanent basis, I understand. I believe that would be better for us.

Mr Harman: You will not have any contract labour coming in?

Mr O'CONNOR: I hope not. If we get to the stage where we cannot get the work done by our tradesmen, we must look at other ways to do the work. First of all, we want to train our own people and provide them with jobs. If we have insufficient trained people, we will bring them in from overseas on a permanent basis as citizens of this State. Each tradesman provides work for several other people.

I can assure members we are doing everything possible, and we are receiving tremendous co-operation from the Commonwealth Government in this area.

The SPEAKER: Grievances noted.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Omission from Notice Paper

THE SPEAKER (Mr Thompson): I wish to draw attention to the fact that yesterday the Minister for Police and Traffic gave notice of his intention to introduce a Bill to amend the Police Act. However, because of a slip up on the part of the people who produce our notice paper, the notice of motion does not appear on today's notice paper.

I direct that the particular matter be dealt with after notice of motion No. 6 appearing on today's notice paper.

BILLS (6): INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

1. Land Tax Assessment Amendment Bill.
2. Metropolitan Region Town Planning Scheme Amendment Bill.
3. Business Franchise (Tobacco) Amendment Bill.

Bills introduced, on motions by Sir Charles Court (Treasurer), and read a first time.

4. Rural and Industries Bank Amendment Bill.
5. Rural Relief Fund Act Repeal Bill.
6. Firearms Amendment Bill.

Bills introduced, on motions by Sir Charles Court (Premier), and read a first time.

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Hassell (Minister for Police and Traffic), and read a first time.

POLICE AMENDMENT BILL

Leave to Introduce

MR HASSELL (Cottesloe—Minister for Police and Traffic) [4.05 p.m.]: I move—

That leave be given to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Police Act, 1892-1979.

The **SPEAKER**: The question is—

That leave be given to introduce the Bill.

MR H. D. EVANS (Warren—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.06 p.m.]: Mr Speaker—

The **SPEAKER**: This is a question which usually is put without debate, but I understand the member for Warren has a point of order to raise.

Mr H. D. EVANS: There is one small point I wish to raise. I understand that because of some malfunction of the system the situation has occurred whereby the Minister's motion has not appeared on the notice paper in accordance with the notification he gave yesterday.

I wish to refer to an incident of some years back when those opposite saw fit, because of a typographical error by myself, to deny leave to have that error rectified at the time. Members opposite cast out the Bill which was to amend the Marketing of Lamb Act. On that occasion, section IV read section VI.

I point out the difference between the churlishness of the Government when it was in Opposition and the attitude of the present Opposition. I think I made the point, at the time, that although the fault was not mine the responsibility was. I also pointed out that even those opposite were prone to make errors from time to time.

I now point out that the Opposition is quite tolerant and is agreeable to the rectification being made.

The **SPEAKER**: Before I put the question might I say to the Opposition that it is not the Government which is being let off the hook; it is, in fact, the Speaker. The Speaker is responsible for the production of the notice paper, and he deeply regrets the fact that the notice of motion by the Minister for Police and Traffic did not appear on the notice paper.

With respect to the other matter raised, had I been the Speaker at the time I am sure I would have looked after the member for Warren.

Mr H. D. Evans: I am sure you would have.

Question put and passed; leave granted.

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Hassell (Minister for Police and Traffic), and read a first time.

RESERVE (PORT DENISON) SUBURBAN LOTS 6 AND 6a BILL

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Tubby, and read a first time.

METROPOLITAN (PERTH) PASSENGER TRANSPORT TRUST AMENDMENT BILL

Third Reading

MR RUSHTON (Dale—Minister for Transport) [4.10 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

MR McIVER (Avon) [4.11 p.m.]: I take the opportunity on the third reading of this Bill to question the Minister further in relation to his reply to the second reading debate. I was not satisfied with his replies in connection with certain clauses of the Bill.

It will be recalled that when I spoke to the second reading I mentioned the amount of money which will be spent on the validating machines and the quibbling of the Government about supplying new uniforms to the staff of the MTT. The Minister did not mention that matter in his reply. I repeat that it is ludicrous that the staff of a body like the MTT must go to the Industrial Commission to get uniforms, when in every other State of Australia the supply of uniforms is automatic.

If the state of the economy is such that we cannot provide uniforms for the MTT staff, how is it that there is no shortage of funds to replace the ticket issuing machines at a cost of \$4 million? I agree that the ticket issuing machines need to be replaced because they have been in operation for a long time. But why must the staff go to the Industrial Commission to obtain new uniforms in order to make themselves presentable to the public? It should be automatic. In order to sell public transport to the people, those who operate it must be well dressed and well presented. That is of paramount importance. It is a factor which should not be overlooked but should be included in the overall expenditure of the MTT.

The next matter which the Minister did not mention in his reply is the replacement of the

ticket issuing machines in Westrail. The conductors on the buses are not the only people who use them. The ticket issuers on trains use the same instrument. No provision is made in the Bill for replacement of those machines used by Westrail. We have the situation where the new machines will be given only to the MTT and the ticket issuers on trains will have to battle along with the old machines which, as the Minister said, are outdated. I would like the Minister also to clarify this matter.

In addition, I am not at all happy with what the Minister said about employees who, because of accidents or sickness, are now employed on lower grades such as the barrier positions. Members of the Opposition do not consider that the Minister has sufficiently explained this matter. The reason I mention it is that an inquiry is to be held more or less on the basis of a social service exercise. I mentioned in my second reading speech the services these men have already given over a long period in the MTT and Westrail. When I read the minutes of the meeting at which this matter was discussed, I noticed that it was suggested to the Minister that the Government was not a social services employment agency.

When a member of Parliament, for example, loses an arm or a leg he can still carry out his duties and no questions are asked. A very good friend of mine—the former member for Wellington—had lost an arm, but he carried out his duties adequately and to the satisfaction of the people of Wellington, and he was returned over a long period. Members of Parliament who have disabilities retain their full salary. Why should not the employees of the MTT and Westrail also retain their full salary? Why must they be thrown on the scrap heap because of disabilities sustained in the conscientious performance of their duties?

The Minister has not convinced me that he has looked far enough into this matter. He said the employees would not be dismissed, but I want him to give the House an undertaking that they will be looked after and will not be displaced when these monstrosities are introduced on the railway stations and the buses.

I want to take up another point very strongly with the Minister. He informed the House that in the discussions he had held with the unions, particularly the MTT unions, everyone was happy and satisfied that the machines would be an advantage to the public transport industry.

This statement really stunned me. On the Thursday I spoke during the second reading debate, and so the next day I took it upon myself to contact the executive of the union. These

gentlemen were appalled at the Minister's statement. They said they had made it quite clear to the Chairman of the MTT that they were far from happy about the matter. They were hoping the message would be passed to the Minister, but of course I do not know whether that happened.

Initially the Minister pointed out to me that this validating machine was to issue tickets and not to cancel them. So the Minister and I were at variance on the name of the machine—is it a cancelling machine or a validating machine? That is another point I want clarified. The discussions on this matter did not go far enough, and I believe the Minister should discuss the matter further.

Perhaps the Minister was advised incorrectly of the attitude of the unions to these machines, or perhaps it was misrepresented to him. The representatives of the railway unions made it quite plain that their members did not want these machines on the trains. We must bear in mind, however, that the Chairman of the MTT is the one responsible for our suburban services in Western Australia and not the Commissioner of Railways. The representatives of the railway unions said that the machines were not going on the trains.

No attempt was made to liaise with the unions before the decision was made to install the machines on stations. I have looked into this matter thoroughly, and although it might sound to be a minor consideration, it could mushroom into an industrial dispute.

The Minister for Transport will recall that in our discussions I asked about the placing of the machines at unattended stations. In his reply the Minister said that if anyone interfered with the machines an alarm bell would ring on the major board and that the machines would be adequately maintained. It is my understanding that the maintenance will be carried out by members of the MTT. However, who will go onto railway land to repair these machines? Will it be members of the MTT staff or staff from the signals and communications section of Westrail? I do not know whether that is the correct name of the section of Westrail, because the names of all sections have been changed in line with American ideas. It is a pity that we cannot keep our own wording.

Is the Minister telling us that technicians employed by Westrail will allow MTT staff to go onto unattended railway stations to maintain these machines? If this is the case, the Minister will find he has further industrial action on his hands. He will remember just a little while ago there was a short stoppage because railway

officers were performing the duties of signalmen. That was a ridiculous dispute which would not have arisen had sensible discussions taken place.

Another point I wish to raise relates to the vehicles to be used by the maintenance men who will repair any machines that are vandalised. I again emphasise the point that they will be vandalised. When the member for Swan spoke he told us what had happened to the machines outside Flinders Street station in Melbourne. The machines there were out of order for months. So irrespective of the contents of the Bill and the contents of the Minister's second reading speech, we must accept the fact that the machines will be vandalised. Members will be aware of the vandalism that occurs in respect of our telephone booths. We must face the reality of what will happen.

The Minister told us that one of the main reasons for the installation of the machines on the buses was to shorten the time spent selling tickets. I believe that the machines will have the opposite effect because the responsibility will be placed wholly and solely on the drivers of the buses. Who will be responsible when vandalism occurs? Will the driver be solely responsible? The provisions of the Bill will place more responsibilities on the driver rather than fewer. There are very important issues involved that need clarification.

As I said in my second reading speech, we do not need these machines at this stage, particularly having regard for the huge deficit of the MTT. Perhaps we could consider them at some future time. Obviously someone saw these machines in operation in a large city in another country, but because they work satisfactorily in a densely populated city, it does not mean they will work satisfactorily here. Why introduce them when the men working for the MTT do not want them? That is a major point.

The Minister replied to a question and told us that \$9 000 per annum would be adequate to service these cancelling or validating machines. I think that is an unrealistic figure. If this \$9 000 per annum is meant to represent one man's salary, it is \$37 a week lower than the weekly wage of a Government tradesman. If the Government intends to use its own employees to maintain the machines, we must look at the wages paid to those people.

So the Minister has been incorrectly advised right from the start. Apparently maintenance was not taken into account initially. I believe it is more likely that maintenance will cost \$27 000 per annum. I am sure all members will agree that the \$9 000 figure is unrealistic.

In the last 12 months this Government has made economic blunders in every sphere for which it is responsible. This position has been aggravated by lack of foresight and discussion with the people who are really concerned, and who know what is the situation.

I sincerely trust for the good of the Western Australian people that the Government does not make this decision at least until I have been proved wrong. I assure the Minister I would be the first to apologise if I am proved wrong, but I have done a great deal of research into this matter, and I wish I was as sure of winning the \$1 million lottery to be drawn as I am of my facts on this issue.

The Government is rushing into purchasing these machines at the whim of some people in the department who do not realise the repercussions the decision will cause. I beg the Minister to check and recheck the facts, and to talk to people who really understand the situation.

I have taken the time of the House during the third reading stage of this Bill because this matter is of such importance. The Government proposes to throw \$4 million down the drain, and I would be failing in my duty as a legislator in this State if I did not bring the facts before this House.

I trust the Minister will take note of what I have said and that he will really go into the facts and decide not to introduce these machines at a time when Western Australia is not in the economic position to afford them.

MR RUSHTON (Dale—Minister for Transport) [4.32 p.m.]: The member for Avon indicated a lack of confidence in the management of the MTT, in its previous chairman and in its present general manager, which surprised me because normally the honourable member does his homework, contacts the people involved and has a chat with them. Had he taken that step on this occasion, it would have been of advantage to him; they would have been able to put him right on the matters which concern him.

When speaking during the second reading stage, the member for Avon said he was going to see his friends at the Perth station.

Mr McIver: I did not use the word "friends"; I said I was going to see the executive of the union. I did not even know some of them at that stage.

Mr RUSHTON: The member for Avon did say he was going to see these people; I do not want to misinterpret his words.

Mr Sodeman: He meant to say, "associates".

Mr McIver: I would not say that, either. In fact, I believe about three-quarters of them would support your party.

Mr RUSHTON: Had the member contacted the management of the MTT—as he did with the Main Roads Department—he would have been reassured as to his doubts.

Personally, I have had and still have complete confidence in the previous chairman of the trust and, equally, I have confidence in the present general manager of the trust. Probably, that makes us differ in our opinions.

Mr McIver: Their ability has nothing to do with what is being discussed today.

Mr RUSHTON: They are the people who advise the Government, and the Minister.

Mr McIver: Well, they are advising you wrongly.

Mr RUSHTON: I have heard the member for Avon say on previous occasions that he had every confidence in these two gentlemen.

Mr McIver: I have.

Mr RUSHTON: Well, that is a good start. One of the issues raised by the member for Avon related to the so-called “quibbling” on the part of the MTT in regard to the provision of uniforms. However, when I visited the causeway depot today I thought—as I have thought on other occasions—how splendidly these people were turned out. I have seen them on the streets and in the buses—

Mr McIver: There is no question about that. However, these people need replacement uniforms occasionally. Surely they do not need to get down on their knees to be issued with a shirt, or a pair of pants.

Mr RUSHTON: I will refer this matter to the general manager; obviously, the member for Avon believes the MTT is not particularly liberal in the provision of adequate uniforms.

Mr McIver: That is the very point I was making, yet here we see the Government proposing to spend \$4 million on validating machines.

Mr RUSHTON: I take the honourable member's point, and I will discuss the matter with the general manager. Obviously, he would be aware of the situation. I will obtain an answer to that query from the general manager. However, I repeat that when I was at the causeway depot of the MTT today, I found the employees to be a well-turned-out group of people.

The member for Avon raised the question of the railway ticket machines being replaced.

Obviously, the MTT has the responsibility of ensuring that the machines used in the suburban area by both the MTT and Westrail are adequate. This is something I accept; it must be done. However, I will take that matter up also to reassure myself.

The member for Avon raised the vital question of the future of employees presently on lower grades. In the main, I think he was referring to people employed at the Perth Railway Station—people who have become handicapped during their service with Westrail, and who have been employed at central station.

The question he raised has great social implications. If Westrail employs a great number of handicapped people at the Perth Railway Station, their wages are debited to the MTT, which provides the public transport system for metropolitan Perth. Therefore, that cost is carried by the service. I do not wish to embarrass the people involved. However, it should be recognised that Westrail cannot continually employ such people in a special position and charge that cost to the transport system. I am speaking now not in personal terms but in realistic terms of the costs involved.

We must establish firstly that Westrail, the MTT, and any other public utility are not social services, but are commercial operations. If we do not, we would finish up imposing extra costs on the people who are the lifeblood of the MTT—the people who use the MTT during their working week. If the operations of the MTT are breaking even, and the service then is loaded with a lot of social services, the people who actually use the public transport system regularly would be charged disproportionately.

Mr Skidmore: I entered the second reading debate on that very question. Your supposition is based on your belief that these workers play no useful part in the operations of Westrail and therefore should be likened to people receiving social security benefits and pensions. That is not true, because these workers provide a service; in fact, they are doing a good job. You are making the improper suggestion that these people do not make a contribution.

Mr RUSHTON: The task of identifying the need is not mine; it is someone else's responsibility. I instanced the case of the MTT running a bus station with six people and the number of people involved at the Perth Railway Station. One would need to equate the various responsibilities and decide what the correct number of employees to run the service would be. If there was a loading on the figure of a certain

number of people I do not believe that would be a due charge to the MTT operation. I am not saying these people should not be looked after.

Mr Skidmore: If they are doing a worth-while job it should be a proper charge against the MTT and the transport system.

Mr RUSHTON: If we put 200 people—

Mr Skidmore: We do not have 200 people. I am saying a number of people are involved, and not some airy fairy number.

Mr RUSHTON: The indications are that there were a greater number employed at the Perth Railway Station than there are now. If there were more employees there than necessary they should be considered in the way I have outlined to the House.

Mr Skidmore: They don't concern those existing.

Mr RUSHTON: It is up to Westrail and the MTT to sort these things out. It is an ongoing issue.

The member for Avon raised the question of the MTT unions accepting the use of the machines. As I indicated to the House, the Chairman of the MTT stated that the bus union had accepted the use of the machines but that the railway unions were not accepting them and that there were ongoing negotiations in this regard.

The next point raised by the member for Avon related to the machines being maintained on the stations. He rightly stated that they would be monitored to see whether or not they were vandalised. The question of maintaining the machines has always been subject to negotiation. I am not aware that the point raised by the member is not being accommodated. He raised the matter of union members servicing these machines, and this is an issue receiving ongoing attention involving MTT and Westrail with respect to who will carry out this responsibility. I can see no problem in that regard.

He raised a further question of costs. The costs have been proposed by the MTT and have been reviewed by the Director General of Transport and the Commonwealth Department of Transport. As far as I am concerned, we have a rather severe accreditation of this costing.

Mr Skidmore: I raised this matter also during the debate. I raised the question of the cost of the existing scheme and you provided figures. It is simply that the figures provided to us showed that on the question of the existing scheme, you included certain costs. The remarkable thing is that to make the other side look better, you did not include any labour costs. You gave an

erroneous figure. I estimate your costs of replacing the old system could really involve a further \$500 000.

Mr RUSHTON: Even if the figure the member gives is correct, the new scheme would still be of great advantage. These costs have been put forward by the MTT and cross-checked by other people. As far as I am concerned they are a reasonable assessment of the situation.

The member for Avon went on to talk about economic blunders. It was not becoming of him to make those generalisations without getting down to specifics. As far as I am concerned he did not go far enough and made only a generalisation with respect to economic blunders. I think he would be hard put to equate his comments about the current situation when we remember the economic blunders of the Whitlam Government not many years ago. That Government was an example of a specialist Government with respect to economic blunders. I regret the member for Avon could not be in the Chamber throughout my comments.

Mr McIver: I apologise, but I was called away to an urgent telephone call.

Mr RUSHTON: I have covered all the items he mentioned, but if there is more information he would like he could take up those matters with me at a later date and I would be happy to accommodate him. I would be happy to arrange a meeting with the General Manager of the MTT. The member might like to discuss this matter with Mr Robinson at some time. I expect to review the physical production of the machines shortly and I might be in a position to give the member for Avon further information at that time. I thank the member for the questions he raised, all of which I have answered in some detail. Once again, I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILLS (2): THIRD READING

1. Main Roads Amendment Bill.

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

2. Change of Names Regulation Amendment Bill.

Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr Hassell (Chief Secretary), and transmitted to the Council.

WESTRAIL: ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION

Inquiry by Select Committee: Motion

MR McPHARLIN (Mt. Marshall) [4.47 p.m.]:
I move—

That a Select Committee be appointed to enquire into and report on all aspects of the administration and operation of Westrail, with particular reference to—

- (i) the accounting system's ability to reflect all aspects of the operational costs, both direct and indirect;
- (ii) the ability of freight rates to actually reflect operating costs;
- (iii) Westrail's access to funds for capital works and the debt servicing of those funds.

I wish to make some comments to explain my moving this motion.

In view of the proposed rail freight increases by Westrail, quite a number of people in country areas were incensed by the magnitude of the proposals and numerous meetings were held in various country centres to voice disapproval.

Before going into detail on this matter, I make it clear that those who were involved in these meetings have not forgotten that Westrail has given great service over many years. They realise it has helped to develop country areas and rural communities. This help has been very much appreciated by all the people involved. Without the railways, many country towns and farming areas would have been in great difficulties. No-one I have spoken to wants to see the service discontinued, but people would like to see it continue on a more equitable basis which would give those who are involved in using the service a fair return for the freight charges which have been proposed.

