

Legislative Council

Tuesday, the 11th April, 1978

The PRESIDENT (the Hon. Clive Griffiths) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

NATURAL DISASTER

CPA: Messages of Sympathy

THE PRESIDENT (the Hon. Clive Griffiths): I wish to advise members that the following messages have been received concerning the cyclone, storm, and fire disaster which occurred last week—

From the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Hon. Datuk Musa Hitam of the Malaysian Parliament—

PERSONALLY GRIEVED TO HEAR OF THE DISASTER THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE IN YOUR STATE FOLLOWING THE STORM RECENTLY STOP ON BEHALF OF CPA CONVEY TO YOU OUR CONDOLENCES STOP WISH YOU THE BEST IN YOUR EFFORTS TO REHABILITATE THE DAMAGE CAUSED STOP REGARDS STOP

From the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Sir Robin Vanderfelt—

PLEASE ADVISE MEMBERS ALL HERE GREATLY DISTRESSED LEARN OF LOSS OF LIFE AND STORM DAMAGE EARLIER THIS WEEK

Suitable replies to these messages have been sent.

QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

LISTENING DEVICES BILL

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by the Hon. I. G. Medcalf (Attorney-General), and read a first time.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: EIGHTH DAY

Motion

Debate resumed, from the 5th April, on the following motion by the Hon. W. M. Piesse—

That the following address be presented to His Excellency—

May it please Your Excellency: We, the Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and to thank Your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

THE HON. F. E. MCKENZIE (East Metropolitan) [4.42 p.m.]: Mr President, I wish to speak on a number of matters in the Address-in-Reply debate. At the outset, I must say I was disappointed with the Governor's Speech outlining the Government's intentions during this session of Parliament. In my opinion, most of the Governor's remarks were of a negative nature, and even where action was proposed, it was a whittling down of conditions enjoyed by the working people of the community. I will refer to one of these matters—that is, workers' compensation—during the course of my speech.

Firstly, I would like to speak about the present position in regard to the conditions of apprenticeships in Western Australia. The Government ought to be concerned about the present situation, and I hope that the Minister representing the Minister for Labour and Industry in this House will endeavour to bring my comments to the attention of that Minister.

One of my constituents became involved in an incredible sequence of events. This young man had served as an apprentice with a number of employers. At the present time I do not want to discuss whether or not he was a suitable apprentice, but rather I wish to inform the House of an unbelievable series of events that took place.

This young man appeared before the Industrial Commission on the 23rd February, 1976, and Industrial Commissioner Martin issued the following order—

That the recommendation of the Technical Education Division of the Education Department be dismissed and that the abovementioned apprentice is no longer required to attend any Government or other approved Technical School vocational classes or other classes for instruction in such subjects as are provided for his trade and nor shall he be required to submit himself for examination to the Technical Education Division of the Education Department.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Would you tell *Hansard* the document from which you are quoting?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I am quoting from Application No. T142 of 76 and the order issued by Commissioner G. J. Martin before the Western Australian Industrial Commission on the 23rd February, 1976.

Our apprenticeship legislation contains provisions for apprentices to attend school to learn the theory associated with their trade. This apprentice had problems with the theory so he went before the Industrial Commission to obtain an order that he need no longer attend the educational classes. That is clearly stated in the order I have referred to.

This young man had already completed four years as an apprentice in the plumbing trade. My concern is that a subsequent order was issued on the 16th January, 1977. This is Application No. T75 of 77, and the order is signed by Commissioner Martin. It reads—

That the abovementioned agreement of apprenticeship be cancelled as from the 17th day of January, 1977.

That was an agreement existing between the apprentice and the employer, and it was cancelled by the Industrial Commissioner. It was cancelled with the consent of my constituent, but he told me he agreed to the cancellation because Mr Price of the Apprenticeship Advisory Council assured him that his four years' work would be credited to him if he became apprenticed elsewhere. As I have not contacted Mr Price, I do not know whether he agrees that he made this statement. However, that is the story told to me by my constituent.

Subsequent to the cancellation of his apprenticeship, this young man found an employer who was willing to take him on for the remaining 12 months of his apprenticeship, provided that he was accredited with his four years' previous work. This apprentice was examined subsequently by the trade apprentice examiners—my understanding is that one examiner is appointed by the union and one by the apprenticeship authorities—and he was failed. Of course, he could not then be credited with his four years' work. So the whole of that period was wasted.

The whole system is open to abuse. It can happen that an employer is bankrupted and apprentices employed by him could have their apprenticeships cancelled in the event that they fail such an examination. Even though this young man has found an employer who is ready, willing, and able to give him a job, he is not considered suitable for such a job by the trade examiners. This is a bad situation; and particularly as it relates to individuals I felt it was my duty to air it

here in Parliament. I have written already to the Minister for Labour and Industry informing him of the situation.

In his letter of the 27th January, 1978, the Minister said—

You wrote to me on December 15 regarding the apprenticeship of (a constituent), requesting that he be granted credit for time previously served as an apprentice to the plumbing trade. The decision not to grant any credit was made by the Western Australian Industrial Commission on November 10 and was made as a result of recommendations received by the Commission's Examiners to the Trade who are representative of the Union and the Employers. Under the Regulations, I am not in a position to reverse the abovementioned decision.

The Minister was powerless to do anything about the matter. As this is the case, the legislation ought to be looked at to give him power in such cases to credit the time served by an apprentice. Alternatively the apprenticeship system should be tightened up so that if this lad was not suitable—and I am not saying he was; that is another question—he should not have served four years of the apprenticeship.

The Hon. G. W. Berry: It may have taken them a long time to find out.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: That is so. It was obvious that there was a weakness in the lad concerning the theory side of his trade because he got an exemption from the Industrial Commission not to attend those classes. How silly is it, when a person has a weakness such as that and cannot pass the examinations, to exempt him from the provisions?

What should happen is that such a person should be given twice the amount of education so that he has an opportunity to learn the theory side. But the exemptions were given, and when the lad lost his apprenticeship because it was cancelled he could not get credit for four years. Surely it does not take four years to find out that a person is not suitable. That ought to be found out in the first 12 months. I see a weakness somewhere in the system. I do not know where it is because I am not involved in the apprenticeship side of trades, but I am speaking as a member of Parliament desiring something to be done to overcome this sort of situation whereby I have a very unhappy constituent because four years' of an apprenticeship has gone down the drain.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: At least what you have said can go on, and I can get an answer.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I should like an answer because I have great sympathy for the lad. It has been said to me by many people that he was not suitable. If he was not suitable, that should have been found out in 12 months.

The Hon. T. Knight: But they serve a three months' statutory apprenticeship before they are signed on. In that time an employer is supposed to say whether he is all right.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: That may be so, but it was not done on this occasion. The matter went on for four years and when he lost his apprenticeship he wanted to do the final year. I said to the Minister that there was an employer willing and able to take on the lad. I named the employer who was willing to take him on for the final 12 months if he could get those four years' credit. I asked the Minister to credit him for four years but he could not do so.

The Hon. T. Knight: As I understand it, if an employer takes on an apprentice and does not employ him at the end of three months he is liable to prosecution. I was a trade examiner, and this was what happened after three months.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Well, it did not happen in this case. When I receive a reply I shall give Mr Knight a copy. Fortunately this is the forum in which we can bring these matters forward.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: That is the proper thing to do. I shall see that it goes forward and that you get an answer.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I have no more to say on that matter which occurred during the parliamentary recess and about which I feel rather strongly.

The next matter is only a small one, but it ought to be raised because it is an area in which the Government ought to be considering legislation. I refer to price control. The situation I am raising involves only one article and would not affect many people. I wish to bring up a matter concerning type MC562N National vacuum cleaner which is a square vacuum cleaner, the design of which is a little different from normal ones. Twelve months ago the cost of five paper bags for this vacuum cleaner was \$1.90. I thought that was a fair price. Twelve months later when I went to purchase some bags I found that the recommended retail price was \$5.25.

The Hon. O. N. B. Oliver: I can instance the reverse situation to this when a price actually came down.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Was it a National vacuum cleaner?

The Hon. O. N. B. Oliver: No.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: There we are; are we buying the wrong type of vacuum cleaners? That is why I am mentioning the National company in this forum.