A number of meetings were held in country areas and one of these was held in Bencubbin in my electorate of Mt. Marshall, a town which will be very much affected by these proposals. The people in the area called a meeting for the purpose not only of airing their disapproval but also of getting further clarification of the proposal from the Minister and the executive officers of Westrail and the Transport Commission. They wanted to see whether there was some way the position could be improved and what other measures could be taken to give the people concerned more satisfaction and more information. They thought a better system might emanate from all the discussions which took place.

I attended two of the three meetings held. Those at the meeting at Bencubbin on 26 June moved and agreed to a number of motions. One motion was: "That this meeting totally reject the proposed increases in Westrail freight rates and suggests the Government review the schedules to make them truly competitive with those we are forced to use on very long hauls." Another motion was: "That Westrail be prepared to enter into negotiations with the Wheat Board that contractual agreements for transport of wheat be on a similar basis to that which is in operation for iron ore and bauxite." The people who attended the meetings agreed to numerous other motions.

The second meeting was held at Pithara and at that meeting several motions were agreed to. The meetings were attended by approximately 200 to 300 farmers and representatives of business houses from the area and also visitors from other areas. A motion at the Pithara meeting stated: "This meeting condemns the new grain rate charges as being harsh and unjust." Another motion was: "That the Government review the grain rate scale after consultation with the total grain industry." Both motions were agreed to. Another motion moved was: "That the Wheat Board—CBH—grain section of the Farmers' Union be asked to negotiate a contract with Westrail to transport grain on a similar basis to that which is in operation for the transport of iron ore." That motion was agreed to also.

Another meeting was held at Merredin and again motions of a similar nature were moved, discussed, and agreed to. I did not attend the Merredin meeting but I have a full report of the trend of the discussions and the discussions with the Minister for Transport.

The Minister attended all the meetings and endeavoured to explain the situation to those present. The opinion of those present at the meetings was quite clear. The people's feelings were indicated clearly and it was gratifying to see the Minister and other representatives, such as the heads of Westrail and Transport Commission representatives, present to discuss the matter. At all of these meetings there was open and frank discussion though sometimes it became a little heated and people were highly critical of the proposals. A strong feeling of dissatisfaction was illustrated at the meetings.

Further to the meetings, a committee was appointed—the inter-zone freight rates committee—which was representative of a wide area. The purpose of this committee was to look at the aspects and the impact and effect of the proposals put forward by Westrail.

I referred to this matter during the Address-in-Reply debate and other members mentioned it also. I note the member for Moore stated he was not satisfied with the proposed increases and he did not think this move was the right thing to do. He mentioned that his concern was that the increased charges would cause hardship to many people. That is a fair statement and one with which many people who are involved in the long haulage areas would agree.

At several of these meetings the Minister was questioned about the provision of certain data to assist in a further examination of inquiries into the proposals. The Minister said he would not provide that data but in a Press report on 8 August he did say that he had asked the Commissioner of Railways to provide him with what data he has. He also indicated in that Press report that the data would be available in approximately a fortnight's time. I understand that that data has not been provided and the committee is a little resentful that it was not provided to them.

The Minister appointed a technical committee and a steering committee. I understand the Minister is the acting chairman of the steering committee. The committees researched the Westrail grain freights in great detail. The members of the committee have been good enough to provide me with a copy of a report which they have made and which I understand has been given to the Minister. The recommendations of the committee have been published in the *Farmers Weekly*. I believe the committee has done a tremendous job; a detailed investigation has been made and as a result the recommendations were produced. The terms of reference were to alleviate any apparent difficulties in the areas of rates. One of the recommendations was that the rail freight rate for grain from grain silos at less than 200 kilometres to be at a rate to become effective at 1 November. The rates for grain from those which are more than 200 kilometres are to be at the rate for the 1979-80 season. That means the short haul rates it is proposed to apply should remain as the Government has proposed. The figures were provided and I will refer to them later in my speech to illustrate how the committee believes the reduced freight rate can increase the income to Westrail. The figures certainly illustrate that fact but of course there is always such assumption when something has not occurred. The reduction is to apply from 1 November. The committee has also asked that the hauls for more than 200 kilometres remain at the rate applied in the previous season.

The second recommendation is—

That the use of rail be encouraged for the haulage of grain by the pricing structure of the grain freight rate and not by the regulation of grain to rail.

It is considered that with an equitable pricing structure the grain freights would reflect the costing of the Westrail system, and that this could be a better method than regulation of grain to rail.

The third recommendation is—

That an independent estimate be made of the likely percentage of Westrail's potential grain haul which will transfer to road haulage as a result of the increased freight rate for grain for hauls of more than 200 kilometres.

It has been estimated that the producers would turn from Westrail to road haulage because of the increased rate.

A number of points were clarified in the report and I propose to cover some of the them. The proposed freight increase will give an incentive to farmers in the eastern wheatbelt to cart their own grain to the port or closer to the port. This will introduce some problems, in that it will make segregation more difficult in relation to the marketing qualities of the wheat. The increased freight rates will provide an incentive for the producers to think about delivering the grain to the Co-operative Bulk Handling installations at harvest time and make arrangements to pick it up from the bins and cart it to port at their convenience later in the year. This is the sort of thing they have been looking at.

The report makes another point, that Westrail could be attempting to get too much from the grain industry by way of contributions to the overheads or fixed costs of the organisation. It is considered that this matter needs to be clarified and that the demand for rail services by the user should be examined.

The diminished seasonal prospects this year will make it much more difficult for those in drought areas to meet the extra costs, and the increased returns to Westrail which have been anticipated will not be met because of the widespread drought. There will be far less grain, and for that reason alone it will be difficult for the producers to meet the extra costs, even though the yield will be low. It will hit them very hard indeed. They will have less grain and less income, and some of them will have practically no income from their grain. Of course, if they have no grain, they will not be paying freight; but those who have grain

will be facing the extra cost of the proposed freight increases.

The incentive for people to move the grain from their traditional bins, sidings, or stations is increased because in some areas the difference between the two lines is quite significant. I mentioned these figures in my speech to the Address-in-Reply and I will repeat some of them now. A good illustration is the line through Mogumber, Coorow, Carnamah, and Mingenew, and the eastern line coming down from Mullewa to Bowgada, and that area. The difference in the freight rates on those two lines is very significant.

Between Canna and Mingenew the difference is \$1.70 a tonne, and that is not a great distance these days. With efficient vehicles and trucks, a farmer could deliver his grain from the Canna area to Mingenew and make a considerable saving. From Morawa to Mingenew the difference is \$3.20 a tonne, which is a very significant difference. If a farmer in the Morawa area has a quantity of grain to deliver, it would more than pay him to move it across to the Mingenew area.

Other differentials are: from Bowgada to Arrino \$2.20; from Perenjori to Three Springs \$2.20; from Caron to Three Springs \$2.50; from Maya to Coorow \$2.20; from Dalwallinu to Watheroo \$3.10; from Dalwallinu to Miling \$2.80; from Pithara to Miling \$2.30; and from Ballidu to Bindi Bindi \$2.20.

If there is a quantity of grain to be moved, farmers on the eastern line will be going across to the line which will save them a considerable amount of freight. It will create congestion and disruption of the bins on that line. The illustrations I have given relate to only one part of the State where this could happen quite easily.

With the grain freight rates for hauls of less than 200 kilometres, which is the cut-off point, it has been estimated by the committee that Westrail could win about 16.4 per cent additional business because of the reduction. As I said, it is only an assumption because it has not happened, but it could increase Westrail's revenue by about 7 per cent. It has been estimated that the marginal income from those short hauls in additional tonnage to Westrail would yield revenue of about \$3.86 a tonne.

Because of the reduction for distances under 200 kilometres, producers will be more inclined to use Westrail for cartage of their grain. Those calculations have been thoroughly investigated and are reasonably accurate, but they are only estimates. Quantities on those assessments have revealed some interesting figures.

I have mentioned some of the freight rate differentials on those two lines, but the committee has listed a great number of differentials, proving that the investigation leading to its submission was very comprehensive and thorough.

The committee mentions arc elasticity. This is a mathematical calculation which I do not propose to quote. It measures changes in quantity due to changes in price, and provides a very good illustration of what could happen in various areas throughout the State in relation to the proposed increases in freights, demonstrating that they will not produce the income anticipated by Westrail. Because of the increases, many producers would be prepared to employ their vehicles, rigs, or trucks on carting grain to various ports, bypassing Westrail.

I understand from the Minister that Westrail is examining these proposals, and I hope it will take note of what has been revealed in the calculations made by the committee. Westrail's expectation of attracting something like an extra \$15 million from the proposed freight increases might very well not be realised. I invite the Minister to look at the proposals which have been submitted and at the rates which are applicable until 1 November this year, which I believe will attract more freight to Westrail than will the proposed increases.

The percentages vary from as low as minus 33 per cent to as high as plus 20 per cent. For these reasons, the producers, particularly those in my area, are not satisfied that the proposed increases are equitable, and they desire that a further inquiry be held into the administration of Westrail and other aspects which are mentioned in the suggested terms of reference in the motion I have before the House. They are seeking to be satisfied in their minds that the administration of Westrail, the accounting systems, the operational costs, and the ability of freight rates actually to reflect operational costs are as have been claimed. They would like further clarification and information on these matters.

After discussion at public meetings and with other members, it was agreed that there was a need for a further inquiry, and my motion appears on the notice paper with the concurrence of the people involved, who fully support the appointment of a Select Committee. To my way of thinking, the purpose of a Select Committee is not to denigrate Westrail but to enable people to provide evidence and have the situation clarified to their own satisfaction and to the benefit of the Government and all concerned.

Out of all the work of the committee, an examination of its report by Westrail, and a further examination of the matter by a Select Committee, a more equitable and satisfactory system could be arrived at. At several meetings the point was raised about whether it is advisable for Westrail to enter into a contract with the grain industry. One of the motions to which I referred spoke of this, and the committee also made reference to it. One of the terms of reference of the committee referred to the nature of a contract of agreement between Westrail and the grain industry, including its legal ramifications.

An overview referred to by the committee was the publicly stated opinion that rail has a natural advantage in respect of the freighting of bulk commodities. That may be so, but the committee claimed it is not reflected in Westrail's accounts and its freight rates for grain. The committee also referred to Westrail's pricing policy and the factors which influence it. It referred to matching the cost of a service with the revenue obtained from it, particularly in respect of long haul costs. In respect of the pricing policy further reference was made to matching total revenue with total costs. So the inquiry went on into the matter of a contractual arrangement.

I have been informed that a contractual arrangement is in existence between the Queensland Government and the Grain Elevators Board of that State. I understand the arrangement works effectively. Under the arrangement all the grain for export is regulated to rail, and I understand Queensland grain growers agree with what has been done. Freight rates under the contract are much more favourable than those which have been proposed by the Western Australian Government. In Queensland, freight rates applicable under the agreement are much lower than public freight rates which appear in the rates book put out by the Queensland railways.

Of course, we know that grain production in Queensland is certainly not as high as in other States, but the principle is there; there is a distinct possibility that a freight agreement can be arrived at and entered into in other States. The committee is having a look at this matter and examining it in more detail in an endeavour to arrive at an acceptable proposal. Further work needs to be done because of the technicalities involved and the difficulties which have been encountered.

It is difficult to compare a contract of transport in respect of another bulk commodity which has only one pick-up point and one receival point.

Another difficulty in making such comparisons is that a bulk commodity such as iron ore is transported in a given quantity no matter whether the season is good or bad. We have something like 218 delivery points for our grain, and seasonal conditions play a big role; in addition, the quality of grain for export has a bearing on the matter. Therefore it is much more difficult to arrive at a transport agreement in respect of grain, but it is not an insurmountable task. Allowances can be made for seasonal conditions and for the fact that there are many receival points. That is what has happened in Queensland. I understand the committee will be making further inquiries into this matter and will submit a report to the Minister.

Grain is not the only commodity transported for which country people pay heavily. All people living in country areas are affected by these high freight increases. The report of the Auditor General last year showed that general freights attracted a huge amount of revenue—something like \$60 million. The commodities involved were not listed, so I put a question on the notice paper on 5 August. When the Minister replied I found that the major freights carried—I will not list all of them—were wool, which produced an income to Westrail of \$3.4 million; fertiliser, a most necessary commodity in country areas, which attracted an income of \$4.9 million; and fuel, again so necessary for all people living in country areas, which provided an income of \$9.2 million. All that was paid for by country consumers.

It is all very well to say that the proposed increases in grain freight rates only keep up with inflation and that Westrail has had to face increased costs, because the farming community and all country people also have had to face tremendous increases in the price of fuel and fertilisers. The price of fertiliser has increased tremendously. Only in this morning's paper we read that superphosphate has increased again by \$2.45 a tonne, making it \$73 a tonne ex-Kwinana. That is a tremendous increase, and the farming community cannot do without superphosphate and other nitrogenous fertilisers. The price of Agras No. 1 is to increase by \$2.60 a tonne to \$202.40, and Agras No. 2 is to increase by \$3.60 a tonne to \$186.15. These prices keep going up.

Therefore, it is not a fair claim that the proposed rail freight increases only keep up with inflation. We have experienced a high incidence of increased costs in other directions which country consumers, particularly producers, must face. So I believe it is necessary that a more equitable system of freight rating be arrived at which will give all concerned a better deal.

It is interesting to note the cost of freighting other commodities. Let me refer to beer. If a contract is entered into with Westrail for the delivery of beer to Wongan Hills, which is within the deregulated zone, it can be delivered for \$11.25 a tonne. However, without a contract with Westrail it costs \$32 a tonne to have the beer delivered by ordinary freight.

Mr Barnett: What is the difference there?

Mr McPHARLIN: It is within the deregulated zone, which means it is within a radius of 150 kilometres from Perth.

Mr Sibson: Incidentally, it is in Western Australia.

Mr McPHARLIN: That is a difference of almost \$21. Ballidu is 22 miles further from Perth than Wongan Hills, but one cannot get beer railed there at less than \$35.20 a tonne. It seems wrong that one can have beer railed to Wongan Hills at \$11.25 a tonne, but if one wants to have it railed a further 22 miles one must pay \$35.20 a tonne. I understand—and the Minister might correct me if I am wrong—that the Ballidu Hotel cannot enter into a contract with Westrail because it is outside the deregulated zone.

Mr Barnett: What is the Minister for Agriculture doing about this?

Mr McPHARLIN: I have not heard a thing. The figures I have quoted were given to me, and they are contained in a letter written by the Minister to the Wongan-Ballidu Shire Council. I assume they are correct. That is the sort of thing that is going on at the moment, and it is so wrong that the system should work in that way.

Mr Barnett: And he is doing nothing about it? Oh!

Mr McPHARLIN: When one looks at the figures over the years one finds there is no doubt that grain has attracted more income to Westrail than any other commodity. When one compares the figures of bauxite, iron ore, and other commodities, one finds that grain is way out in front. I have referred to the figures over a number of years, but I will refer to only one year. In 1978-79, 3.1 million tonnes of wheat, oats, and barley were hauled by Westrail, gaining it revenue of \$34.09 million. In the same year Westrail hauled \$1.2 million tonnes of iron ore for revenue of \$9.3 million; and it hauled 5.4 million tonnes of bauxite—a high tonnage—for revenue of \$4.4 million. As the rate applying to bauxite is so low on short hauls, a high tonnage of that commodity was hauled but it produced only a small income. Those figures were given in answer to a question and they show without doubt that the grain industry is the major income earner for Westrail.

On 16 September the member for Avon asked the following question of the Minister for Transport—

On a per tonne basis, do grain growers in Western Australia pay a greater percentage of Westrail's fixed costs than Alcoa?

The Minister replied—

Yes, and indeed this is to be expected because grain operations include significantly more fixed cost resources than those required for Alcoa. For example, more kilometres of track, more locomotives and wagons (many of which have to be provided for seasonal peaks only) and more administrative and supervisory staff—and of course grain tonnage is less than half the tonnage hauled for Alcoa.

Mr Minister, it just is not true that grain tonnage is less than half the tonnage hauled for Alcoa. That is incorrect, and I have just illustrated that by the figures I gave. The grain haulage is far more than the amount of bauxite hauled for Alcoa. I challenge the Minister to deny those figures; and the answer given to him was certainly not a true one. The figures I have given reveal that.

Mr Rushton: Finish the answer.

Mr McPHARLIN: The rest of the answer is as follows—

If the comparison is made in terms of the proportion of total revenue received, Alcoa's contribution to fixed costs would be higher.

Over the many years that Westrail has been in operation, it has given a service to country towns; and the income paid to Westrail by the country people using these services is far higher than the amount paid by Alcoa, which has not been functioning for very long. The contributors to Westrail for many years have more than pulled their weight when it comes to fixed cost resources, and so on. However, it is said that the grain tonnages are less than half the tonnage of ore from Alcoa. That is not true; and I would like the Minister to check that with his officers, because it is a misleading statement.

Another point made by the committee was that in adopting a pricing policy for freight rates, Westrail did not take into account the cost that a farmer has to pay for delivering the grain from his paddock to the bulk handling authority. I suppose one could say that is not the province of Westrail; it is the responsibility of the producer. Therefore, it is his responsibility; but it is an added cost that he has to face for transporting his grain.

When one examines the replacement costs of vehicles, they can range from \$120 000 to \$40 000, or even less; but that is another necessary cost for a producer delivering his grain. He has to move it to the railhead, to use the services being provided.

Another matter raised by Westrail and also by the Minister is that the telescopic freight rate system is still in operation. It has been changed considerably, however. Before 1 July this year, the net cents per tonne/kilometre rate for an 80 kilometre haul was 9.13. That has been reduced to 5c. When one considers a 200 kilometre haul, the net cents per tonne/kilometre rate was 4.75, and it has been reduced to 4.65. As one goes from there, it changes quite a bit. For 387 kilometres, it was 3.31; and now it has been increased to 3.95. For a 412 kilometre haul, it has been changed from 3.23c to 3.86c. I suppose one could say the telescopic system is still operating; but it is certainly not to the advantage of the people who have to haul their grain for long distances. I see no reason for changing the rate on the closer hauls, because they had a geographical advantage, anyway; and it must not be forgotten that each person who produces grain and delivers it receives the same amount for it.

The change to the system is not a good argument. It does not carry a great deal of weight, and it needs to be examined further. It always happened that the growers on the shorter hauls were paying more per tonne/kilometre for their grain; but because they had short hauls only, the cost did not amount to very much. Now, for an 80 kilometre haul, it costs the farmer \$5. For a 412 kilometre haul the farmer would have to pay \$15.90—a difference of \$10.90. Therefore, the system of telescopic freight rates has not been changed to the advantage of the people who are a long way out.

A number of questions have been asked in the House from time to time about freights because the producers are dissatisfied. The member for Merredin placed a few questions on the notice paper. One of those questions was—

Are grain freight rates calculated on the distance from the rail siding to the nearest port?

The answer was as follows—

Yes, and to any other destination if so consigned. Freight rates are calculated on the shortest rail distance between the origin and destination stations, calculated from the distances listed in the Railway Commission's goods rates book.

His next question was—

If not, how is the freight calculated?

The reply was—

There are no clearly defined zones for the transport of grain. However, grain for export is consigned by the grain handling authority to ports usually in accordance with a set pattern.