The Hon. Grace Vaughan: Even that is not as big an increase as that for my tin of sardines.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I am talking about something entirely different from that. Although I agree with Mrs Vaughan, she can raise that case when she talks to the Supply Bill. A number of retail firms will not stock these bags, and because I thought that was wrong I telephoned Haco Distributors, the agents in Western Australia. They told me that if I cared to send them the money beforehand they would send the item back to me and I would not have to go to the shops. But think of the inconvenience involved in that type of transaction. I asked them to send the item out and I would pay cash on delivery. But not on your sweet life!

The Hon. R. G. Pike: Are you proposing that the Government legislate to control the price of those bags?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I am talking about price control generally.

The Hon. R. G. Pike: You want price control generally?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Yes.

The Hon. R. G. Pike: Not just for vacuum cleaners?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: No. The cost of living in Western Australia is higher than that in any other State, and this is one of the reasons.

The Hon. R. G. Pike: It may get higher if you introduce price control.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: If the member will allow me to finish the story he will admit that this is a fairly big price hike. What happened then was that I was informed by Boans that they may not be keeping these bags in stock in future because of the difficulty in selling them. There is a consumer problem here in so far as once one buys a vacuum cleaner one has difficulty in obtaining particular paper bags—and paper bags are a staple item—for them; and for the price to go from \$1.90 to \$5.25 is scandalous. Everybody is trying to pass the buck. The people at Haco Distributors—when I nailed them—said that it really was not their fault, but the fault of the people in Sydney. Where does one go then? All I am saying to members of this House and to those people who may care to read *Hansard* is, "Do not buy National vacuum cleaner MC562N because you are going to have all the trouble in the

world." People can be protected against this sort of thing. Wages are controlled, so why cannot prices be controlled.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: There is the Consumer Protection Bureau.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: The Minister for Consumer Affairs might read *Hansard* and find out what the score is. I prefer to mention this matter in the House in the hope of getting a bit of publicity so that people are warned not to buy a National vacuum cleaner of this type. It is very easy to buy the vacuum cleaner but it is very hard to buy the bags that go with them. The amount of \$5.25 for five bags—more than \$1 each—is ridiculous. Something ought to be done about the matter.

The Hon. R. G. Pike: Are the bags re-usable?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: That is a good question from Mr Pike; I am glad he reminded me. The bags are not re-usable, because a small piece of cardboard on the top which fits into the vacuum cleaner prevents one from emptying the contents out afterwards. So, because they are not re-usable there is a double problem.

The next matter I wish to raise is a much more serious one, and it concerns the central posting office that exists within Government departments. That was the description supplied to me. A constituent came into my office one day complaining about the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority; no doubt other members have had the same experience, and that is why I am asking the Minister to look into the matter. This constituent had made inquiries at the Belmont Shire Council concerning a set of plans which had been sent to the local authority for approval. She was advised that they had been posted back on the previous Thursday to the Belmont Shire. A delay had been experienced in the receipt of those plans.

As a result my constituent became agitated, and rang me on a Saturday morning. On the following Monday I thought it would be a relatively simple matter to check with the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority to find out whether, in fact, those plans had been sent back. When one deals with a multiplicity of authorities one sometimes finds that they pass the buck from one to the other. I rang the shire to ascertain whether the information was correct, and I was assured it was. I then rang the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority and I was assured that the plans had been sent out on Thursday of the previous week.

This was a delay caused by the central posting system that had been introduced to save money,

and it may be a week before a letter reaches Belmont. I regard it as incredible that it should take a week for a letter sent from Perth to reach Belmont. The reason advanced to me was that the particular letter had just missed the mail that night, and I was informed the mail was cleared only twice a week. It had arrived the following Thursday, and so it was a week in transit. This system has been introduced to save money, but it is causing a great deal of inconvenience. Whilst it may save some money, the amount would not be of any great magnitude.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: It is saving thousands of dollars a year.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: This central posting system is causing a tremendous amount of inconvenience to people. Surely the people deserve some consideration. If it takes a week for a letter written, for instance, by a Minister to reach one of his constituents or a business firm, then the position ought to be looked into. A delay of a week could cost a person in business thousands of dollars, in the case of an important plan for which approval is being sought. If such delay occurs then the amount of money the Government is saving is being wasted. I raise this matter relating to the central posting office, and I hope the Minister in this House will inquire as to whether the system is working, particularly as far as the MRPA is concerned.

Whilst I am dealing with the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority I wish to refer to another problem which involves another individual, but no doubt others have been affected in the same way. The matter I wish to raise has been discussed in this House before in relation to another scheme. It concerns the Metropolitan Region Scheme Amendment No. 138/31, Herdsman Lake. This matter has been raised by one of my constituents, Mr Uren. I am sure members are familiar with this gentleman, because of the problems which he experienced some years ago arising out of a scheme that was operating in the Bayswater area. Mr Uren still feels that a wrong was done to him at the time, and he is taking every possible opportunity to ensure that it does not happen to others in the future.

Some of the events that occurred as a result of the lodgment of his objection to the Herdsman Lake scheme indicate to me, anyhow, that the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority is not very tolerant towards the actions he is taking. I believe the authority should be tolerant, in view of the errors that were made some three or four years ago.

I wish to outline exactly what happened in connection with his objection to the amendment that has been put into effect. I refer to section 31 (f) appearing in the second schedule to the Act, as amended in 1975. I shall quote that section so that members may be fully aware of it. It states—

(f) (i) The Authority shall consider all submissions that have been duly lodged and where a submission contains an objection to the Scheme the Authority shall not dismiss the objection until the person making the submission or his agent has been given the opportunity of being heard on the objection by the Authority or by a subcommittee of the Authority appointed by it for the purpose and which it is hereby authorised to appoint.

This person put in what he claimed to be an objection, and it was included in a written submission. The submission was lodged on the 16th March, 1977.

He did not receive a reply to his submission until the 23rd June, 1977; at least the letter is dated the 23rd June. I do not wish to confuse the issue; I want to make clear the attitude of the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority, bearing in mind that its reply was written after a meeting had been held. The final paragraph of the letter reads as follows—

The Metropolitan Region Planning Authority has on 25th May, 1977 given consideration to your submission and noted that your submission has no relation to this amendment either as one in support or in opposition to it. Furthermore, the Authority considers that there is no basis for the claims made in your submission.

That is the view of the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority. However, Mr Uren contests that view. The major point to be made is that irrespective of that view, he lodged an objection and he had the right to be heard, but the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority did not want to hear him. In his submission he went to great lengths to outline what the matter was all about. I support him in the claims he made. He claimed that the authority had no right to pass over his objection, without giving him the opportunity to be heard. The authority should have extended the courtesy of hearing him.

After he received the letter he went to the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority on the 6th July, which was the date of the second hearing. He was told by a Mr Peters that the authority was hearing only one person on that day, and that Mr Uren would not be heard. Notwithstanding the fact that he would not be

heard, he went there on the day the authority was to hear his objection. Before any evidence was taken he asked to be heard, but he was still denied the opportunity to be heard.

Then on the 7th July he wrote to the authority protesting about the fact that he had not been given a hearing. The authority did not even have the courtesy to answer his letter on the 7th July. Not to be daunted he wrote again on the 21st August, 1977, outlining much of what I have said. He received a letter dated the 21st September, 1977, in which the following appears—

In reply to your letter dated 21st August, 1977 I am advised that The Metropolitan Region Planning Authority has complied with the relevant provisions of the Metropolitan Region Town Planning Scheme Act and has given full consideration to your submission.

I wish to point out that the letter of the 21st August was, in fact, addressed to the Minister for Urban Development and Town Planning (the Hon. E. C. Rushton), and the part of the reply I have just read out was from a letter written by Mr Rushton. The Minister did not say he agreed, but only that he had been advised.

Mr Uren then wrote again to the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority on the 30th September, but again there was no reply. The only reply he received after the 7th July was the letter from the Minister, who did have the courtesy to reply. However, the authority has ignored his letters. The least it could have done was to reply to his letters, and because of its failure to do so I am very critical of it.

Let us turn to the report on the Metropolitan Region Scheme Amendment No. 138/31 submitted by the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority, which has been tabled in Parliament. The report contains some inaccuracies. At page 2 under the heading of "Part 3—Summary and Consideration of Submissions" the following appears—

7. At the close of the period the Amendment was open for public inspection twenty seven (27) submissions had been received. The list of persons who made submissions is at Schedule 1. Twenty five submissions were in the form of objections, one was in support of the Amendment and one related to the methods the Authority adopts in implementing amendments.

I emphasise the last part of that paragraph "and one related to the methods the Authority adopts in implementing amendments". I believe that refers to the submission put forward by Mr Uren.