Those answers are not clear enough to the people concerned. The committee wants more clarification because it believes that one can assess the cost per tonne of hauling grain to the ports. It believes that a more accurate figure could be found relating to all of the delivery points. That is one of the reasons it wants more information on the accounting system and the reflection of operating costs in the freight rates.

Another question asked by the member for Merredin was as follows—

How many companies have agreements with the State in which there is provision for the company to contribute funds to Westrail for capital works or rolling stock?

The reply to that was—

There are some 12 agreements involved which place responsibilities upon the various companies subject to the agreements to provide varying forms of infrastructure and capital associated with railway facilities and transport operations.

There are 12 agreements involved. Those agreements place responsibility on the various companies; and I suppose that is fair enough. I anticipate if there is a contractual arrangement between Westrail and the grain handling authorities there would be some responsibility involved in that. That would have to be examined in some detail; and both Westrail and the grain handling authorities would have to be satisfied that it would work, to the satisfaction of both. Therefore, I hope that the outcome of it all is a much more satisfactory system.

In a Press release on 15 August, the Minister for Transport made it very clear that he would not disclose details of operating costs, nor would he expect Westrail to do so. That related to the pricing structures of rates struck under commercial contracts. He went on to say—

I am not prepared to compel Westrail to release its detailed traffic costs to the public.

Then he gave his reasons as follows—

Westrail's objective (which, I know, has widespread public support) is to become progressively more "commercial" in its approach to winning traffic. The Government should no more compel Westrail to publicise

its costs than it should compel any other commercial transport organisation.

Now, that is one of the reasons the committee is not satisfied. It wants greater clarification. The Minister went on to say—

If grain costs were released, it would be virtually impossible to refuse a similar request from any other Westrail customer. When current mineral contracts were renegotiated, for example, these companies could seek to be similarly supplied with Westrail costs;

I know of no precedent where a client has been given this sort of advantage over the business with which it is to commence negotiations.

The committee believes that to arrive at a satisfactory position with a more equitable solution it would be to the advantage of all if it was able to obtain the figures which have been referred to. That would allow it to make its decisions on the information for which it has been asking.

The purpose of the proposal for the appointment of a Select Committee is to try to obtain, with Westrail's co-operation, that sort of information. That would allow a more informative recommendation to be made to the Government for a better system.

I have a great deal more information, but I believe I have covered the subject adequately for the purpose of moving this motion. I hope other members of the House will realise the advantage of having a Select Committee which would work to the benefit of all concerned, but not for the denigration of Westrail.

Mr Barnett: I think you would have the support of the Minister for Agriculture in this.

Mr McPHARLIN: I hope so. I note in the Budget Papers and the Financial Statement presented by the Treasurer last night, table 28 refers to the railways account. It is interesting to note that the annual revenue of Westrail covers the working expenses. The annual revenue was \$175.7 million and the working expenses were \$172.9 million, so there is a slight margin of revenue covering expenses. However, when we go down further, we see the interest, depreciation, and sinking fund. First of all, the interest is \$19.5 million. That is one of the factors that reacts against Westrail. One could claim it is a legitimate charge, because Westrail has borrowed money. If one borrows money, one is required to pay interest. However, it is a burden because it goes on and on, and never becomes less.

That table shows that the loss for Westrail in 1979-80 was \$28 million; so the loss over the years has increased. In the years between 1975-76 and 1979-80, the loss has become higher each year. No doubt that is the reason the Government wanted to increase freight rates. However, I believe there are other ways of overcoming the loss.

One of those ways would be for the Government to consider the interest rate and another is a more equitable system of freight rates. That would be helpful in obtaining for Westrail a greater volume of freight.

I commend the motion.

Mr COWAN: I second the motion.

Debate adjourned until a later stage of the sitting, on motion by Mr Rushton (Minister for Transport).

QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

WESTRAIL: ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION

Inquiry by Select Committee: Motion

Debate resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR RUSHTON (Dale—Minister for Transport) [6.08 p.m.]: Mr Speaker—

Mr H. D. Evans: I was under the impression the debate was to be adjourned; I was not trying to stifle the Minister at all.

Mr RUSHTON: The member opposite gave me something of a surprise. I thought another member would have answered, but he must have declined.

I will comment on the somewhat incredible presentation by the member for Mt. Marshall. I am quite amazed that he should move such a motion which, he indicated, was at the request of the Farmers' Union committee. The member for Mt. Marshall said he was moving the motion because the committee wanted further information. My understanding is that the committee is one of the groups which is negotiating with Westrail with regard to contractual arrangements, and it has the opportunity to obtain information.

It is also my understanding that if the same group was not able to get satisfactory information it would press through the member for Mt. Marshall in order to get that information. I am totally disappointed. The attitude of the member for Mt. Marshall in moving this motion for an

inquiry is unrealistic. The motion expresses a lack of confidence in the administration of Westrail.

I believe that when I have had the opportunity to present my response members will agree that we should not support the motion. I suppose it is a pious hope, but I trust the member for Mt. Marshall will consider the points I raise, and will withdraw his motion. The inquiry outlined by the member could cause a lot of damage to Westrail and inconvenience to country people who are the main users of this great service.

I will base my case on a number of points. Not long ago we finalised a full inquiry into the land freight transport system, and the member for Mt. Marshall will be aware that a tremendous amount of research went into the inquiry. The report has been presented publicly, and the Government has moved to take action as a result of the report. In fact, the first step was taken on 14 April.

We should acknowledge in this place that Westrail is progressively moving towards an efficient commercial operation. That is consistent with what has been said by the member for Mt. Marshall and his colleagues in this House. They have supported such a move. It is most unsatisfactory that Westrail should be discredited in this way. I hope the move was not for a political reason.

Mr Cowan: Do you believe that a 20 per cent increase in grain freights makes Westrail more competitive?

Mr RUSHTON: I will give an answer to that in due course.

Westrail is moving in the direction of becoming more directly responsible for its own commercial decisions. As far as I am concerned that is the policy which should be implemented. It is recognised that Westrail needs to adapt itself more to the task of becoming a commercial enterprise. I believe members would agree with me that the member for Mt. Marshall has not paid Westrail the courtesy of requesting and obtaining additional information. That information would have satisfied him that Westrail was an efficient organisation.

The recent performance of Westrail in holding down expenditure compares most favourably with the rest of the Australian railways system. I will indicate some of the major initiatives implemented by Westrail in an effort to improve its performance. Members will be aware that in recent times Westrail engaged with Transmark in a study of the mechanical branch at Midland. The reorganisation of that branch was a very vital part of Westrail operations.

Westrail, in conjunction with CBH, also carried out detailed studies into the efficient handling of grain. In 1973 Westrail created a management bureau to provide research to help the creation of efficient services for its clients. Westrail also has a record of being the first Australian railway to introduce a number of advanced processes in the handling of goods. I think these steps should indicate to the member for Mt. Marshall that Westrail is, in fact, a most efficient organisation.

Members of the National Party, when we debated these issues last year, indicated that they supported the introduction of these policies. Members of that party committed themselves on what I believe were sound grounds. They believed that Westrail and the Government were moving in the best interests of country people.

Mr Cowan: The policy conflicts entirely with what you have done.

Mr RUSHTON: The member for Merredin does not stick to the facts for very long.

I want to indicate that the member for Mt. Marshall, instead of speaking to his motion, referred to the question of freight rates. As far as I am concerned, he has not adequately made out a case to support the motion which he has moved. I suggest to members that we should oppose his proposition.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr RUSHTON: Before the tea suspension I indicated to the House that the member for Mt. Marshall had not made out a case for a Select Committee. In fact, he addressed himself mostly to freight increases and the fact that some people with whom he was involved in the Farmers' Union zone committee had asked that such an inquiry be initiated. I told him some people had indicated to me that if they did not obtain satisfaction they would then want an inquiry. We have not yet reached that point because the representatives of the grain growers are still negotiating.

I was rather concerned that the honourable member's whole case seemed to be based on the belief that Westrail, through its freight rates, should carry the cost problems of the growers. Of course such an idea is unrealistic and unacceptable. We know that many of the farmer's other costs are far in excess of the freight rates he must pay. While we had great expectations for the grain crops to be harvested this year, we must agree there is now no cause for great optimism. It was hoped that Westrail would cart a good portion of a bumper harvest. It is a matter of regret to all members that this will not now happen. To a large degree the economy of the State is based on its agricultural production and a

good harvest benefits the entire State. When the farmers suffer a drought, Westrail and the taxpayers of the State feel the effects of that drought.

I made a number of points earlier indicating the reasons that we should not establish a Select Committee. I told members that a tremendous amount of research has been instituted and acted upon. Westrail is moving towards an improved commercial position. I also stated that the administration and operation of Westrail are the most efficient in Australia.

I enunciated some of the projects that had been carried out. In case I missed some points earlier, I would like to refer to some of the initiatives taken by Westrail. These are as follows—

A Westrail/Transmark study into the mechanical branch provided a master plan to reorganise management control procedures and improve productivity and reduce capital and operating costs associated with locomotive and rolling stock maintenance, and this was currently being implemented;

Westrail/CBH Ltd grain studies to optimise the use of facilities and equipment for the receipt and transport of grain;

The creation of a Management Services Bureau in 1973 to provide research and other specialised information and support capabilities for management and to expand computer technology applications;

Re-organisation of the marketing branch to provide selling and research arms—the former involving an increased impetus in the selling area with individual representatives liaising with all major industries and the latter involving research into areas where Westrail might be able to provide improved services to clients;

A changeover to cyclic maintenance of the track on a scheduled basis, utilising modern maintenance techniques and track repair machinery;

The introduction of a formalised system of evaluation of capital expenditure projects, being the first railway system in Australia to do so;

A major move in providing better management information by introducing responsibility accounting and an analytical budgeting and reporting system;

Introduction of pay-roll processing on punch-card data processing equipment, being the first railway system in Australia to do so

and since being one of the leaders in the use of computers; and

Setting up a centralised wagon control and locomotive utilisation system to optimise wagon and locomotive availability.

So this indicates that certainly Westrail is not lacking in initiatives; it is not lacking in expertise, and it is recognised throughout Australia as being the most progressive railway system in the country.

I interpreted the remarks of the member for Mt. Marshall to mean that he supported railways. Certainly he did not make out a case that the railways are inefficient.

Mr H. D. Evans: He attacked the operation of the railway system.

Mr RUSHTON: He did not actually attack the operation of the railway system.

Mr Stephens: If we knew all the answers we would not want an inquiry.

Mr RUSHTON: If the member for Stirling heard the answers he would not believe them. I would like to present some more facts to the House. It was a discourtesy on the part of the member for Mt. Marshall and the people who support his view not to discuss this matter with Westrail and to give its officers an opportunity to answer his queries before he moved in this House for a Select Committee. The appointment of a Select Committee is a very serious matter, and it could reflect adversely on the people running Westrail.

Mr Stephens: If you had nothing to hide you ought to be prepared to show more.

Mr RUSHTON: That is the point of view of the member for Stirling. He is the most suspicious person I have ever met.

Mr Bryce: Oh no, the Premier is the most suspicious person.

Mr RUSHTON: No one could beat the member for Stirling.

Mr Bryce: The Premier's paranoia is the most finely-honed paranoia that ever existed.

Several members interjected.

Mr RUSHTON: Before the livelihoods of the many employees of Westrail were put in jeopardy, more thought should have been given to this issue.

Mr Stephens: Many people in Western Australia would like an inquiry, and you know it.

Mr RUSHTON: At my request Westrail has provided me with a rundown of the actual receipts for 1979-80, and I am sure the member for Mt. Marshall will be interested in—

Mr B. T. Burke: Incorporate it in *Hansard*. You always read a great list of things and it is very boring.

Mr RUSHTON: Westrail has listed these amounts under various headings: variable costs, revenue and contribution to joint and several costs. It sets out about seven items under these headings and a total cost is given. It also sets out how the total costs have been distributed throughout the whole system. We hear a great deal about suburban passenger services, and we see here that it has a variable cost of 6.7—

Mr B. T. Burke: But 6.7 what? Bananas?

Mr RUSHTON: —and a contribution to joint and common cost of 5.6.

Mr B. T. Burke: But 5.6 what? Feet tall?

Mr RUSHTON: This is the sort of information Westrail has made available. For the interstate passengers, the variable cost is 3.9 and the revenue is 3.9.

Mr B. T. Burke: It is 3.9 what?

Mr RUSHTON: The loss from interstate passengers is \$0.4 million. The variable cost attached to the carriage of the interstate freight is 8.8, and the revenue is 15.8.

Mr B. T. Burke: But 15.8 what?

Mr Bryce: Per cent or kilometres?

Mr RUSHTON: Million dollars.

Mr B. T. Burke: Thank you for telling us eventually.

Mr RUSHTON: The joint and common costs are \$7 million. The variable cost attached to rent, salaries, etc. is \$0.9 million. The revenue is \$9.7 million, and the contribution to joint and common costs is \$8.8 million.

Mr McPharlin: Am I right in believing that the committee had those figures you are referring to?

Mr RUSHTON: I do not think the members of the committee have referred back to Westrail to discuss the contractual arrangements, but that opportunity was available. These figures will be available to them.

The variable cost in relation to ores and minerals is \$25 million. The revenue is \$49.8 million, and the contribution to joint and common costs is \$24.8 million.

The variable costs relating to country passengers are \$4.2 million, the revenue is \$3.3 million, and the contribution to joint and common costs is a loss of \$0.9 million.

The variable cost of country freight is \$70.8 million, revenue is \$81.3 million, and the contribution to joint and common costs is \$10.5

million. So that gives members an indication of the difference. Country freights account for a contribution of \$10.5 million to the joint and common costs, and ores and minerals make a contribution of \$24.8 million.

The total under "variation costs" is \$120.3 million, the revenue is \$175.7 million, and the contribution to joint and common costs is \$55.4 million.

The joint and common costs variable is \$83.4 million, and that balances. The total cost altogether is \$203.7 million.

The point to be remembered is that when we relate the revenue to suburban passenger services the cost reimbursement was from the MTT, so that balances out. If the member for Mt. Marshall wants a copy of that information, I would be happy to give it to him.

Mr McPharlin: I would appreciate that.

Mr RUSHTON: The member for Mt. Marshall referred to the Treasurer's Budget speech. I will not go through the details, but I would like to refer to some of the important costs estimated for this year. The variable cost for ores and minerals is \$28.3 million, the revenue is \$54 million, and the contribution to joint and common costs is \$25.7 million. The variable cost for country freight is \$76 million, the revenue is \$85.1 million, and the contribution to joint and common costs is \$9.1 million. This year it is anticipated that the transportation of ores and minerals will account for a greater contribution and the contribution from country freight will be down. This year the deficit will be increased to \$40 million. I will be happy to provide figures to allow members to understand why the deficit has increased from \$28 million to \$40 million. Certainly it is a very serious situation.

I believe many of the complaints have arisen because of a lack of understanding of the difference between carting grain and carting iron ore, as well as a lack of understanding of the use of Westrail resources. The figures I read out just a moment ago give us some indication of the difference.

About 85 per cent of the 3.5 million grain task is handled by block and special grain trains, say three million tonnes, and uses 30 locomotives, 30 brake vans, 77 crew, and 1 300 wagons. On the other hand, iron ore is 1.6 million tonnes per annum, which is just over roughly half the tonnage involved with grain. This is where the contrast comes in. This service required four locomotives, two brake vans, six crews, and 145 wagons.

The committee would have had this information. It has been answered in the House, and I have referred to the relativities in other places. One needs to understand the ratio between the resources used in the carting of iron ore and those used in the carting of grain to appreciate the factual position of grain.

Another point which is well worth considering is the usage of the various lines. Every country member would be conscious that grain plays a major part in country rail services. I have some figures which bring home how vulnerable these branch lines would be if grain were not carted. It goes back to the total cost, to which I have just referred. If farmers prefer not to use rail, and there is a significant downturn in the amount of grain being transported by rail, Westrail would have to consider the option of discontinuing the service.

When one reads the figures for 1979-80 relating to the amount of grain carted on some of these branch lines, the significance of grain becomes apparent. For example, on the Toodyay-West Miling line, 91 per cent of all freight was grain; on the Burakin-Bonnie Rock line, 89 per cent of all freight was grain; on the Kondinin-West Merredin line, the figure was 87 per cent; on the Tambellup-Gnowangerup line, it was 86 per cent; on the Amery-Kalannie line, it was 85 per cent; and, on the Wubin-Mullewa line, it was 85 per cent.

Mr McPharlin: Are those the figures for 1979-80?

Mr RUSHTON: Yes, they are the latest figures I have been able to obtain.

Mr McPharlin: If the freight rate increases you will not get those percentages.

Mr RUSHTON: If farmers wish to retain rail in their community—as I believe they do—they must use it. If farmers do not use rail to transport their grain some of these branch lines must close. In fact, some farmers have even submitted these branch lines should be closed, and they should be allowed to cart their wheat to the main railhead. However, I have not heard that suggestion in many quarters; it would not be the right approach to the problem. In a good harvest year, the rail system is most necessary and is used to capacity.

When I break down the various components of rail freight, it is easy to identify the smallest contribution. In 1979-80, ores and minerals made a contribution of \$24.8 million, and the country freight contribution amounted to \$10.5 million of the core cost; Westrail finished up with a deficit of \$28 million. So, members should be aware

there is no overcharging within the system as it has historically developed.

Members have stated on other occasions that Westrail should be the basis of the development of our transport system in Western Australia. Our distances are such that it makes it unattractive to operate a rail system. Other countries' best performances are over longer distances and because of the greater population involved. Western Australia has developed with the help of the rail system and as far as I am concerned we should continue to use that system. I am sure that the new policy has the support of the member for Mt. Marshall.

I refer now to the matter of finances. Although the member for Mt. Marshall did not touch on this question, I intend to refer to it because it comprises part of the terms of reference of the suggested Select Committee. His motion refers to Westrail's access to funds for capital works and the debt servicing of those funds.

On 1 July 1950 a decision was made to write off \$24.7 million and include in the accounting system of Westrail provision for depreciation and of obsolescent debts. Since that day, that practice has continued.

Because of the Government's new policy objectives, Westrail currently is identifying the public service obligations of Westrail; it is also considering the commercialisation of the service.

Many country members have urged me to ensure that Westrail is not carrying the debt burden of the past. This needs to be identified. I am pleased to report that it should not be long before we have that information.

I could not quite see the objective of the member for Mt. Marshall in moving for the appointment of a Select Committee. However, towards the end of his speech he revealed he was responding to the request of the committee formed to fight against freight rate increases in areas a considerable distance from Perth. I believe his motive was as crude as that. It has not been demonstrated that Westrail is inefficient. In fact, I can prove Westrail is more efficient than any other rail system in Australia. However, that is not good enough for us; we need to ensure every step is taken to improve the efficiency of the service.

I have confidence in the management of Westrail, and I believe the appointment of a Select Committee would indicate a lack of confidence by the House in the management of Westrail. That is not good enough, and it is something about which we must be careful.

Recently I had the opportunity to speak to people in Merredin and Northam. They were most concerned at the reports appearing in the local newspapers and they were indeed happy to receive an accurate explanation of what was going on. These people living in the country areas make a big contribution to Westrail, and they are entitled to receive accurate information. Some of these statements have been mischievous in the extreme. It was one of the pleasures of the journey to be able to put these people's minds at rest and to reinforce their support for Westrail.