The authority says in its report that 27 submissions were received. I counted them, and in fact I found there were 28 submissions. So, there appears to be a discrepancy which the authority ought to clarify.

It is on this basis that Mr Uren has requested me to move that the report be rejected by Parliament. I prevailed on him not to adopt that course of action, because I would have to go to great lengths in taking such a step.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: One submission could have covered two cases.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I am not sure of that, but I counted 28 submissions. If we look at the schedule we find there are 28 listed. Whether the explanation given by the Minister for the discrepancy is correct I do not know. However, the matter needs clarification. Neither Mr Uren nor I can understand it.

I shall now deal with the next paragraph again under the heading of "Summary and Consideration of Submissions". It states—

8. The Authority decided to offer all but two persons who made a submission in the form of an objection the opportunity of being heard by the Authority. Twenty one objectors were heard either in person or through an agent acting on their behalf. The two persons not offered a hearing were Main Roads Department (Submission No. 4) and Mr V. V. Daniele (Submission No. 25) as it was possible to meet these objections by modifying the Amendment.

I emphasise that 21 objectors were heard, and two parties were not offered a hearing—Mr V. V. Daniele, and the Main Roads Department.

Earlier in this report the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority states at page 1 under the heading of "Synopsis of Events Leading to the Amendment"—

4. The Authority, at its meeting on 23rd April, 1975 adopted a preliminary report entitled "A Plan for Herdsman Lake" as a basis for discussion on the future of the Herdsman Lake, which is reserved for parks and recreation in the Metropolitan Region Scheme, with various environmental bodies and public instrumentalities.

5. These discussions culminated in a seminar held on 14th August, 1975, from which evolved a report representing a technical assessment on obtaining a satisfactory balance between the wide variety of interests and aiming to re-evaluate the present and potential uses of the Herdsman Lake area.

6. The Authority endorsed that report and adopted the Concept Plan as amended as a guide for the future development of the Lake. At the same time the Authority at its meeting on the 2nd June, 1976 resolved to amend the Metropolitan Region Scheme to reflect the changes contemplated in the Concept Plan and report.

The point I make here is that as far as the MRD is concerned that seminar was a waste of time, because subsequent to it the department made a submission altering the proposed plan and it was agreed to. Therefore, what was the purpose of the seminar? I wonder what is going on at the MRPA when this type of thing occurs. This is the first experience I have had with the authority, but it appears to me that it is running roughshod over people and that it conducts seminars and so forth, but does not come up with the right answers. The MRD has had to make a submission which was subsequently agreed to. According to the report there was no need for the department to be heard. Paragraph 9 of part 3 reads—

9. The submission by Mr A. C. Uren (Submission No. 24) was noted only by the Authority as this submission did not affect the Amendment.

Of course it was only noted, but I believe Mr Uren ought to have been heard.

We now come to part 4 which is headed "Conclusion and Recommendation". It reads—

Conclusion

The Authority is satisfied that every submission was fully considered and that every person who made a submission and required to be heard were afforded every opportunity to express their points of view in a frank and open discussion with the Authority.

What a load of rubbish! Mr Uren was not even heard. He did everything possible to be heard, but he was not even given the courtesy of a reply to his submission until after the first meeting was conducted. I ask members: Is that very fair?

That deals with the report itself. Let me now come to the next sequence of events. Mr Uren came to my office and indicated that the written

report—not the maps, but the written report—was not available to the public from the MRPA, and would not be available until such time as it had been approved by Parliament. I did not think that was right, because if there was something in the report to which Mr Uren objected and he wanted to read the report and contact his local member to raise the issue before the time for disallowance had elapsed, he ought to be given the opportunity to do so. The report ought to be freely available to the public.

So I rang the MRPA myself to find out whether I could obtain a copy. At first I did not say who I was; I merely asked for a copy. I spoke to a Mr Gell who said I could not have a copy, but that I could go into the office because it was on the board and I could have a look at it there. I indicated that I knew the map was on the board as I had been told this, but that I wanted the submissions to study. He replied, "Oh no. You cannot obtain those until after they have been approved by the Parliament."

Again, not announcing who I was, I protested, and when I did so I was told to get one through my local member, whereupon I told him I was the local member.