Mr Cowan: Tell the House what mischievous statements have been made. Be specific.

Mr Barnett: It is no good making these scurrilous attacks in Parliament.

Mr Stephens: It is very easy to make unsubstantiated statements. Now, substantiate them.

Mr Bryce: Reprehensible!

Mr Tonkin: In the extreme.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Watt): Order!

Mr RUSHTON: The main issue raised by the member for Mt. Marshall related to the matter of freight. I am sure the House by now knows the true situation. It has been claimed that—

Mr Barnett: Order! I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that he is not answering the question.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The member for Rockingham is making facetious interjections and I would ask him to desist.

Mr Barnett: Certainly, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr RUSHTON: The member for Mt. Marshall referred to attending a meeting at Pithara where certain statements were made about the new freight rates. They were described as "indiscriminate, harsh and unjust." One needs to examine the situation in the proper context. The last increase in freight rates occurred 2½ years ago. Since that time, the CPI has increased by something like 23 per cent. In real money terms, the actual freight rate when allied will be less than it was 2½ years ago.

Mr Cowan: If you are going to use that argument, how can you justify—

Mr RUSHTON: I am not going to respond to the honourable member; he will have his opportunity to enter the debate.

Mr Cowan: How can you justify the difference between what is a contract rate inside the 160-kilometre zone and the rate for an area only 20 kilometres outside that zone being up to \$11 a tonne extra on freight like beer—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Watt): Order!

Mr Cowan: How can you justify that?

Mr Stephens: That is a fair question; now, answer it!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has made it quite clear he does not intend to answer interjections. As long as the Minister wishes to make his speech through the Chair, I would ask members to make their interjections one at a time, and if the Minister chooses not to answer them, that is his prerogative.

Mr Stephens: He is incapable of answering.

Mr RUSHTON: I certainly do not want to answer inaccurate statements from around the Assembly. When considering freight rates, one needs to refer to the rate applying to the 400-kilometre mark. In 1965 freight, as related to the gross value per tonne of grain, was 15 per cent. Today, in 1980, it represents only 9.5 per cent. So, all these statements about "harsh and extravagant" increases in freight rates are not factual or justified and I am sure that, in their own hearts, members know this.

The member for Mt. Marshall did not refer to the fact that between the years 1965 and, I think, 1973, Westrail imposed no freight rate increases. At that time, Westrail was undergoing a programme of standardisation, and of dieselisation, and the people benefited from these initiatives.

The member for Mt. Marshall made a strong case relating to the increased costs farmers have had to endure. However, no attempt was made to discuss the effect on those costs of freight rates. It is interesting that the freight component of those costs is on the downturn, when compared with 15 years ago. I am sure the member for Mt. Marshall would not claim the same effective reduction in cost over the same period of machinery, superphosphate, fuel, and other commodities. This demonstrates the hypocrisy of his statements, and of some of the interjections.

We have been listening also to the inaccuracies of recent attacks related to the difference between the freights charged for ores and minerals and those charged for other products. It is so easy for those who want to understand, but for those who do not want to understand the facts will never be acknowledged. But I have referred to the facts related to the resources used. The public will understand even if some members do not wish to do so.

This brings me to the topic of contracts for grain. The member for Mt. Marshall was

involved—he showed good sense and goodwill I thought—at a meeting where he put forward a motion which the people at the meeting accepted and which indicated they should enter into contractual arrangements for the cartage of their grain. This has been the policy and philosophy of the National Party.

When I moved that motion at Pithara the people there said they wanted a little longer to consider it. I invited the growers at four meetings I attended to get together and put forward a proposition to Westrail and to negotiate for a contractual arrangement for the cartage of their grain. Nothing happened for a long time.

Mr Bryce: Would the Minister like an extension of time?

Mr RUSHTON: I invited a response from the Farmers' Union, the Pastoralists and Graziers' Association, the Australian Wheat Board, the Grain Pool, and CBH. Representatives of these organisations attended and asked me to chair their meetings.

Mr B. T. Burke: He promised us an inter-party bus trip to the bridge, but we have not seen that.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Watt): Order! Members are having conversations all over the Chamber which is making it most difficult for the Minister to make his speech.

Mr B. T. Burke: That is not what is making it difficult.

Several members interjected.

Mr B. T. Burke: The Minister is still on his feet.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I think it is in all our interests—

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! It is in all our interests for members to try to contain their interjections and cross-Chamber conversations and to allow the Minister to get on with his speech.

Mr RUSHTON: When we have to deal with a rabble it is difficult to have regard for their comments. The grain growers did create two committees—a steering committee and a technical committee. They asked me whether I would chair the steering committee. I said I would prefer not to do so, but if they were not prepared to appoint one of their own people I would do so. They asked me to appoint one of our own people to chair the technical committee, and so Stewart Hicks undertook that responsibility.

Mr B. T. Burke: Who is Stewart Hicks?

Mr RUSHTON: If the member does not know, he should.

Mr B. T. Burke: With the Minister it is always personalities.

Mr RUSHTON: Finally they prepared a report which has been presented to Westrail for a response and it should not be very long before we have an indication of Westrail's findings.

Mr Bryce: Is there no limit?

Mr RUSHTON: At this time, Westrail's indication to me—

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Mr RUSHTON: Westrail's indications are that the proposals would cost something like \$4 million to the taxpayers of this State, but this is something which has to be given further consideration.

Mr B. T. Burke: Politics of filth.

Mr RUSHTON: The member for Mt. Marshall considers we should agree to the recommendation—

Mr Tonkin: Show us the inaccuracies.

Mr RUSHTON: —that the Government and Westrail should carry out the first intention, which is to reduce the freights on the longest haul and that we should carry on with the freights as indicated for up to 200 kilometres and that for distances over 200 kilometres the old freight rates should be charged.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Mr RUSHTON: The member for Mt. Marshall has claimed that by doing this, Westrail would receive more income.

Mr B. T. Burke: Why don't you admit it is the Fraser Government's tightening of funds that has caused the problems?

Mr Young: Stop getting political!

Mr RUSHTON: I do not know how members can consider themselves to be good members when they conduct themselves like rabble.

Mr Blaikie: Hear, hear!

Several members interjected.

Mr B. T. Burke: Mac the knife!

Mr RUSHTON: I have made the point that there has been no case made by the member for Mt. Marshall. To my mind, his motion is an attack which discredits Westrail.

Mr Cowan: That is rubbish.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Mr RUSHTON: The member for Mt. Marshall did not present any facts which would sustain his motion.

Several members interjected.

Mr B. T. Burke: He did his best. Do you want more?

Mr RUSHTON: His motion is damaging to Westrail.

Mr Cowan: It is not.

Mr Stephens: Many members of Westrail are keen to have this inquiry.

Mr B. T. Burke: Call them to the Bar of the House.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Mr RUSHTON: The member for Mt. Marshall has not made out a case to support his motion, a motion which is damaging to Westrail. The proposals could lead to the closure of Westrail's services if they were accepted. I have already suggested to the member for Mt. Marshall, when he does have regard for the figures I gave him, that he should withdraw his motion.

Mr Bryce: The Minister is improving his chances in the leadership stakes. He is obviously declaring himself a candidate.

Mr Sodeman: If he is, are you?

Mr Bryce: This is only an off-the-cuff job.

Mr RUSHTON: The member for Mt. Marshall has publicly supported the Government in the introduction of its freight policy. The actions which have taken place since that time and which started on 14 April—

Mr Cowan: We supported the Government's land freight policy. Can you quote from the Government's land freight policy where you indicated a 20 per cent increase for long haul grain freight rates? That impost was not included in it.

Mr RUSHTON: The member is incorrect.

Mr Cowan: You quote where there was to be an increase in the long haul freight rates!

Mr B. T. Burke: He cannot.

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

Mr RUSHTON: I would like to give the House a very firm understanding that the Government is strongly committed to protect the future of Westrail. The Government believes Westrail has a very positive part to play in our transport system. The Government is making big commitments for the upgrading of Westrail and it is very conscious

of the part Westrail's employees play within our total transport system.

Mr B. T. Burke: It is an election stunt.

Mr RUSHTON: The Government finds it totally unacceptable that the jobs of these employees should be jeopardised by inaccurate and mischievous statements which certainly have been published in country newspapers.

I think the House should in a very serious way contemplate what the results would be of the House carrying such a motion for a Select Committee to inquire into Westrail. I consider it would convey a total lack of confidence in Westrail.

Mr B. T. Burke: In the Minister.

Mr RUSHTON: The motion does not recognise the work done by Westrail or the fact that it is the most efficient rail service in Australia. I strongly believe that we should disallow or not approve of the motion before the House.

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

FUEL AND ENERGY: COMMONWEALTH POLICIES

Appointment of Committee: Motion

MR CARR (Geraldton) [8.10 p.m.]: I move—

- (1) That this House notes that the Commonwealth Government's imposition of a tax to bring the price of crude oil produced in Australia for Australian consumption up to the excessive levels charged by OPEC countries for crude oil has:
 - (a) significantly increased Australia's unacceptably high inflation rate;
 - (b) added heavy cost burdens to industry;
 - (c) fallen hardest on those people least able to afford it;
 - (d) contributed substantially to the Commonwealth's revenue without any corresponding reductions in other tax levels or any corresponding increases in funds for roads, energy conservation, energy research or oil exploration;

and therefore, the House calls on the incoming Commonwealth Government to abandon the policy of charging world prices for crude oil produced from existing Australian fields.

(2) That this House further notes that:

- (a) the existing fuel pricing policy adds to the inequality between country and city living;
- (b) rising fuel costs have pushed all freight and production costs up to the detriment of our rural and export industries more than any other;

and therefore, the House calls on the incoming Commonwealth Government, should it not abandon the parity pricing policy, to investigate the prospects of providing excise relief for country people and export industries to counter the effects of higher freight costs caused by rising fuel prices.

- (3) That this House further notes that the Commonwealth's fuel freight subsidy scheme has had no appreciable effect on the differential between city and country prices and, thereby, breaches the Prime Minister's promise of November, 1977 that "petrol prices in country areas will be reduced to within a cent per litre of the normal city retail price without any increase in the city price as a result," and, therefore, calls on the incoming Commonwealth Government to introduce a realistic fuel price equalisation scheme. This House commits itself to the passage of State legislation to ensure that the benefits of such a scheme are passed on to the ultimate consumers.
- (4) That this House appoint a committee including representatives of all parties to represent the case for the abandonment of oil parity pricing or special consideration for country people and export industries, to the incoming Commonwealth Government.

I have decided to bring this matter before the House because it has become evident to me and the Opposition that the Federal Government's fuel pricing policy is the biggest single disincentive to decentralisation and regional development in Western Australia and Australia generally.

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

Mr Nanovich: That is not so.

Mr CARR: The spiralling prices are affecting all people in non-metropolitan areas of Western Australia and Australia.

Mr Sodeman: Another pre-election stunt.

Mr CARR: I know it is also true that city people are being well and truly hit by high petrol

prices and that it has a serious effect on the economy throughout the nation. However, it is the country people particularly who are most seriously affected by this situation. People individually are being affected. Country industries are being affected adversely and the cost of living is spiralling throughout the country areas of the State.

The State of Western Australia is suffering the most. It is the largest State in Australia. It is the State that has some of the most remote locations in Australia. It is the State in which the industries are mostly export-orientated and have the greatest involvement with primary industry.

Mr Clarko: Do you agree the increases in costs are less than they were under the Whitlam Government?

Mr B. T. Burke: That was five years ago.

Mr CARR: I indicate to the House that I wish to present my case without the interjections from the member for Karrinyup and other members. To summarise the motion, I indicate that there are four parts to it. The first deals specifically with the question of the parity pricing policy by which Australia produced crude oil charged for on world parity prices. That part of the motion seeks an end to that particular policy.

The second part states that if the oil parity pricing policy continues, this House should seek relief for country and export industries from that policy. The third part of the motion deals specifically with what was called at the last election the fuel equalisation scheme, but which has since been renamed the freight subsidy scheme. The motion seeks to have a more effective policy introduced.

The fourth part of the motion seeks to establish a committee involving all parties to make a co-operative approach to the incoming Federal Government of whatever political colour it may be on behalf of Western Australians to see whether we can gain a better deal for our people.

Mr B. T. Burke: Co-operation, not confrontation.

Mr CARR: Firstly, in relation to part one of the motion, I should make sure the House knows what the Opposition is talking about. The Opposition is talking about a policy by which oil produced in Australia and discovered prior to a date in 1976 is sold at world parity prices. This involves most of the oil which is consumed in Australia. Various estimates place Australia as being 70 per cent to 90 per cent self-sufficient in oil, all of it coming from what we call "old" oil; that is, oil discovered prior to 1976 and which is

therefore produced at a cost structure which relates to that period of time.

The production of oil in Australia costs on an average approximately \$2 per barrel. There are various costs in different fields, but the average cost of production is \$2. The Australian producer selling that oil receives on average about \$6 per barrel of oil. The refineries pay \$27.50 per barrel for the oil and of course that price is escalating every time OPEC countries meet and put up their prices. The other \$21 or thereabouts is the oil levy which is paid directly to the Federal Government. That money goes directly to the coffers of the Federal Government.

I have quoted average figures for Australian-produced crude oil, but perhaps I should refer to the Bass Strait situation where most of Australia's oil is produced. The field in Bass Strait was discovered approximately 12 years ago. The cost of production is about \$1 per barrel. In the years 1976-77 the price paid by refineries for that oil was \$4.33 per barrel. The price paid now is \$27.50 per barrel.

Mr Sodeman: To take that a step further, what would be the price once the oil production is nationalised under a Federal ALP policy?

Mr CARR: I did mention that I have no intention of responding to any interjections and particularly interjections as ridiculous as the one from the member for Pilbara.

Several members interjected.

Mr CARR: I think it is important—

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! The member for Pilbara was unable to interest the member for Geraldton in answering his interjection. I had hoped that it might finish at that, but I see that the member for Morley chose to involve himself and I simply ask members of the House to cease interjecting.

Mr CARR: I think it is important to—

Point of Order

Mr SODEMAN: I do not know whether the member opposite meant what he said when he made the statement that I told an untruth. I ask him to withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Order! I simply ask that members not use language of that nature and I ask members not to indulge in cross-Chamber interjections.

Debate Resumed

Mr CARR: I was about to relate the extent of the oil levy with regard to the Australian tax

burden. In the current financial year the estimate is that \$3 500 million will be the amount of that oil levy paid to the Australian Consolidated Revenue Fund. That is in fact more money being paid this year in fuel tax than was paid by all taxation only 10 years ago. We find that the levy is equivalent to 12 per cent of the entire Federal Budget at the present time. That increase is large when compared with the figure of \$250 million only four years ago.

Malcolm Fraser was the man who called for an end to the great tax rip-off. In reality, he is the person presiding over the highest levy of tax ever charged in peace time in Australia.

I wish to emphasise the point that the controversy relates only to what we call "old" oil; that is, oil discovered prior to 1976.

All oil imported into Australia is charged at world parity prices. There is agreement between the Government and the Opposition, and to my knowledge there is agreement amongst all political parties that new oil—oil not yet discovered—will be charged at world parity prices.

In 1975 the ALP Federal Government announced that it desired to move to parity pricing for new oil; that is, oil undiscovered at that stage.

The reason I make that point is to emphasise that as far as the encouragement of exploration is concerned there is no difference between the price to be paid for oil by the present Government and the price to be paid by an ALP Government because both parties are committed to parity pricing for undiscovered oil.

The Prime Minister has made a rather curious claim that the Iraq-Iran war justifies his policy on the basis that because there may be some shortage of supply in the Middle East OPEC will put the price up and this will lead to more exploration. That is nonsense because, as I have just said, both parties have a policy which encourages oil exploration.

I believe the Iraq-Iran war has a contrary effect. After OPEC price rises, under the present Government policy the Australian price for "old" oil will be increased as well as the prices for "new" oil in Australia. Under the ALP there would not be the same effect.

Mr Sodeman: What would our figure be?

Mr CARR: The estimated figure for Australian self-sufficiency in oil is 70 per cent to 90 per cent.

Mr Sodeman: On-the-shelf oil?

Mr CARR: Let us look at the impact of this policy of the Fraser Government. We have seen the price of petrol at the bowser rise from 15c a litre to 36c a litre. I realise prices vary in different locations. Some areas are paying more than 36c. However, that figure means that in December 1975 the average family car could be filled with petrol for \$11. Now, the cost is approximately \$25 for an average family car. Not only has the price of petrol more than doubled, but the prices for distillate and fuel oil have also more than doubled. Prices for Avgas and LPG have more than trebled during the five years of the Fraser Government.

Last year the tax bill for fuel cost Australian families an average of \$700 per family for their fuel bill. The estimates are that this year the cost for fuel alone for the average Australian family will be \$900; that is, the \$3 500 million figure has been divided by something like four million families throughout Australia.

It has also been estimated that the Federal Government receives something like 83c every time the price of oil rises by \$1. It is clear that we are looking at a situation which is causing an enormous impact on all Australians. It is also highly inflationary and the tax on oil in the last financial year was estimated to have caused approximately 3 per cent of the increase to the Consumer Price Index.

It is interesting to note that this Federal Government was previously totally preoccupied with inflation. That Government stated that inflation was the most important issue before all Australians and in that way justified its actions in November 1975. It said it would bring inflation down to 5 per cent. It did bring inflation down to the vicinity of 9 per cent, but inflation is now in the vicinity of 11 per cent and rising. It is estimated that inflation will be 13 per cent by the end of the year.

The election was set for 18 October instead of 25 October to avoid the CPI figures which will be available on 22 October. We have a very inflationary situation and it seems that whilst in the past, the Federal Government talked about the importance of inflation, the current strategy seems to be that inflation is okay, so long as another country in the world has a higher inflation rate.

No Government in the past has had a perfect record with regard to inflation, but no other Government has so deliberately embarked on a single policy which has been so directly

inflationary. It has sent shock waves through the economy and throughout the country.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr CARR: Inflation has turned upwards and interest rates are high. Pressure has been applied for interest rates to rise again.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! I do not know whether the members of the House have observed that in the gallery there are a number of boy scouts, girl guides, and the like. I would like members to display to our visitors a more stable degree of talk than has been present in the last few minutes.

Mr CARR: There is pressure for further rises in interest rates and unemployment is very high. It is clear to me that the economy of this country needs a chance to settle to absorb these recent shocks.

The ALP policy which has been put forward in the current election provides for a chance to settle and absorb the shocks of the 1978 Budget.

Mr Watt: Tell me how you came to the figure of \$900.

Mr CARR: We are looking at \$3 500 million being paid in oil levies and approximately four million Australian families divided into that figure produces \$900 per family. If the member wishes to proceed with the matter, he should persuade the Premier to extend the debate after nine o'clock when private members' business ends.

As well as the inflationary effect of this policy we find that considerable costs are added to industry. The policy causes unemployment and has slowed economic growth through the reduced profitability of many companies. Export-orientated industries rely very heavily on fuel to freight their products to markets. Hence, as a result of this tax they are less competitive internationally.

This tax hits hardest at the low-income earners. It is a regressive tax because the same price is paid for petrol by everyone, irrespective of income. Therefore, a person on a lower income pays a larger percentage of his income in this fuel tax.