That is a poor way to have to go about obtaining a report. I knew I could obtain one as the local member because Mr Uren had obtained one from Parliament. I do not think that is a fair situation. If the public wish to study the report before the time for disallowance of the regulations expires, they ought to be given the opportunity. Therefore, I hope the Minister will raise this matter with the Minister in another place to ascertain whether something can be done to improve the situation.

What I said amounts to the MRPA keeping things from the public. Why should Mr Uren not be able to get the document the same as I can obtain it? Something is wrong. The public ought to have this opportunity and I hope the Government will consider the position to ensure people are given adequate opportunity to look at reports, so that if they disagree with anything in them they can contact their local member as did Mr Uren prior to the expiration of the period for disallowance by Parliament.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I thought these reports were available from the Government. You can buy them at the information office.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I tried to obtain a copy myself by phoning just to confirm that Mr Uren was levelling with me. I did not think that what he told me was possible. I might add that when I informed Mr Gell I was the local member,

he decided he had better check the position. He said there had been a kerfuffle the other day about the matter, but he added he had been told I could have a copy after Parliament had approved the amendment. However, he went to check with someone higher up, and that was the answer he gave. I do not think that is a fair situation.

Anyone can obtain the report through the local member, but that puts us to a great deal of unnecessary trouble. I think we are given only 12 sitting days in which to move a motion of disallowance, and therefore people should be able to obtain a report easily.

I come now to the subject of workers' compensation which I mentioned earlier and about which I know a great deal, because I was heavily involved in it in the union. I noticed that in the Governor's Speech he indicated legislation would be introduced to overcome defects in the Act, pending a thorough review of it. There are some defects in the Act which require review, but not the type of amendment the Government is proposing in respect of a reduction in payments from 100 per cent to 85 per cent, and other provisions which have been mentioned. The legislation is not before Parliament, but if we read the newspapers we can expect the worst.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: What makes you utter a remark like that?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: It is freely mentioned in the Press and Mr Grayden has been on television—

The Hon. G. E. Masters: You say that we can expect the worst. Why?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: As far as I am concerned, a reduction to less than the worker's award wage is the worst. As a matter of fact the worst has already occurred, because in 1975 the then Government amended the legislation to provide for the payment of the worker's award wage instead of his average weekly earnings. If a worker was doing overtime or had other inbuilt penalties for weekend work and the like which he had been accustomed to receiving, he would have budgeted according to the circumstances; and this is the important factor. The worker was faced with the proposition that his wage was reduced to the award wage.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: It was brought back to what it was supposed to be in the first place. Mr Dans and I happened to be on the same committee. There was no doubt about what it was supposed to be. It was misinterpreted.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: That might be what the Minister says now.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: That is the truth.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: That is what the Minister is saying now.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: You can read the transcript.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: That is not how the Act read.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: The Act was misinterpreted.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: If the Act was not drafted as it was supposed to be—

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: They drafted it as they thought fit, but the law interpreted it differently.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: That shows you how easily lawyers get their money.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Mr Dans sat side by side with me and knew precisely what we agreed to.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: We will not argue about that, because it is water under the bridge. The Government is cutting it back further. The Minister just said it was already cut back to where it ought to be. If that is the Minister's interpretation, I will accept it; but why should it be cut back another 15 per cent?

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: We haven't, have we?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: It is threatened and the unions are organising a campaign to prevent it. If the Government does not intend to make the reduction it should make an announcement to that effect to prevent the gross waste of money. That is what the campaign is about.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Great waste of money?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: If the Government is not going to make the reduction, for heaven's sake let it tell the unions so they can cease their campaign.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: They would not believe us if we told them that tomorrow would be Wednesday.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I do not blame them.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: But more reasonable people would.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I have the reputation of being most reasonable and most lovable.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. F. E. McKenzie!

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Thank you, Mr President. The average gross award wage is \$158.61. If that is reduced by 15 per cent the