I can say one good thing about the Federal Government in regard to this policy—only one—and that is, in the main, the Federal Government has been honest in not attempting to disguise this fuel tax. It has not denied that it is a taxing mechanism.

Mr McIver: It is a secretive tax.

Mr CARR: At least the Government is prepared to say it is a tax by which it is raising revenue. I mentioned that \$3 500 million has been taken from the motorists and it is important that this money is returned to them. The original fuel levy tax when introduced many years ago was intended to fund roads.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I ask the member for Avon and the member for Pilbara to desist their cross-Chamber exchange.

Several members interjected.

Mr CARR: I am sorry I must shout to be heard above the interjections. As I said, the \$3 500 million has not been returned to motorists. The fuel levy was intended to be a means of collecting funds which were to be returned in the construction of roads. That has not happened because there has not been any extra expenditure on roads. Extra expenditure on roads is desperately needed. One example is a new Mandurah Bridge and there are many other places in the north of Western Australia which require such expenditure.

Money should be spent on public transport, and this tax should be a means whereby the travelling public can be assisted. None of this money is being spent on oil exploration either. The \$3 500 million collected by the Government is not being spent on oil exploration.

In addition to that, a very negligible amount is being spent on energy research. The amount spent on research into alternative energy sources is only peanuts. As for the extra profits of oil companies, very little of that is being spent on exploration. Most of that money is being expatriated back to foreign investors.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I prevail upon the member for Avon to desist from cross-Chamber conversation. I ask him to have some regard for the problem at present being confronted by the *Hansard* reporter, with one member shouting in her right ear and another shouting in her left ear, and the member for Geraldton trying to get over that.

Mr CARR: I was speaking about the amount of money being spent on oil exploration in Australia. Much has been said about the encouragement of oil exploration. Here are some figures. In 1972 the number of exploratory wells in Australia was 100, including 38 offshore; in 1978 the number was down to 52 exploratory wells; in 1979 there were 51 exploratory wells including 21 offshore. If that is a good effort in oil exploration, let us compare it with another

country: Canada has between 2 000 and 3 000 exploratory wells at the present time.

Mr P. V. Jones: What about the price of petrol in Canada?

Mr CARR: Clearly, the Government should abandon this ill-advised parity pricing policy for old oil. The Opposition is committed to do so.

Several members interjected.

Mr CARR: That of course applies to the 70 to 90 per cent of Australian consumption produced in Australia. A Labor Government will adjust the price of oil six-monthly in accordance with the CPI or the OPEC price, whichever is the lower. If that policy had been in effect since July 1979, petrol would be 6c a litre or \$3.78 a tank cheaper than it is at the present time. It offers not only cheaper oil but also cheaper LPG, diesel, heating oil, petrol, and Avgas.

Mr Sodeman: Where is that?

Mr CARR: Under the policy announced by the Australian Labor Party for the forthcoming Federal election. The price would be cheaper than it is under the present Government.

Mr P. V. Jones: Import or OPEC, whichever is the cheaper?

Several members interjected.

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

Mr CARR: I am dealing in particular with country people.

Mr T. H. Jones: See whether the farmers support your viewpoint.

The SPEAKER: Order! There are far too many interjections. If they continue I will have to take some action.

Mr CARR: I was saying the effect on the country is most severe and it is the biggest single deterrent to decentralisation in this State. It adds to the inequality between city and country people. Country people have always been disadvantaged but this policy increases the disadvantages and affects all aspects of country life adversely. It affects industries and the travel of country people throughout the State. Let us look firstly at industries in the country areas of the State.

Mr P. V. Jones: Which affects the country, the policy or the pricing?

Mr CARR: The policy causes the high prices.

Mr P. V. Jones: No, it does not. Is it the policy or the distribution of funds which affects the country? If you are talking about the distribution of funds, we are also critical of that.

Mr CARR: Most major country industries are large users of fuel. They are the farming industry, the mining industry, the fishing industry, and very importantly the tourist industry. It is interesting to note the Australian Farmers' Federation has in the last couple of days come out with a statement that it will support no particular party in the forthcoming election. A body which has traditionally been anti-Labor, with a national president (Mr Eckersley) who was particularly hostile to the Labor Government in the period 1972 to 1975, now says it will not support any particular party. Clearly, it has been affected by the policy. It affects transport and the costs to primary producers in Western Australia.

Mr P. V. Jones: We agree with that.

Mr CARR: Transport costs affect people in two ways: firstly, getting the product to the market; and secondly, in transporting machinery, fertiliser, and other items to the work place, as well as the cost of food, household items, and other essential items. It is not surprising that farmers are most unsympathetic towards the present Government.

Let us have a look at fuel prices in the farming areas of the State. Since November 1975 motor spirit has increased from about 13c a litre to in the vicinity of 36c a litre; Avgas has increased from 15c to 42c in March this year; distillate has increased from 7.7c to 24.8c; and all of those prices are still rising.

When talking about the effect of the policy on farming industries, it is interesting to refer to a piece of research done by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics which published a paper in November 1979. The title of it is "Economic Implications of Higher Oil Prices for the Rural Sector", and the authors were Stoekel, Paterson, and Fliedner. The paper showed the decrease in net income due to the 1978 policy in isolation. The decrease was not due to any other factor but the changes announced and contained in the 1978 Budget. According to the calculations of the BAE those changes will have the following effect on farm incomes in the 1979-80 financial year: the incomes of beef producers will be reduced by 3.4 per cent; cropping enterprises by 3.9 per cent; sheep farmers by 4.4 per cent; horticulturists by 7.7 per cent; and dairy farmers by 8.3 per cent. One could conclude from those figures that it is the horticulturists and the dairy farmers, the rural people on the lower levels of income, who suffer the most.

Another study by the Impact team which was presented to a seminar in Canberra in February 1979 dealt with the effect of the policy on the

fishing industry and showed that it was far more severely affected than any other subsector of agriculture or primary industry.

Mr P. V. Jones: We have been publicly critical of that. So get back to the policy.

Mr CARR: I gathered from the noise a while ago that there may have been agreement with the policy.

In Western Australia certainly the cost of production has been vastly increased. We have here a fisheries operation which is very energy hungry. Most members will be familiar with the system of catching rock lobsters, where a boat may need to steam for five or six hours, using petrol or diesel all the time, pulling pots, revving, reversing, and accelerating, and obviously using up a large amount of energy.

Mining is another industry which is obviously very energy hungry, both in the extraction and the transport of the mineral products. Tourism is a vitally important industry to many Western Australian country towns, especially those which do not have alternative industries in the traditional sense. Last summer was a slower tourist season than usual, partly due to cheaper overseas air fares but largely due to high fuel prices. The tourist industry in this State cannot afford further difficulties.

This policy has been harmful not only to farmers, miners, fishermen, and so on but to all country people, because all country people have to use their private motorcars. There is no viable alternative to the private motorcar in country areas. Even in those towns which have a public transport system, transport needs to be supplemented by the private family car. That applies to all country people. It is worth noting that country people generally need to travel greater distances for their normal work or recreational requirements, and they often need bigger cars because of the road conditions and the distances travelled in the country.

Air services are another essential part of country living, and once again we notice that the price of Avgas has increased by a greater amount than most other petroleum products.

Mr P. V. Jones: You have not answered the question whether it is the parity pricing policy or the retailing policy.

Mr CARR: The Minister can reply to the debate.

Mr P. V. Jones: Which is the policy you are criticising at the moment?

Mr CARR: I am dealing with the parity pricing policy, the general level of prices.

Mr P. V. Jones: Not the disbursement of funds?

Mr CARR: Paragraph (3) of my motion deals with the fuel equalisation scheme, and I will come to that in a few moments. At present I am dealing with paragraphs (1) and (2), which deal with the oil parity pricing policy and the higher level of prices in country areas.

The ABS figures for food prices up to 1979 have shown a widening gap between city and country prices since 1974. It seems to me that the gap between city and country prices will become more pronounced as the present high petrol pricing policy flows through. Clearly, it will affect every essential item in country areas in this State. It affects everyone in the country. It especially affects the people in the country who are less well off.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has also done a survey of household expenditure. An analysis of it shows that rural households in the lowest stratification of income spent nearly 10 per cent of their income on petrol, oil, and lubricants. The corresponding national figure is 3 per cent. So clearly this policy penalises the lowest income country households more than three times as much as the community in general.

Members will notice in paragraph (2) of my motion a proposal for fuel excise relief in particular for export industries and rural industries. This is not a new policy. The ALP has made similar submissions many times before. The Leader of the National Country Party should recognise some of the words used because they were taken directly from the National Country Party policy at the last election. I will quote from the policy objectives of the National Country Party prior to the last election, which said under the heading "Fuel and Energy"—

Fuel is subject to Federal excise. We believe that the time has come for investigation of the prospects of providing excise relief for country people as a means of counteracting the inequality between country and city living. Our rural export industries are heavily dependent on transport within Australia and to overseas markets. Rising fuel costs have pushed all freight costs up, to the detriment of those export industries more than any other. Excise relief seems more than justifiable under the circumstances.

Further on it says—

We will... Explore prospects for fuel excise relief for export industries (to counter the effects of higher freight costs caused by rising fuel prices).

I am therefore pleased that what is being said in my motion has the support of the National Country Party, at least at State level. That policy announcement was not well received by Mr Anthony, but it is good to know the National Country Party in this State is thinking along the same lines as we are.

I now turn to the fuel equalisation scheme. This is the scheme about which the Prime Minister at the last Federal election made this promise—

... petrol prices in country areas will be reduced to within a cent per litre of the normal city retail price without any increase in the city price as a result...

I emphasise the words "within a cent per litre of the normal city retail price".

Mr Harman: Who said that?

Mr CARR: The Prime Minister said that. By the time that legislation was introduced in the Federal Parliament in 1978, the fuel equalisation scheme came to be called the freight subsidy scheme. A number of places throughout Australia were given some degree of subsidy, but every port in Australia was not given a subsidy, and those towns which did receive a subsidy received only a small one. This led to a situation where the vast majority of Western Australian country motorists received no benefit at all; and even those who did receive a benefit received only a very small one.

Mr McIver: It only subsidised the oil companies' subsidy, not the retail price.

Mr CARR: The member for Avon is right. The Government is spending \$123 million on this policy this year, and it is simply not getting through to the people in country areas. It is being stopped along the way; be it by the oil companies, be it by the wholesale distributors, or be it by the petrol retailers, somewhere along the line that amount of \$123 million this year is being taken up because it is achieving nothing. It is not being passed on.

Any member who has been in country areas and looked at a petrol bowser price will know that the money is not being passed on. Surveys indicate this. It is a cheap trick on the part of the Federal Government to pretend that it is fulfilling its election promise when clearly it is not. I refer to the surveys which I mentioned earlier, and to a survey conducted by the Pastoralists and Graziers Association—again not a traditional supporter of the Australian Labor Party. A report in the *Western Farmer* of 19 June 1980 under the heading, "Fuel price gap rises in country" stated—

PETROL prices in agricultural areas are up to 25 per cent higher than the cheapest available in the Perth metropolitan area.

And some remote north-west service stations are charging 30 per cent more.

The report then goes on to detail a number of prices charged at various country locations. The prices quoted relate to June, and are prior to the latest increase which occurred on 1 July. Therefore, to some extent they are out of date, but they certainly demonstrate the considerable difference between city and country petrol prices. I quote further as follows—

PGA executive officer Graham Maisey said the figures showed no pattern, indicating transport was not the price-setting factor.

Federal Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs Vic Garland admitted this week that the Commonwealth subsidy could not guarantee that country petrol prices would stay within 0.44c a litre of city prices.

The Government has spent \$123 million subsidising country transport costs.

What has gone wrong with the system? I think we all know, and it was well put in an article which appeared in the *Weekend News* on 12 April in an article entitled "Kitney's Canberra" in which that journalist said—

The problem is that the subsidy is being paid to the oil companies and the wholesale distributors, rather than direct to the consumer.

In very many cases the oil companies and the distributors are not passing the subsidy on.

That should not be surprising, because the ALP foresaw that problem in 1978 when the legislation was first introduced. I refer members to the debate in the House of Representatives on that occasion. The Federal member for Fremantle raised a number of questions with the then Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs (Mr Fife). The member for Fremantle queried what provision was made to ensure that the subsidy would be passed on to the ultimate consumer. When one looks at the remarks made in reply to him by the then Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs, one sees the problem was already in the offing at that time. I quote some extracts from the Minister's reply, as follows—

Claims for subsidy may be made only by oil companies and other distributors registered under the scheme...

Further on the Minister said—

Before such distributors can be registered they will be required... to enter into an agreement with the Commonwealth that they will pass on to the re-seller the full benefit of subsidy...

So there we have the Minister saying the subsidy will be passed on to the reseller and not to the consumer. Again I quote Mr Fife as follows—

...the Commonwealth does not have price fixing powers. These are powers that are exercised by the States...

Again he emphasised that it is the reseller to whom the subsidy is passed on. That exchange in the House of Representatives was followed up in this House in May 1978 when complementary legislation was carried in this Parliament. I queried the same point with the then Minister for Fuel and Energy—the present Minister for Works—and I quote from his answer—

...the member knows full well that if anything the competition between retailers is more than the usually accepted level under normal trading conditions today.

I did not know that then, and I do not know it now. The Minister also said—

If the member for Geraldton honestly thinks that through this arrangement... the consumers will not benefit, I invite him when he sees such a case to inform me.

Well, there are thousands of cases in every town in this State and if I were to fill out an individual complaint in respect of every consumer who is not receiving the benefit, the Government would not be able to fit the complaints into the Superannuation Building. The Minister went on to say—

... I can assure the member, as I have assured another member, that this Government will not introduce price control.

So clearly this Government is washing its hands of the responsibility to see that the subsidy is passed on to the consumer. I have taken up the matter again recently with the present Minister for Consumer Affairs in question 386 of this session in which I asked—

What action does the State Government propose to take to ensure that the benefits of the subsidy are passed on to the consumers?

The Minister replied—

No action is necessary since the benefits of the subsidy are already passed on to consumers.

That is not what the survey carried out by the Pastoralists and Graziers Association found out.

Again, in question 708 I asked the same Minister—

...will he please detail the information which enables him to conclude that "the benefits of the subsidy are already passed on to consumers"?

His answer was—

The oil companies and their registered distributors are required to reduce the passed on freight charges by the amount of the differential.

The Minister for Consumer Affairs in this House may think that, but in fact the Federal Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs (Mr Garland) does not think it. I quote from a Press release of 9 April 1980 issued in Canberra by that Minister—

Mr Garland said that the Government expected retailers to pass on the benefits to consumers.

"I want to make it clear that the Commonwealth Government does not have control over the retail price of petrol," the Minister said.

So clearly we have a situation where there is no enforcing provision to ensure that this subsidy is passed on, and that is one of the key points of paragraph (3) of the motion. The Government claims now that several factors affect the price of petrol in country areas. The Premier and other Ministers have said that a number of factors affect the price. It is interesting to note that in fact the present Minister for Fuel and Energy expressed that point of view recently when he was reported as follows in the "News of the North" supplement of *The West Australian* on 11 September—

The Minister for Fuel and Energy, Mr Jones, has blamed bigger retail mark-ups and not freight charges for higher petrol costs in the country than the metropolitan area.

It is interesting to note also that the Minister is out of step with the policy of his own party at the last election.

Mr P. V. Jones: That is why I asked whether you are talking about the retail pricing policy and not the retail pricing parity.

Mr CARR: Both are contained in the motion.

Mr P. V. Jones: I know, but they are two different things.

Mr CARR: I am aware of that, but I am talking about the fuel equalisation scheme at the moment. I quote the policy of the National Country Party as follows—

We are aware that the Federal Government has taken the first steps in a programme designed to equalise fuel prices by reducing the freight differential which is responsible for most of the cost disparity...

So it is curious that we have a situation in which the National Country Party policy document says the price differential is caused mostly by freight, and now we have Country Party Ministers saying, along with Government members, that it is no longer caused by freight but the retail price mark-up.

Mr P. V. Jones: There is a freight component in it.

Mr CARR: So we find the outcome of what I have been quoting is that in fact the Government is not prepared to introduce legislation to force the subsidy to be passed on. Instead it relies on competition in the market. That might be all right in an ideal or perfect market, but we do not have that in this situation. We have communities in some places where there is only one service station; and also we have a most unfair factor being introduced by fuel companies which sell fuel at different wholesale prices. I think it is well known that if there are several petrol outlets situated close to one another in the metropolitan area and one of them starts to discount the price of petrol, the fuel companies associated with the other outlets start to supply fuel to them at a lower wholesale price so that they can keep their share of the market or, hopefully—from their point of view—increase it.

However, who pays when an oil company sells fuel at a lower price? The oil company does not reduce its profit; obviously it charges someone else more for fuel. Quite clearly country service stations in many cases are sold petrol at wholesale prices which are higher than the retail price charged in the metropolitan area. This is because the oil companies are prepared to allow country people to subsidise city people in that way. Clearly, we have a most unsatisfactory situation from the point of view of country people.

Let us now consider the scheme in summary. We have the Commonwealth Government which says it does not have the power to see that the amount of \$123 million this year is passed on. We have the State Government which does have the power to see that money is passed on, but which will not act to use its power. We have the country motorist who continues to pay more as the gap widens between city and country prices. We have oil companies and/or distributors and/or service stations which are not passing the benefit on to the consumer. To cap all that off, we have the

Federal Government pouring \$123 million down the drain this year, to no effect.

I turn finally to paragraph (4) of the motion, which deals with the proposal to appoint a committee. This is intended to be a constructive suggestion; it seeks the co-operation of all parties on behalf of the Western Australian people. I know it may sound a little naive to ask for all parties to co-operate, but I do believe there are members of all parties in this Parliament who are prepared to put their electors first. I believe co-operation between the parties is possible. Other politicians in this State have also previously expressed support for co-operation. I refer again to the Leader of the National Country Party in an article reported in *The West Australian* on 29 September 1978 under the heading, "Old seeks unity on rural problem". I quote as follows—

The parliamentary leader of the National Country Party, Mr R. C. Old, yesterday appealed for unity among politicians to combat rising rural costs in WA.

He called on MPs to forget political rivalries and fight the problem together.

At that time he was speaking specifically about the fuel equalisation scheme. I quote again as follows from the same article—

The NCP would welcome support from the Labor and Liberal Parties on the moves.

Members of the Opposition are happy to join with members of the Liberal Party or the National Country Party or anyone else in this Parliament to help the people of Western Australia deal with the problem of high petrol prices in the country. We hope the House will agree that it is appropriate to take the type of action I have outlined and that a committee of this Parliament be established to prepare a case to present to the incoming Federal Government, of whatever colour it may be.

The SPEAKER: Order! I point out to the member for Geraldton that it is almost nine o'clock, at which time private members' business must cease. He has three courses open to him: he may seek leave to continue his remarks; he may resume his seat and I will put the question; or he may conclude his speech, resume his seat, and allow another member to move for the adjournment of the debate.

Mr CARR: I need only about another 30 seconds, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: That is about as much time as you have.

Mr CARR: I need only sufficient time to conclude by saying that I hope the State

Government will see fit to support the motion so that we may have a committee of all parties of this House representing the Western Australian people on this matter.

MR H. D. EVANS (Warren—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [8.59 p.m.]: I second the motion.