figure will be reduced by \$27.79 which is a tremendous reduction in the weekly wage. The Minister would not understand the trauma experienced by a worker who suffers an injury of heavy magnitude.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: Do you think that worries Mr MacKinnon?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: It ought to. It certainly worries me and if members opposite have dealt with workers in that situation they would understand.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: They might too.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Are you two having a private conference?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I raise this subject because I have had practical experience. This does not apply to the Minister. I say this with respect, because there are some areas in which he could probably say the same about me. However, I have had practical experience on this subject with the union.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: You know there is only one reason for the figures as they appear, and that is a gross misuse of the Workers' Compensation Act.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: That is not true.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Of course it is true, and in this field I know more than Mr Hetherington because I have worked in the trades.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I have had a look at this carefully and I have heard all the statements which have been made. We lack the proof, because the Minister will not produce it.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: It is in any graph you like to study.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I hope he brings it forward.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: You can reject it if you like, but it is there for you to see.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: You bring the proof.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: This accusation of abuse is a load of rubbish.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: It is not. I have worked side by side with fellows in the trades.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I want the Minister to tell me where it is occurring.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Mainly in back troubles, and you are well aware of it.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I wish to quote the provisions of the Act.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I helped write them.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Obviously the Minister has not remembered the first schedule, clause 5 of which reads—

5. Any worker receiving weekly payments under this Act shall, if so required by the employer, from time to time submit himself for examination by a duly qualified medical practitioner provided and paid by the employer. If the worker refuses to submit himself to such examination, or in any way obstructs the same, his right to such weekly payments shall be suspended until such examination has taken place, and shall absolutely cease unless he submits himself for examination within one month after being required so to do.

I have had practical experience of workers objecting to the provision requiring them to go to another medical practitioner when so notified by the employer. They do not want to go to another doctor. They think the one who is treating them is satisfactory.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I bet they do.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: What happens then? If the worker does not comply with the requirements of the Act his payments are immediately suspended.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: That is nonsense. What other doctor does he go to at Pannawonica?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: An appointment will be made for him to go to Port Hedland.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Is Pannawonica the area where all the abuse is taking place?

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: No. I cite that as an illustration of the fact that that clause has no import.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I agree that anyone cheating on workers' compensation should be met with the full force of the law if the Minister can bring forth the proof, but he will not do it.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: The employer can send the worker to a doctor of the employer's choice, no matter where that doctor is. If the employer has doubts about the worker, he has a responsibility to send him to another medical practitioner, and if that doctor says he is bludging—or, in other words, he is fit—the insurance company stops the payments immediately.

Then comes the next problem. The worker has to wait 49 weeks—a little over 11 months—before he can take his case to the Workers' Compensation Board, and in that time he does not receive one red cent. If there are abuses, they should not be occurring. Either the insurance

companies or the employers are falling down on the job, because provisions exist in the Act to ensure abuses do not occur. That is what I am pointing out. I cannot understand why the Government would listen to a few insurance companies.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: You know better than that. The insurance companies in no way want a reduction. If you had an ounce of knowledge of the matter, you would know your last statement is absolute rot. Not an insurance company in the State wants the amount reduced.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Then who does?

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: You are making the speech; you tell me.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Someone is pressurising the Government.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Certainly not the insurance companies. Have a talk to Mr Dans during the tea suspension and he will put you straight.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Read the speech of a member in another place, when he signalled what he would do.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members will refrain from these unruly interjections. The honourable member will address his comments to the Chair and disregard the interjections.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I understand the sensitivity of the situation but I am doing my best to point it out to members opposite, because it may well be that something can be done in party circles before legislation comes here. I have quoted the provisions in the Act which place the onus on the insurer or the employer to send the worker to another doctor if there is any doubt about him. If the doctor says the worker is fit, the insurance company has the right to cease payments, and it takes the worker 11 months to get before the Workers' Compensation Board.

It is interesting to note that the average time lost per accident is actually falling. In 1975-76 the average time lost per accident was 3.4 weeks, and in 1976-77 it was 2.8 weeks. I quote those figures from Appendix A of the Bureau of Statistics documents; so they are authentic. Even the cost per accident is falling. In 1975-76 the cost per accident was \$580, and it is now \$558. Yet amending legislation is to be brought forward.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: Do you think it is a deliberate attempt by the Government to agitate the work force?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I must think that. I cannot understand it. I have had practical

experience of dealing with people on workers' compensation.

I was going to mention the problems some of these people have. I have worked in the railway industry and I know it very well. It is an accident-prone industry. A number of people in the community have worked in the railways and lost limbs or life in shunting accidents, which are not always their own fault. The weather is sometimes responsible for these accidents, just as it was responsible for the losses suffered recently by farmers in the south. On a very wet night one is probably out shunting in rubber galoshes and paddling around in pools of water, because shunting yards must be in a flat area. The steel rails are slippery, and if the worker slips there is an accident. It happens innumerable times.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: What do you mean by "innumerable"—476?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: No. I do not want to enter into semantics.