Leave to Continue Speech

Mr H. D. EVANS: In so doing, Mr Speaker, I seek leave to continue my remarks at a future date.

Leave granted.

Debate thus adjourned.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Council; and, on motion by Mr O'Connor (Deputy Premier), read a first time.

Second Reading

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to the second reading.

MR O'CONNOR (Mt. Lawley—Deputy Premier) [9.01 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Bill is to bring licences issued under the Wildlife Conservation Act relating to flora conservation into line with those which are issued in respect of fauna under the wildlife conservation regulations. This is in relation to the duration of licences and the waiving of fees.

Amendments to the principal Act in 1976 and 1979, which were proclaimed in April this year, made provision for the conservation of flora and the control of the commercial flora industry to be incorporated in the Wildlife Conservation Act, 1950. These provisions were so drafted that the issuing of licences was provided for in the Act and not the regulations, and state that the licences may be issued "for such period or periods as are so specified". The view was held that those words meant the licences could be issued for a full year and for any other periods less than a year. However, advice from Parliamentary Counsel is to the effect that the word "period" refers only to parts of a year.

It is usual practice for other licences under the wildlife conservation regulations to be issued for a period of one year, renewable thereafter upon payment of the prescribed fee, except in those instances where a shorter finite period is

appropriate. Combined with the need to renew licences annually, and pay an annual fee, is a requirement for a return to be provided giving details of wildlife taken under the authority of the licence so that the extent of cropping, taking, etc. can be monitored. Without an annual renewal system it very quickly becomes uncertain as to the number of licensees still active, or those who have withdrawn from the industry.

In the regulations, the Minister is empowered to waive fees in those cases where he considers it appropriate. A similar provision is proposed in this Bill for fees to be waived for licences issued under the Act.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Barnett.

NATIONAL COMPANIES AND SECURITIES COMMISSION (STATE PROVISIONS) BILL

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Council; and, on motion by Mr O'Connor (Deputy Premier), read a first time.

Second Reading

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to the second reading.

MR O'CONNOR (Mt. Lawley—Deputy Premier) [9.04 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill represents the first legislative step towards giving effect to the State's obligations under a formal agreement executed by all States and the Commonwealth on 22 December 1978, to implement the proposed national scheme. A copy of the formal agreement appears in the schedule to the Bill.

It follows action taken during the 1979 session of Parliament when holding legislation was passed in this State pending the adoption of a national scheme for co-operative legislation by the Commonwealth and States to establish a uniform system of law and administration regulating companies and the securities industry in the six States and Territories. The first practical result of the formal agreement was the setting up of a Ministerial Council comprising Ministers of each of the six States and the Commonwealth. The functions of the Ministerial Council, outlined by subclause 21(1) of the agreement, are to consider and keep under review the formulation and operation of the substantive companies and securities legislation provided for under the

agreement and to exercise general oversight and control over the implementation and operation of the scheme.

The Ministerial Council is responsible for approving all the legislation that is required to give effect to the co-operative scheme before that legislation is introduced into the various Australian Parliaments. The Ministerial Council has arranged for the formation of an executive body called the National Companies and Securities Commission or, more commonly, the NCSC, which, subject to directions from the Ministerial Council, is to have responsibility in all States and participating Territories for the administration of the substantive companies and securities laws which will apply under the scheme.

Pursuant to the formal agreement, the Commonwealth in 1979 passed an Act in terms approved by the Ministerial Council which established the National Companies and Securities Commission. That Act was proclaimed and came into force on 1 February 1980. It gave the NCSC powers in relation to the Australian Capital Territory, and each State will have to pass complementary legislation to give similar powers to the NCSC in relation to State law and the workings of companies and the securities industry in the State. This Bill is intended to achieve that purpose for Western Australia.

The next step in the legislation under the scheme will be to establish new substantive laws for companies and the securities industry which will be uniform and reciprocally enforceable in each jurisdiction. Each of those Acts will be first enacted in the Federal Parliament with application to the ACT. It is then intended to apply those Acts as laws of the respective States by means of application Bills passed through the State Parliaments, making such changes only in those Acts as are required to reflect local legal and administrative requirements. The NCSC's substantive powers and functions will be derived from those Commonwealth and State laws; but they will be administered by the State authorities operating under powers and functions delegated from the national commission.

Subclause 37(1) of the formal agreement provides that to the maximum extent practicable the administration of the substantive legislation shall be delegated to the State administrations. Section 9 of the Commonwealth Act establishing the NCSC requires the NCSC to comply with this provision and the other provisions of that agreement that apply. The Ministerial Council has the power to give directions to the NCSC.

The Bill now before the House recognises the role of the national commission in administering the substantive Western Australian laws relating to companies and securities which are to form part of the co-operative scheme legislation. The Bill will empower the NCSC to carry out functions to be given to it by the substantive Western Australian laws, and also provides for the administration of the NCSC in relation to local circumstances when it is carrying out those functions. The powers, the functions, and the administrative provisions set out in the Bill parallel those contained in the Commonwealth Act, but expressly extend those provisions to matters subject to the substantive Western Australian laws.

The commission has five members, three of whom, including the chairman, are full-time. The appointments were made by the Governor General on the nomination of the Ministerial Council.

Section 19 of the Commonwealth Act establishing the NCSC provides for a register to be kept of the financial interests of members and staff of the commission. By section 49 of that Act and clause 17 of this Bill, NCSC members and staff and State delegates performing functions under the NCSC Act are required to notify the commission of their interest in any securities and of the fact of any recent previous employment by, or association with, any person or body corporate that relates to matters which they are required to consider in the course of their duty.

Both the Commonwealth Act and the Bill give to members of the national commission the same protection and immunity in carrying out their functions in relation to a hearing as judges of the High Court have in carrying out their duties and to persons appearing and witnesses at such hearings the protection they would receive in proceedings in the High Court. This standard has been selected to provide a uniform provision throughout Australia.

The Bill allows the national commission to hold hearings in public or in private in order to perform any of its functions under the substantive State laws, and the delegation provisions allow for those hearings to be conducted by State officers. Provision has also been made for the interchange of staff between the NCSC and State administrations.

The Bill provides for the Western Australian Commissioner for Corporate Affairs and his officers to act as delegates to carry out the NCSC's powers and duties in the State, and obliges the delegates to carry out the directions of

the NCSC. The seemingly wide powers of delegation will, in practice, be limited by the overseeing responsibility of the Ministerial Council. Delegates will be under the same duties of secrecy and disclosure of interests that apply to members of the national commission.

The legislation also takes account of the fact that the commission is subject to joint State-Commonwealth control. Under subclause 42(1) of the formal agreement the States will contribute 50 per cent of the costs and expenses of the NCSC apportioned between the States in proportion to the estimated population of each State as at 31 December in each year. As the State will be contributing towards the cost of the national commission, the Bill makes provision for the submission of annual accounts of the NCSC to the Parliament of the State.

Similar State provisions Bills are being, or are to be, introduced into the Parliaments of all the other States. The implementation of the scheme as a whole cannot yet be settled due to the many technical aspects of this field of the law.

This present Bill is required to establish a proper basis in law in Western Australia for the commencement of the scheme proposals; but Parliament will later have the opportunity to consider each of the application Bills appropriate to the substantive elements of the law to be applied under the scheme.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Davies (Leader of the Opposition).

FOREIGN JUDGMENTS (RECIPROCAL ENFORCEMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Council; and, on motion by Mr O'Connor (Deputy Premier), read a first time.

Second Reading

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to the second reading.

MR O'CONNOR (Mt. Lawley—Deputy Premier) [9.15 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The Foreign Judgments (Reciprocal Enforcement) Act of 1963-1965 permits judgments of courts from other countries to be enforced in the Supreme Court of Western Australia.

The Act contains a specific exception that it does not apply in respect of charges, taxes, fines, and other penalties.

Its principal purpose is to facilitate the recovery of judgment debts in private litigation; for example, in cases of breach of contract.

The Standing Committee of Attorneys General, which includes the Attorney General of each State and the Commonwealth, has given consideration to a request by Papua New Guinea that the legislative scheme for the reciprocal enforcement of judgments between the Commonwealth and the States on the one hand and Papua New Guinea on the other, be extended to include enforcement of Papua New Guinea revenue judgments.

In its submission that reciprocal enforcement of judgments legislation should be extended to include such revenue judgments, Papua New Guinea stated that a large percentage of persons who evade Papua New Guinea tax are Australian citizens who absconded to Australia without meeting their tax obligations.

At the last meeting of the Standing Committee, all Attorneys General present indicated that they would be seeking their respective Governments' approval to introduce into their Parliaments, legislation to allow the reciprocal enforcement of revenue judgments from Papua New Guinea.

Because of the close bond which has developed between Australia and Papua New Guinea, the Western Australian Government agreed to participate in the proposal, which in effect will make, in relation to Papua New Guinea, a specific exception to the general rule against enforcement of foreign revenue judgments, and allow Papua New Guinea and Western Australia to have reciprocal arrangements.

The legislation does not at present permit enforcement in the Supreme Court of Western

Australia of any revenue judgments obtained in the courts of overseas countries.

It is not presently intended to amend the Act to make provision for the enforcement of foreign revenue judgments in Western Australia other than those of Papua New Guinea.

The draft Bill proposes that judgments for money payable in respect of tax payable under the laws of Papua New Guinea relating to taxes on income should be enforceable in the Western Australian Supreme Court.

It makes provision for two exceptions as to the type of revenue judgments which can be enforced—firstly, penalty tax and, secondly, tax declared by the Governor not to be properly a tax on income for the purposes of this legislation.

In essence then, the Bill relates only to taxes on income and does not include other revenues such as stamp duty and rates.

The Standing Committee has been informed that complementary legislation to enable Australian revenue judgments to be enforced in Papua New Guinea will be prepared and introduced into the Papua New Guinea Parliament in due course.

Being reciprocal legislation, its eventual implementation will need to await the passage of similar legislation in the other States of Australia, the Commonwealth, and Papua New Guinea.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Davies (Leader of the Opposition).

STOCK (BRANDS AND MOVEMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

Returned

Bill returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 9.18 p.m.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

EDUCATION: PRE-SCHOOL

Four-year-olds

923. Mr WILSON, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) What is the amount collected from the levy on four-year-olds attending pre-school centres, for each year since it was introduced?
- (2) What is the purpose of this levy as it is now applied?
- (3) To what specific purpose is the amount collected from the levy, applied?
- (4) What proportion of the funding for the specific area referred to in (3) is represented by the levy amount?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) Information requested is not available. It would require considerable search through records dating back to administration by the Pre-School Board, and it is not considered that this is warranted.

- (2) to (4) Salary costs paid on behalf of pre-school centres are largely for five-year-olds. The block grant funding from the Commonwealth was based on children in the age group one year below school entry.

Where pre-school centres are able to admit four-year-olds, for which the State is required to find the total salary costs, parents are expected to recognise their privilege and share a small fraction of the costs by means of this levy which at most totals \$32 per annum per child.

The salary costs for a pre-school centre consisting of 50 four-year-olds would amount to \$17 000 per annum and the total levy to \$1 600.

EDUCATION: PRE-PRIMARY AND PRE-SCHOOL CENTRES

Grants

924. Mr WILSON, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Are both pre-school and pre-primary centres eligible to apply for needy child grants and needy kindergarten grants?

- (2) What are the conditions on which such grants are made available and how are they funded?

- (3) Which pre-school centres and pre-primary centres are currently receiving—

- (a) needy child grants; and
- (b) needy kindergarten grants?

- (4) How many of each grants were approved in each of the past five years?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) Yes. Needy child grants and needy kindergarten grants are available for pre-primary centres and community-based pre-schools.

- (2) The grants, which come entirely from State funds, are made available on the recommendations of regional early childhood personnel. Grants are available in respect of five-year-olds and in the case of special placements for children one year younger.

- (3) and (4) The information requested requires substantial research which is not considered to be warranted.

ROADS

MRD: Carnarvon Employees

934. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) How many Main Roads Department employees have been shifted from Carnarvon to Sandfire?
- (2) What total number of employees are engaged on the Sandfire work?
- (3) What is expected to be the duration of their stay?
- (4) What project are they to be used on when the Sandfire job is completed?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) 27 MRD employees and six private plant operators.
- (2) Varies, but about 70.
- (3) Until mid-December.
- (4) As presently planned, mainly on the North West Coastal Highway south of Carnarvon.

TRANSPORT: BUSES*Perth-Pinjarra: Pensioners*

935. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Is it fact that the bus fare for pensioners from Pinjarra to Perth has increased from \$2.70 to \$3.60?
- (2) Has the Government given consideration to private concessions for pensioners living in the country who need to travel to Perth for medical attention or other matters?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) Yes, but this applies to return tickets only which are now double the single journey fare. Single ticket fares have not been increased.
- (2) All pensioners are entitled to unlimited 50 per cent concession rate travel and one free return ticket per year.

HEALTH*Handicapped Persons: Parking Bays*

936. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister for Urban Development and Town Planning

Further to question 792 of 1980 relevant to disabled persons car parking facilities, will she advise the results of her examination into whether bays can be set aside in car parks for disabled people when they are received?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

This matter has been pursued since it was raised in the earlier question. I will be happy to let the Leader of the Opposition know what has been done just as soon as it is opportune to do so.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS*Hire-purchase: Suspension of Payments*

937. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Minister for Consumer Affairs:

- (1) What is his department's policy in respect of the granting of applications for suspension of hire-purchase repayments?
- (2) (a) For what period can suspensions be granted initially; and
(b) do the criteria change in respect of any further suspensions sought?

(3) Is there any written code of procedure, instructions, manual, or information sheet covering the way in which applications for suspension are to be dealt with?

(4) If "Yes" to (3), will he please table such material?

(5) How many applications for suspension were made in each of the past five years?

(6) How many were granted?

(7) How many were refused?

(8) Considering the unemployment situation, are there any plans to alter the present operation of and entitlement to these payments suspension?

(9) Is it fact that some finance companies are simply adding the deferred payments to those due at the end of the period of suspension?

(10) Has he received complaints as to whether or not this practice is in conformity with the legislation?

(11) If not, will the Department of Consumer Affairs act to eliminate the practice?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

(1) To administer section 36A of the Hire Purchase Act 1959-74, with regulation 4 of the Hire Purchase (General) Regulations 1975, according to each individual application received.

(2) (a) Pursuant to subsection (3) (a) of section 36A of the Act, three months' forward relief may be granted from the date of granting the relief or, in exceptional circumstances, six months' forward relief from that date.

In addition to any forward relief which may be granted, retrospective relief may also be granted pursuant to subsection (3) (b) of section 36A, subject to the criteria outlined in section 36A and the regulations.

(b) No.

(3) Yes, for internal use only: otherwise an application form is available for applicants.

(4) No.

(5) to (7) In the financial year ended 30 June 1976, there were no applications received.

In the financial year ended 30 June 1977, five applications were received, but none qualified for relief pursuant to section 36A of the Act.

In the financial year ended 30 June 1978, there were 120 applications—79 were approved and 42 were rejected.

In the financial year ended 30 June 1979, there were 740 applications—380 were approved and 360 were rejected.

In the financial year ended 30 June 1980, 751 applications were received of which 734 were processed—420 of these applications were approved and 314 were rejected.

- (8) No.
- (9) Not to my knowledge. The agreement is varied by extending its term by the extent of the relief granted.
- (10) No.
- (11) If any such instances are brought to the attention of the Bureau of Consumer Affairs, appropriate action will be taken to correct this irregularity.

LAND VALUATIONS

Inquiry

938. Mr WILSON, to the Premier:

- (1) When will the Government-established inquiry into the impact of new valuations on taxes and charges begin receiving public submissions?
- (2) In what form will these submissions be received?
- (3) Will the call for submissions be advertised, and if so in what form?
- (4) Will the inquiry be conducting hearings in public?
- (5) Can he confirm previous advice from the Deputy Premier that the findings of the inquiry will be made available to the public?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) The committee of inquiry into rates, taxes, and charges will publish a position paper within the next few weeks and, at that stage, submissions will be invited from all interested parties.
- (2) It will be preferable to receive submissions in writing.
- (3) Appropriate advertisements will be placed in the national and local newspapers.
- (4) The committee will conduct hearings in public when considered necessary.

- (5) Once the committee's report has been studied by the Government I see no reason, at this point, to prevent the findings being made public.

DEFENCE FORCES

Sonic Booms

939. Mr WILSON, to the Premier:

- (1) Is he aware that people who suffered property damage as a result of the sonic boom caused by aircraft returning from a defence exercise off the Western Australian coast in August were not covered by insurance for this damage?
- (2) Has the State Government made any representations to the Commonwealth Government regarding the possibility of further property damage from similar occurrences in the future, with regard to prevention or compensation?
- (3) If "No" to (2), is he prepared to take up the matter with the Defence Department?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) to (3) The matter is being investigated and I shall reply to the member early next week.

FISHERIES INSPECTORS

Resignations

940. Mr WILSON, to the Minister representing the Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife:

- (1) How many fisheries inspectors have left the department in each year since 1974?
- (2) In each case, how many of these departures have been due to resignation?
- (3) Has the level of resignations in recent years in any way reflected the department's policy of appointing older men to these positions and the unwillingness of men with families and established homes to leave the metropolitan area?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) The number of fisheries inspectors leaving the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife in each year since 1974 was—

1974	3
1975	2
1976	6

1977	2
1978	10
1979	2
1980	7

(2) Resignations in each year since 1974 were—

1974	3
1975	2
1976	6
1977	2
1978	8
1979	2
1980	6

(3) Resignations because of an unwillingness to leave the metropolitan area does not appear to be correlated with the age of the officers on appointment.

- (3) A manpower planning committee, which has a tripartite composition of Government, industry, and unions, is examining the demand and supply of skilled labour for the various development and construction programmes on an ongoing basis. Copies of an initial report were distributed widely, and an updated report should be available shortly. The report showed the expected demand and supply of skilled workers, and the resulting shortfalls.
- (4) Manpower planning in respect of labour requirements is carried out in the research areas of several Government departments. There is no single officer involved exclusively on manpower planning.
- (5) The specific tasks carried out are directly related to the requirements of the manpower planning committee.

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Skilled Tradesmen: Development Projects

941. Mr WILSON, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

- (1) Adverting to his answer to question 874 of 1980 relevant to trade classifications, what particular areas has the assessment of trade classifications in which shortfalls will exist for current and future development projects revealed as areas where trade training programmes will assist?
- (2) What projections, if any, have been made with respect to likely numbers to be recruited in these areas in the foreseeable future?
- (3) What attempts are being made at a State level to gather information to establish more accurate manpower planning requirements?
- (4) How many departmental staff are involved full time in the area of manpower planning?
- (5) What are the specific tasks carried out by these staff members?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) Boilermaking, welding, fitting and machining—including pipe fitting—electrical fitting and electrical installing—including instrument fitting.
- (2) Approximately 3 600.

APPRENTICES

Motor Mechanics

942. Mr WILSON, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

- (1) How many motor mechanic apprentices completed their apprenticeships in—
 - (a) 1979; and
 - (b) 1980?
- (2) In each case, how many were successful in passing their on-the-job examination?
- (3) What certification, if any, is given to apprentices who having completed their five years training are unsuccessful in passing their on-the-job examination?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) (a) 12 months to 30 June 1979 . . . 412
(b) 12 months to 30 June 1980 . . . 496.
- (2) (a) Statistics are not readily available.
(b) 424.
- (3) Apprentices who fail their on-the-job examination are provided with an extract of their apprenticeship record.

POLICE

East Perth Lock-up: Bail

943. Mr T. H. JONES, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) Can a person arrested on a bench warrant be released on bail at the East Perth lock-up?
- (2) If "Yes", what is the procedure?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) and (2) There are a number of types of warrant falling within the classification of "bench warrant", and whether or not bail may be available will depend upon the directions contained in the warrant. If the member has a particular case in mind and will provide details, the Attorney General will arrange for the matter to be researched.

HEALTH

Laboratory Services

944. Mr HODGE, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Is the Government giving consideration to handing over responsibility for some laboratory investigations in public hospitals to private pathologists?
- (2) Is it a fact that some negotiations between the Government and private pathologists have already occurred?
- (3) Does the Government intend allowing private pathologists to engage in the most profitable areas and leave the State Health Laboratories Services to do the tests which are complex and require extensive equipment?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) No. The arrangements envisaged would require private pathologists undertaking hospital work to provide a 24-hour, seven days-per-week service and be responsible for all tests required by the hospital he serves.
A representative committee is presently considering the rationalisation of laboratory services to non-teaching public hospitals and will prepare a report for Cabinet consideration.

WATER RESOURCES

Agaton

945. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister for Agriculture:

Further to questions 683 and 846 of 1980 relevant to the Agaton project, in

view of no minutes of a meeting of the Rural Water Council being kept, does he have a recollection of advising the council that the Agaton project had been given number one priority by the State Government when submitting water research projects to the Commonwealth for approval and funding?

Mr OLD replied:

The answer which I gave to the member in question 682 reflects my recollection of this matter.

HEALTH

Meat Inspection

946. Mr STEPHENS, to the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) How many local authority health inspectors are involved in meat inspection?
- (2) How many are employed full time on meat inspection?
- (3) How many are employed on a part-time basis—that is, as part of other health inspection duties?
- (4) What is the amount in fees raised as a result of the inspections undertaken by local authorities in the past year?
- (5) (a) How much of these fees was derived from inspection of stock slaughtered at abattoirs;
(b) how much was derived from re-inspection of meat already inspected by the Department of Primary Industry for export and diverted to the local market;
(c) how much was derived from inspection of meat imported from the Eastern States?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) to (5) The information required to respond to the member's question will necessitate a considerable amount of research.

I will convey the information, in writing, as soon as it has been collated.

WESBEEF

Land

947. Mr STEPHENS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Were either of the following general areas ever suggested for pastoral, agricultural, or similar purposes by Wesbeef:
 - (a) Chudalup Plains;
 - (b) Pingerup Plains?
- (2) If "Yes"—
 - (a) who were the owners of the land involved;
 - (b) in regard to these areas, was it considered that development programme for the purposes aforementioned would require drainage operation;
 - (c) what was the State Government's general assessment of the viability of these areas for pastoral or agricultural land use;
 - (d) what was the State Government's general response to the proposed development of these areas, and if these responses were unfavourable, what aspects were generally seen to be problematical?

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) and (2) The Department of Resources Development is researching the information requested and the member will be advised by letter.

HEALTH

Meat Inspection

948. Mr STEPHENS, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) How many inspectors are presently employed by the Department of Health and Medical Services?
- (2) How many are employed solely on meat inspection?
- (3) How many are employed on meat inspection on a part-time basis; that is, as part of other health inspection duties?
- (4) What did it cost the Health and Medical Services Department to employ these—
 - (a) full-time meat inspectors in the last 12 months, including all overheads directly connected with them;

- (b) part-time meat inspectors in the last 12 months, including all overheads directly connected with them?

- (5) What is the total amount in fees raised as a result of the inspections undertaken by the Health and Medical Services Department meat inspectors in the past year?
- (6) In relation to (5), are all of these fees derived from inspections of stock slaughtered at abattoirs?
- (7) (a) How much of the fees was derived from prime inspection of carcasses committed to the local market;
- (b) how much of the fees was derived from the result of re-inspection of carcasses already inspected by Department of Primary Industry inspectors for export and diverted to the local market subsequently?
- (8) (a) How many abattoirs in Western Australia presently have Health and Medical Services Department inspectors;
- (b) which ones?
- (9) How many inspectors are involved at each of these works?
- (10) Does the Health and Medical Services Department inspect imported meat and meat products from Eastern States destinations?
- (11) If so, what fees are collected for this?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) to (11) The information required to respond to the member's question will necessitate a considerable amount of research. I will convey the information, in writing, as soon as it has been collated.

HEALTH

Medical Practitioners: Katanning and Kojonup

949. Mr HODGE, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Further to my question without notice 177 of Tuesday, 16 September 1980 relevant to health services, and his reply that he intended to examine the matter further in relation to health services at Katanning and Kojonup, I now ask: Is the examination completed?
- (2) If so, will he table the findings of the examination?
- (3) If "No" to (2), why not?
- (4) Who carried out the examination?

- (5) Did the person or persons concerned visit Katanning and/or Kojonup?
- (6) Did they interview those residents who had complained about the service?
- (7) Did they meet with all the doctors concerned?
- (8) Has any action been taken to improve the situation since complaints were originally made?
- (9) If the examination is uncompleted, will he advise when he expects it to be completed and to receive the findings?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Answered by (1) above.
- (3) It took some time to arrange a mutually convenient date for all parties concerned. A meeting will be held at Katanning on Friday, 17 October 1980.
- (4) The Director, Hospital and Allied Services has arranged the meeting at Katanning.
- (5) Answered by (4) above.
- (6) Answered by (4) above.
- (7) All local practitioners have been invited to the meeting of 17 October 1980.
- (8) No.
- (9) 17 October 1980.

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) Public servants and local government employees may be appointed as justices of the peace where special circumstances justify such appointment. For example, officers of institutions such as prisons and large hospitals are not infrequently appointed so as to process matters for or concerning inmates or patients.

However, it is policy generally not to appoint Government employees as justices. All justices are required, if called upon, to undertake all the duties of office, including court duties. Government employees should not be absent from their official duties and to exclude them from court duties would conflict with that policy. Also, it is considered undesirable that a Government employee be called upon to carry out duties as a justice which may involve fellow employees or the departments in which they are employed, and may involve allegations of bias.

These reasons are also of particular relevance to local government employees. In addition, it is clearly most undesirable to appoint as justices persons who may have the responsibility or whose employer may have the responsibility of instituting prosecutions.

- (2) Not applicable.

951. *This question was postponed.*

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

Public Servants and Local Government Employees

950. Mr BATEMAN, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) Will the Attorney General give a full and comprehensive reason why public servants and local government employees are not allowed to be appointed justices of the peace?
- (2) If not, why not?

RYE GRASS

Research

952. Mr STEPHENS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Since rye grass toxicity was identified in Western Australia, how much money has been spent on research by the Department of Agriculture?
- (2) Is he aware of any other research being carried out and, if so, by whom?

- (3) What amount has been expended in each of the previous three financial years?

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) Approximately \$960 000.
 (2) By the CSIRO Division of Animal Health (Victoria), CSIRO Institute of Biological Resources (South Australia), and the WAITE Research Institute (South Australia).
 (3) 1977-1978 \$163 000
 1978-1979 \$198 000
 1979-1980 \$214 000

RURAL AND ALLIED INDUSTRIES CONFERENCE

Expenditure

953. Mr STEPHENS, to the Premier:

- (1) With regard to the rural and allied industries conference, what is the total expenditure from inception to 31 August 1980?
 (2) What has been the expenditure for the financial year ended 30 June 1980?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

(1) and (2)

YEAR	TOTAL \$
1976-77	195
1977-78	65 451
1978-79	113 497
1979-80	107 132
July-August 1980	17 500

FUEL AND ENERGY

Petrol: Country Areas

954. Mr CARR, to the Minister for Consumer Affairs:

- (1) Further to his answer to question 708 of 1980 relevant to oil companies and their registered distributors, in which he said that oil companies and their registered distributors are required to reduce the passed on freight charges by the amount of the Commonwealth freight subsidy scheme, can he please direct me to the legislation which deals with this question?
 (2) Does the term "registered distributors" used in his answer refer to service stations retailing petrol?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) The legislation to which the member refers is a Commonwealth Act entitled State Grants (Petroleum Act) 1978. Section 4(1) of that Act provides for the Commonwealth Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs to formulate freight subsidy schemes.
 (2) The term "registered distributors" is defined in the Act as "a person registered as an oil company or as a direct purchase distributor."

EDUCATION

School Children: Insurance Policies

955. Mr CARR, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is permission required for insurance companies to sell school children insurance within Western Australian Education Department schools?
 (2) Is permission given on a State-wide basis or by individual schools?
 (3) If permission is given on a State-wide basis, will he please advise which companies have been approved?
 (4) Is it usual for parents and citizens' associations or other school authorities to be involved on a commission basis in the sale of policies?
 (5) Does either the department or a specific school have the right to grant exclusive rights to one company within the school?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) Yes.
 (2) State-wide basis.
 (3) (a) State Government Insurance Office.
 (b) C.G.A Fire & Accident Insurance Co. Ltd.
 (4) Yes.
 (5) No.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS

WA Film Council

956. Mr CARR, to the Minister for Cultural Affairs:

- (1) Who are the members of the WA Film Council?
 (2) What organisations do they represent?

- (3) What funds were allocated to the WA Film Council for 1979-80?
- (4) How much of those funds were spent?
- (5) To whom were the funds paid and in relation to which films?
- (6) What are the aims and criteria of the WA Film Council, in so far as allocation of funds is concerned?
- (7) How many applications were received for assistance during 1979-80?
- (8) Were all applicants advised of the outcome of their applications?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) Mr Bernard A. Wright (Chairman)
Mr Owen J. Burns (Deputy Chairman)
Mr William H. Bowen
Mr Syd Donovan
Mr John Pyc
Mr Russell Twogood.
- (2) The members do not represent any organisations, but were selected for the contribution they were able to make.
- (3) An annual amount of \$200 000 is allocated from Consolidated Revenue Fund to a Treasury trust fund account in the name of The Western Australian Film Council for investment in approved film ventures by the council. In addition \$35 000 was provided for in 1979-80 CRF Budget to meet the council's administrative costs.
- (4) and (5) During 1979-80 \$35 000 was paid to the council to meet its administrative costs and \$240 000 was paid to the council from the Treasury trust fund account for investments in the following films—

	\$
"Harlequin"	100 000
"Falcon Island"	40 000
"Road Games"	100 000

- (6) Aims of the Film Council are to encourage the local film industry by assisting with finance in the production of feature films and television serials and with advice on script writing, budgeting, and production. Criteria is based on the following points—
 - (a) good script;
 - (b) responsible budget;
 - (c) capabilities of producer, directors and crew;
 - (d) maximum use of local expertise to be used wherever possible;
 - (e) location of filming to be within Western Australia.

- (7) and (8) I have been informed that 39 applications were received during 1979-80 and that all applicants have been replied to.

REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Geraldton

957. Mr CARR, to the Honorary Minister Assisting the Minister for Regional Administration and the North West:

- (1) Did he attend a "regional administration dinner" to welcome the new regional administrator to Geraldton on or about 19 September as reported in the *Geraldton Guardian* of 24 September?
- (2) Who organised and funded the "regional administration dinner"?
- (3) Were any parliamentarians from the area invited?
- (4) If "Yes", who were they?
- (5) If not, why not?
- (6) Does he see merit in regional administrators having positive and constructive relations with parliamentary representatives irrespective of their political affiliations?
- (7) If "Yes" to (6), will he initiate action to see that the type of oversight referred to above is not repeated?

Mr LAURANCE replied:

- (1) Yes. I attended a small function held at the Geraldton Town Council to welcome the new regional administrator.
- (2) Office of Regional Administration and the North West.
- (3) No.
- (4) Not applicable.
- (5) The function was to enable local government leaders to welcome the new regional administrator.
- (6) Yes.
- (7) There was no oversight. The new regional administrator will be making contact with all members of parliament in the region.

FUEL AND ENERGY: SEC

Charges: Rebate

958. Mr BERTRAM, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

- (1) Has he received a detailed proposal for the introduction of a rebate system to be

applied in respect to State Energy Commission charges from the State Energy Commission action group?

(2) If "Yes"—

- (a) when did he receive it;
- (b) what action has he taken thus far concerning this proposal;
- (c) Has he responded to the State Energy Commission action group;
- (d) if "Yes", when;
- (e) if "No", when will he do so?

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) (a) 1 August 1980.
- (b) The proposal has been discussed personally with the action group by both the SEC and by me. Comment has since been sought from the Minister for Community Welfare and a detailed report is being produced by the State Energy Commission on the cost and practicability of the proposals.
- (c) No.
- (d) Not applicable.
- (e) As soon as all available information has been received and considered..

STATE FORESTS

Log Production, and Wood Chipping

959. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister representing the Minister for Forests:

- (1) What was the total log production from State forests in—
 - (a) 1960;
 - (b) 1979?
- (2) Of these amounts what quantity was sawlogs and what quantity for wood chipping in each of these years?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

Figures are not available in the form requested from State Forest only. The following figures are for State forest and Crown land as quoted from the respective Forests Department annual reports for 1960 and 1979. Unless specified otherwise the figures relate to hardwood and softwood combined—

- (1) (a) 1 101 140 m³
- (b) 1 489 514 m³
- (2) (a) Sawlog 1 101 140 m³
Hardwood chip—nil.
- (b) Sawlog 909 735 m³
Hardwood chip 454 096 m³.

WATER RESOURCES: CATCHMENT AREAS

Land Valuations

960. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Works:

- (1) Have there been any guidelines for valuers of the Valuer General's office to follow when placing a value on land offered for sale or compensation by farmers in the water catchment areas where clearing bans apply?
- (2) (a) If "Yes", what are the guidelines which are being applied;
- (b) are these guidelines being rigidly applied and, if not, under what circumstances is deviation from them permitted?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) (a) The document is entitled *Guidelines for Clearing Control Compensation Procedure—January 1980* and is available from the Public Works Department. I have arranged for a copy of this document to be forwarded to the member.
- (b) The guidelines set broad principles for the determination of compensation where clearing controls apply. These broad principles are being followed by the Valuer General for the assessment of compensation. The guidelines are currently being reviewed.

STATE FORESTS

Forests Department: Aircraft

961. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister representing the Minister for Forests:

- (1) What is the total number of aeroplanes which will be used by the Forests Department for fire surveillance in the 1980-81 fire season?
- (2) Are all these aircraft on lease and, if so, from what company/ies?

- (3) What is the total cost of leasing these aircraft per annum to the State Government?
- (4) What would be the estimated cost calculated on an annual basis over the period of amortisation, of purchasing a similar number of aircraft for use by the Forests Department and other departments such as the Lands and Surveys Department, in the non-fire season?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) Nine.
- (2) No. Four are on lease—ANZ Bank.
- (3) \$38 825.
- (4) It is estimated that it would be marginally cheaper to purchase planes if the capital funds were available. The leasing arrangement permits access to the most suitable aircraft available for the detection task.

WATER RESOURCES: CATCHMENT AREA

Warren River: Land Clearing

962. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Works:

- (1) How many applications for compensation for land for which clearing applications have been rejected in the Warren River catchment area have been received?
- (2) (a) Of these applications, how many have been approved;
(b) on how many has compensation actually been paid;
(c) what amount of money has been paid by way of compensation for such land for which permission to clear has been refused?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) 38 claims for compensation have been received.
- (2) (a) all applications involve negotiation and 13 have been resolved;
(b) Public Works Department records show that compensation—as distinct from land purchase—has been part-paid on two properties.
(c) The amount covered by (2)(b) is \$175 770.

WATER RESOURCES: CATCHMENT AREAS

Tree Planting

963. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister representing the Minister for Forests:

- (1) Is the Forests Department available to advise and assist farmers in river catchment areas where clearing bans apply with regard to the planting of trees on their properties?
- (2) If "Yes", what form of assistance will officers of his department give, and what is the procedure which individual farmers should follow to avail themselves of such assistance?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) The member should be well aware that Forests Department staff have always been available to advise and assist farmers with regard to the planting of trees on their properties. This service will continue to be provided in all areas within the limits of staff availability.
- (2) Assistance given by departmental officers will be in the form of advice concerning suitable tree species and methods of establishment and tending. To avail themselves of such assistance, farmers should write to the Conservator of Forests or contact appropriate divisional headquarters.

DAIRYING

Alumina Smelter: Effect

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

- (1) Has any investigation been made regarding the effect of the proposed aluminium smelter to be constructed near Wagerup on the dairy industry of that district?
- (2) If "Yes", what are the findings of such investigations, including the nature and extent of any possible adverse effects on the dairy industries?

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) and (2) There is no proposal to construct an aluminium smelter near Wagerup. Should one be contemplated detailed investigations would be undertaken.

GRAIN

Rapeseed

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

- (1) What price did the Grain Pool pay growers of rapeseed for seed received in the 1979-80 year?
- (2) What price did Refinoil Pty. Ltd. pay the Grain Pool for seed received in the 1979-80 pool year?

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) Payments to date amount to \$195.00 per tonne.
- (2) This information is confidential to the parties concerned.

TIMBER

Road Transport

966. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Has an approach been made by small sawmillers and hauliers for permission to cart longer lengths of timber than that presently permissible to Perth?
- (2) (a) If "Yes", does the Government intend to allow the cartage of longer lengths of timber by road;
(b) if "No" to (1), what is the reason for such refusal?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) (a) No, except under exceptional circumstances.
(b) In view of the impact of any change in policy relating to the road transport of timber on the overall objectives of the Government's new land freight transport policy, there will be no change to existing policy for the time being. The introduction of piecemeal decisions may affect the implementation of the new policy and have a detrimental effect on Westrail's finances. It is anticipated for the current financial year transport of timber will contribute approximately \$3.8 million to Westrail's revenue. To allow greater freedom of road transport railway finances would be affected and place in jeopardy the continuation of some rail services to south-west areas.

LAND

Reserve A24913: Removal of Sand

967. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister representing the Minister for Conservation and the Environment:

Further to question 396 of 1980 relevant to Reserve No. A24913 and the removal of sand, is the Minister now able to advise me of the outcome of his investigations?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

The Department of Lands and Surveys is expecting a report from the Denmark Shire shortly. This will enable the investigation to be proceeded with.

TRAFFIC: MOTOR VEHICLE

Ford Capri

968. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Police and Traffic:

Would he advise me as to whether or not the following vehicle was subjected to a Road Traffic Authority examination prior to it being registered in the name of Dawton Datsun, of 204 Great Eastern Highway, Midland: The details of the vehicle are—1970 Ford Capri Manual Sedan; Engine No. JA 3350B; previous Licence Plate No. (NSW) SM 248; new Licence Plate No. 6FY 706?

Mr HASSELL replied:

Yes. The vehicle in question was examined at Midland Traffic Office on Friday, 29 August 1980.

SEWERAGE

Septic Tanks: Fees

969. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Health:

Would he give urgent consideration to a review of the fees charged for examination and installation of septic tank installations carried out in accordance with the bacteriolytic treatment of sewerage and disposal of effluent and liquid waste regulations, as well as making any necessary amendments to the Health Act?

Mr YOUNG replied:

Yes.

EDUCATION: PRE-PRIMARY CENTRES

Swan View

970. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is he aware that the Swan View pre-primary centre is sited in a position that is subject to considerable flooding?
- (2) Would he have the necessary filling and drainage carried out to relieve any future flooding?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Arrangements have been made to re-locate the pre-primary centre on higher ground as this is a more economical approach.

WATER RESOURCES: SALINITY

Batalling Creek and Wellington Dam

971. Mr McPHARLIN, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) In the data taken from gauging station No. 612 016 in the Batalling Creek, Maxon Farm, on 11 July 1979, it shows a flow rate of .044 (M3/sec) and the concentration of TSS as 12366 (MG/L). At this rate what would be the volume, in tonnes, of TSS delivered into Wellington Dam in 24 hours?
- (2) In the same data on 15 July 1979, in Batalling Creek interceptor drain, it shows a flow rate of .006 (M3/sec) and a concentration of TSS as 276 (MG/L)—what would be the volume in tonnes of TSS delivered into Batalling Creek in 24 hours?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

Assuming the conditions remained constant, the following quantities would pass the respective gauging stations in 24 hours—

- (1) 47.01 tonnes.
- (2) .143 tonnes.

TERMITES

Pre-construction Site Treatment

972. Mr WILSON, to the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) Is she aware of reports that current anti-termite treatments of sites to be covered by concrete rafts or footings are

seriously below the recommended standard and in particular of a recent survey in the Shire of Kalamunda which showed that only one out of 22 sites tested complied with the prescribed standard?

- (2) What action is she or her department taking or prepared to take to better ensure that approved chemicals of sufficient strength and quantity are used in pre-construction pest proofing for all types of residences?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) I have had no report of any problem in municipal districts generally; nor have I heard of a survey in the Shire of Kalamunda. However, I am aware that the City of Stirling wrote to the Housing Industry Association, the Master Builders' Association, the Institute of Architects, and the Builders' Registration Board, drawing attention to a number of instances where the standard of termite treatment was below that prescribed in the Uniform Building By-laws and requesting co-operation to ensure that the building industry met the requirements.
- (2) Municipal councils are responsible for the enforcement of the Uniform Building By-laws. If there were any question that the provisions of these by-laws covering termite treatment were inappropriate or inadequate, the matter would be examined. However, there has been no suggestion that this was so.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Lump-sum Payments

973. Mr WILSON, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

- (1) Has any consideration been given to relaxing the requirements of clause 10 of the first schedule of the Workers'

Compensation Act 1912-1979, governing the redemption of weekly payments of compensation to allow a broader section of applicants to qualify for lump sum payments where such applicants believe that settlement in this form would benefit them to greater effect?

- (2) If "Yes", what has been the outcome of such consideration?
- (3) If "No" to (1), is he prepared to have this matter considered as a means of assuring those concerned that the Government is committed to paying this entitlement as full recognition of the damage to their health resulting from adverse working conditions?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) to (3) Consideration is being given to lump-sum redemption of weekly payments in clause 10 of the first schedule of the Worker's Compensation Act in conjunction with many other matters under review, and any amendments determined will be included in an amending Bill soon to be presented to Parliament.

ANIMALS

Dog Act: Amendment

974. Mr WILSON, to the Minister for Local Government:

What action does she propose to take in response to the following requests for changes in the Dog Act—

- (a) The request from the City of Stirling for a minimum penalty for failing to register a dog-
- (b) the request from the Town of Armadale and the Shire of Port Hedland that sections 32 and 33 be amended to facilitate the prosecution of persons who offend against these provisions;
- (c) the requests from the Country Shire Councils' Association that—
 - (i) it should be an offence for a person to own or keep an unsterilised dog unless that dog is a working dog or is registered for breeding;

- (ii) there should be a minimum penalty of \$100 where a dog is shown to have attacked a person without provocation, and for a justice of the peace to be able to issue an order for the destruction of that dog;

- (iii) the penalties prescribed in the Act be increased?

- (d) The requests by the Local Government Association that—

- (i) dogs be required to be restrained by a leash whenever in a public place;
- (ii) there be a general minimum penalty of 20 per cent of the maximum penalties prescribed in the Act?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (a) to (d) All these matters are still under consideration.

ROAD

Guildford Road-Morley Drive Link

975. Mr WILSON, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) When will work commence on the new road linking Guildford Road and Morley Drive, announced in his statement last Friday, and what is the projected date for the completion of the road?
- (2) Is the road to be a single or dual carriageway road?
- (3) Will this road comprise part of the Beechboro-Gosnells Freeway?
- (4) Is a concept plan for the road available and, if so, will he supply me with a copy?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) No commencing date has yet been determined. The Main Roads Department has written to council proposing early discussions with a view to agreeing on details of the route and a possible construction timetable.
- (2) Single two-lane carriageway.
- (3) Yes, in the long term.
- (4) Yes.

AGED PERSONS

Senior Citizens' Centres: Funding

976. Mr WILSON, to the Minister for Health:

Which new senior citizens centres have been approved for funding in—

- (a) 1980-81;
- (b) 1981-82; and
- (c) 1982-83?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (a) New centres approved for Pinjarra and Melville and additions to Morley;
- (b) new centre approved for Kalamunda and additions to Belmont and improvements to five centres in Stirling;
- (c) not yet announced by the Commonwealth.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Small Businesses

977. Mr WILSON, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

- (1) Is he aware that some small business operators affected by the collapse of Palmdale Insurance earlier this year, are having to meet ongoing payments amounting to thousands of dollars in workers' compensation to injured employees?
- (2) Have any further approaches been made to the Commonwealth Government regarding the plight of small business operators who find themselves in this situation in Western Australia?
- (3) Is he aware of any proposals by the Commonwealth Government to take over responsibility for these workers' compensation liabilities?
- (4) If not, is he prepared to make a special approach to the Commonwealth Government with such a proposal?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No.

(3) No.

(4) No. The State has already had contact with all other States and proposes taking action to create a special fund from which relief can be provided.

978. *This question was postponed.*

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

MINISTER FOR CULTURAL AFFAIRS

Absence

224. Mr NANOVIICH, to the Minister for Cultural Affairs:

Is the Minister for Cultural Affairs aware that accusations were made last night by the member for Gosnells to the effect that he is frequently away from the House during question time and if so, what is the explanation for this?

Mr Pearce: Thank you, Dorothy!

Mr McIver: He is one of these "incredible hulks"!

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

The question last night was typical of those so often asked by the member for Gosnells. On each occasion that I have been absent from this House during question time this session, it has been because I have been engaged elsewhere on Government business.

Last night I had to open a seminar for the Institute of Plumbing, Australia, and a pair was arranged for the short time involved. On each of the other occasions that I have been absent on Government business, I have been paired with a member of the Opposition.

IMMIGRATION

Refugees: Employment

225. Mr B. T. BURKE, to the Treasurer:

I should like to ask the Treasurer whether he is aware of any State or Commonwealth Government scheme to assist financially in the employment of refugees in market gardens in any part of Western Australia?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

I have not heard of any specific scheme; but if the member has knowledge of one, or wants me to inquire into the matter, I shall follow it up. However, my colleague, the Minister for Immigration, would be more likely to be informed on the matter.

HOUSING

Midland and Lockridge

226. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Honorary Minister Assisting the Minister for Housing:

- (1) How many three-bedroomed townhouses are vacant in the Midland and Lockridge areas respectively?
- (2) What is the reason for their being vacant?
- (3) How many three-bedroomed houses are vacant in the Midland and Lockridge areas respectively?
- (4) What is the reason for their being vacant.

Mr MacKinnon (for Mr LAURANCE) replied:

- | | Common-wealth-State Agreement | Aboriginal Housing |
|--|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| (1) | | |
| (a) Midland | Nil | Nil |
| (b) Lockridge | 3 | Nil |
| (2) Normal vacation by tenants and currently under maintenance action prior to re-letting. | | |
| (3) | | |
| (a) Midland | Nil | Nil |
| (b) Lockridge | 4 | Nil |
| (4) See (2) above. | | |

In addition, the member might be interested to know that vacant flats at Lockridge as at 1 October numbered 211, and as at 30 June the figure was 255. In Midland, flats vacant were one as at 1 October, and nil as at 30 June.

TRADE UNION

Federated Clerks' Union

227. Mr WATT, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

- (1) Is he aware that the Federated Clerks' Union has an officer in Albany threatening clerks that they must join the union or be sacked?

- (2) Is he further aware that he—that is, the officer of the Federated Clerks' Union—has threatened management of at least one company that if it continues to employ non-union clerks, he will call on other unions through the TLC to call members out on strike to close the company's operations?
- (3) Is he operating within the law with such threats?
- (4) What actions are available either to the employees or the company to prevent the union from carrying out its threats?

The SPEAKER: Order! One part of the question is out of order in that it asks the Minister to give an interpretation of the Statute. That is not within the competence of a member to ask; but the balance of the question is in order.

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question the answer to which is as follows—

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) No. His threats are both un-Australian and unlawful.
- (4) It is not obligatory for workers to join a union under State laws and blackmail and standover tactics by some unions are distasteful to the Government.

Action can be taken through the Industrial Commission or the law courts. If the member has any particular problem as a result of the standover tactics and protection rackets being run by unions, he can refer them to my office and I will see action is taken.

VEGETABLES

Potatoes

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

- (1) Has the departmental inquiry into the handling of reports and outbreak of the disease black leg in potatoes, which was

announced by the Director of Agriculture at a meeting of growers in Manjimup earlier this year, been carried out?

- (2) If "Yes" to (1), what were the results of the inquiry?
- (3) If "No" to (1), is it intended that such an inquiry will be held.

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) to (3) Yes. An inquiry identified the need for improved communication between growers and departmental officers. Subsequently my department arranged a visit by Mr D. E. Harrison, Senior Plant Pathologist of the Victorian Department of Agriculture.

The nature of the disease and the factors which influence its development are contained in a report by Mr Harrison, copies of which were forwarded to WA potato growers in June 1980. The report indicates that the disease has been present in Western Australia as in many other potato growing areas of Australia for over 50 years.

NOONKANBAH STATION: VILLAGE

*Minister for Cultural Affairs:
Press Statement*

229. Mr PEARCE, to the Minister for Cultural Affairs:

I refer the Minister to the answer he gave to the Leader of the Opposition to question 188 on Wednesday, 17 September. The Leader of the Opposition asked the Minister about his comments in the Press in relation to a \$1 million 60-house village at Noonkanbah.

The Minister replied as follows—

Firstly, the report in the *Daily News* was not correct. I did not stipulate an amount at all . . .

Will the Minister now concede to the House that the first paragraph of the second Press release he put out earlier that week and which he subsequently tabled in this Parliament at my insistence, read as follows—

The Noonkanbah community has given assent to the construction of a \$1 million or more village in the so-called area of influence at Noonkanbah.

Will the Minister concede to the House that he misled it on that occasion, and will he apologise for that statement and withdraw it?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

Nothing could be further from the truth than to say that I have misled the House. On the contrary, as usual the member for Gosnells has got his facts mixed up and again, as is usual for the member, he is using incorrect information to make scurrilous and unfounded attacks on others.

For the member's information—I appreciate it is a little difficult for the member to absorb information, but I will make my comments fairly slowly and deliberately so hopefully he will absorb them—the *Daily News* article to which the member referred was not based on the two Press releases which I issued.

Mr Pearce: The question was whether or not you stipulated the amount.

Mr GRAYDEN: The *Daily News* report was based on a telephone inquiry by the *Daily News* which took place prior to the Press release being written.

The supplementary Press release which contained a reference to the \$1 million or more village was in fact written after the *Daily News* was published, and the figure of \$1 million or more was taken from the *Daily News* article only as a means of identifying the village to which that paper was referring.

Mr B. T. Burke: You based your Press release on what the *Daily News* wrote! That is hard to take!

Mr GRAYDEN: I put out a supplementary Press release but the *Daily News* item is not based on that either. The *Daily News* put the figure of \$1 million or more on the project.

I shall conclude by saying that in *The West Australian* of Saturday, 20 September 1980, Frank Platell estimated the cost of the village as likely to be more than \$3 million.

HEALTH: MENTAL

David Newett: Death

230. Mr E. T. EVANS, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Has the Minister seen the article on page 16 of today's issue of the *Daily News* regarding the circumstances surrounding the death of David Newett formerly of Kalgoorlie?
- (2) If the answer to (1) is "Yes", will the Minister on behalf of the Government accept full responsibility for the funeral expenses involved?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) and (2) The situation to which the member for Kalgoorlie has referred is one which seems to have been rather accurately reported on page 16 of today's issue of the *Daily News*. I wish to advise the member and the House that, following representations by the family to me, I have agreed to make an *ex gratia* payment to meet the funeral expenses.

STATE FINANCE

Short-term Investment Earnings

231. Mr DAVIES, to the Treasurer:

- (1) Does the Treasurer propose to transfer any of the \$26.5 million in unallocated revenue derived from the investment of Treasury cash balance and held in suspense at 30 June 1980 to balance revenue with expenditure on the Consolidated Revenue Fund in 1980-81?
- (2) If "Yes" to (1), what is the total amount estimated to be transferred to bring revenue and expenditure into balance?
- (3) Under what item is the revenue included?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) to (3) As to the Consolidated Revenue Fund, page 11 of the Budget speech sets out details of the proposed transfer of \$17 million (\$17 069 000) from the short-term investment earnings balance of \$26.5 million held at 30 June 1980.

The remainder of \$9 416 000 is to be paid to the General Loan Fund and will be explained when the Loan Estimates are presented tomorrow.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS

WA Museum: Geraldton

232. Mr CARR, to the Treasurer:

Last night I asked the Treasurer whether he could clarify that the Government had budgeted during the current financial year for the establishment of a branch of the Western Australian Museum at Geraldton? Has the Treasurer been able to inform himself of the details, and could he advise me?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

As promised, I looked up this matter and the member will realise it is traditionally dealt with each year under "Miscellaneous", and not as a detailed break-up, although when we get to miscellaneous items it is not unusual for members to seek detailed information on the vote involved.

I referred to the total allocation for the Museum in my Budget speech as being \$3.5 million which is an increase of 19.3 per cent on last year's grant. I then went on to refer to the continued restoration of the Batavia and other displays.

However, the specific details of the matter dealing with Geraldton are as follows: The amount that has been set aside in the Budget within the total Museum allocation for the operation of the Museum at Geraldton is—

	\$
Salary Costs for the curator	17 100
Two part-time attendants	8 000
Administration Costs	20 400
Total	\$45 500

Just by way of explanation, the curator was appointed during 1979-80 and the appointment of the attendants later this year will enable the operation of a completely established branch museum in Geraldton during 1980-81. I understand my colleague has advised those concerned accordingly.

VEGETABLES

Potatoes

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

- (1) How many compensation payments to potato growers have been made from the Potato Industry Trust Fund in the past five years?
- (2) For what reason was each of these payments made?
- (3) Who are the members of the trust fund?
- (4) Have any members of the trust fund received payments from the fund in the past three years and if so who and for what purpose?

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) Four.
- (2) To maintain seed production following frost damage.
- (3) Messrs J. P. Fallon, N. P. Carter, F. J. Atherton.
- (4) No.

HOUSING

Home Savings Grant

234. Mr B. T. BURKE, to the Treasurer:

Acknowledging and accepting the Federal Government's decision to increase or enlarge the home savings grant that is available at present, I ask the Treasurer whether he is aware of the financial strains being placed on families and applicants by the inordinate delays that are occurring presently in the allocation of home savings grant funds and whether he, as Treasurer, will make urgent representations to the Commonwealth Government in an effort to decrease delays which are now in the order of nine to 12 months?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

I do not know of the delays, but certainly I shall make some inquiries to see whether there is any reason for them or if they are administrative problems. In many cases, they could be the fault of the applicants themselves, but I will make some inquiries.

COMMUNITY WELFARE

*Low Income Families:
Government Charges*

235. Mr WILSON, to the Premier:

In answer to a recent question without notice the Premier stated he appreciated the difficulties encountered by some people on low incomes in meeting increased charges for electricity, water, and housing. He said that social benefits were the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government.

In view of the fact that people in such circumstances must be considered of equal value with other members of the Western Australian community, for which he has primary responsibility, what special approaches has he or his Government made to the Commonwealth Government for particular provision to be made for those most cruelly affected by increased Government charges?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

No specific approach has been made in respect of any particular group of people or any particular persons—at least, not by me.

The whole question of the people with these problems is constantly under review through the use of funds which operate in this field—some Government and some private—and also by the Minister for Community Welfare in the ordinary course of his portfolio.

I think it is a total question when we talk about relief for these particular cases. It is tied up with the whole question of social services. We constantly make our representations as we see the situation.

In so far as the problem relates to a particular group, no specific representations have been made by me. A representation may have been made by the appropriate Minister.

SEWERAGE

Septic Tanks: Fees

236. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Health:

My question without notice relates to the answer given to question 969 today. The Minister provided the cryptic answer, "Yes".

I now ask the Minister whether any investigation has been made, or whether any investigation is being carried out. Could he perhaps indicate when it may be possible for this matter to receive consideration?

Mr YOUNG replied:

I am not sure whether the member for Swan was in the Chamber during the grievance debate when the member for Mundaring—if I may use the term—"grieved" on this matter.

I gave an assurance that I would be looking into the whole question of charges in respect of the installation of septic tank systems.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS

Art Gallery: Mr Lou Klepac

237. Mr PEARCE, to the Minister for Cultural Affairs:

My question concerns the Minister's Press release in yesterday's issue of the *Daily News* regarding the appointment or otherwise of Mr Lou Klepac to the newly created position of Assistant Director (Curatorial) of the WA Art Gallery.

In the news release the Minister said the division of the two sections would have allowed Mr Klepac to concentrate on curatorial aspects rather than administrative ones. He said a new position would have involved a relatively small cut in salary, and the difference would have been made up in other ways.

In the light of the clear implication of that statement, and as the Minister is aware that Mr Klepac has now applied for the downgraded position, will the Minister give an assurance that Mr Klepac will be appointed to the downgraded position?

Will the Minister indicate the other ways in which the \$2 000 salary discrepancy may be made up?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

For the sake of greater accuracy, I ask the member to put the question on the notice paper.

LIQUOR ACT

Inquiry: Report

238. Mr WILSON, to the Chief Secretary:

In view of the widely expressed public interest in the inquiry into liquor licensing, has the Minister changed his view on the public release of the report of the inquiry?

Is the Minister now prepared to make the findings of the committee available to the public?

Mr HASSELL replied:

I advise that no final decision has been made as to whether or not the report of the inquiry into the State liquor laws will or will not be made public. A decision will be made in due course.

From my own point of view I indicate that unless there is some special reason not to, I expect the report to be made public.

WATER RESOURCES

*Metropolitan Water Board:
Revenue and Expenditure*

239. Mr MENSAROS (Minister for Water Resources):

I seek your guidance, Mr Speaker. Now that we have adopted the system of handing in answers to questions on notice, would I be in order to hand in a correction to question 594? The correction comprises statistical figures.

The SPEAKER: There appears to be something of a problem with respect to providing corrections to replies to questions on notice.

It seems to me appropriate that where a Minister becomes aware of the need to correct an answer to a question, the appropriate time to make that correction

would be during Questions Without Notice.

On this occasion I ask the Minister to hand in the statistical information which relates to question 594. I will undertake to ensure that the corrections are inserted in the same way as they were under the old system.