The PRESIDENT: I suggest the member does not.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Let us say there have been a number of accidents. One of the worst things that can happen to a worker is to lose a leg. When this happens the railway union arranges for another worker who has previously lost a leg and been fitted with an artificial leg to visit the hospital to reassure the injured man. It also sends a representative out to the worker's residence to talk to his wife. The family is usually very distraught. For a long time Dad has done all the chores around the house and the gardening. He now finds he cannot do it any longer. He cannot mow the lawn or chop the wood, and his wife has to get someone in to do it, particularly when she has two or three small children.

An additional financial responsibility is therefore incurred, so the worker will be hit twice; firstly by having his compensation payments reduced, and secondly by having to meet additional expenditure to have someone else do the things he cannot do himself. This situation might continue for a couple of years until an artificial limb can be fitted and the worker has use of it to some extent.

I hope that before the legislation comes to Parliament members opposite will consider what I have said and hammer home to the Minister the fact that the Act contains a provision which should be used more often in the case of abuse. Whatever system we have, there will always be an odd few who will abuse it. I could not say everybody does the right thing, because in any society anywhere in the world there will always be

people who abuse the system. I daresay in the communist countries there are people who abuse the system.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: They have a sudden end if they are found out.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: The Government should be looking at the report of the board of inquiry into workers' compensation in Victoria, which was instigated by the Victorian Liberal Government. One of the recommendations in the report is that there be one statutory authority to overcome the administrative cost of having so many private operators.

We have a Premium Rates Committee to examine workers' compensation premiums, but I think it is out of date. That committee is responsible for the increased premiums employers have to meet. Under the Tucker formula the committee takes into account profit margins, and so on. Because it must take into account unresolved claims, it must make some sort of a guess to arrive at the premiums. I do not think it works satisfactorily.

If the premiums are too high, the Government should be looking at these matters instead of reducing workers' compensation payments and putting this State behind the rest of Australia. In Western Australia there are 74 private insurers. There should be only one.

The Government should also be looking at employers who have bad safety records because of their inadequate safety provisions. Some employers have good safety records but others could not give a damn; they hide behind the workers' compensation provisions.

In addition, the legislation should contain a provision for rehabilitation.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Don't you think it would be better to keep rehabilitation as a separate discipline, so that rehabilitation is the responsibility of one group? Don't you think we should have one centre, instead of having one for workers' compensation, one for retraining, one for accidents in motorcars, and so on?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: There is no provision in the Workers' Compensation Act for workers to have their rehabilitation paid for.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: That is not what you said, but I see what you mean.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I come now to my hardy annual concerning transport, which is a matter that really interests me. I would like to speak on a number of areas in relation to public transport and the railways in general. First of all, let me refer to the decision of the Government to

hand over refrigerated transport to private entrepreneurs.

I raised this matter during the last session before the decision was made, in the hope that the Government would not proceed with the matter. I am sorry to say that, notwithstanding my remarks, the decision was made; and it has been very badly received if the information coming to me is correct. A number of people have written to me from country areas regarding this; people right throughout the State are dissatisfied and unhappy with the service that has taken the place of the rail service.

As an example, the Minister for Transport would know that the Shire of Dundas has been very unhappy with the new service to Norseman.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: They were unhappy. Many of their difficulties have since been alleviated.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I have not been advised of that.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: Perhaps the Minister had better go there and have another chat with them.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: The matter certainly had not been resolved on the 26th January, because the shire wrote to *The Kalgoorlie Miner*.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: That letter was outdated even then; it was written before that.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: It was on the 26th January, and the shire took the Minister to task in respect of certain things he said at that time. I quote as follows from the letter in order to refresh the Minister's memory—

In respect to Mr Wordsworth's statement that "a particularly mischievous claim was that there would be a rise of 250 per cent in costs for Norseman people for fruit and vegetables", I advise that an officer of the council obtained the freight rates applicable, immediately prior to the change over, from Westrail.

These rates were used when determining the percentage increase in respect to the new service. If mischievous claims were made they were made on the basis of figures supplied by Mr Wordsworth's own department.

So the shire claims that freight rates increased by 250 per cent, based on information provided by Westrail officers. In respect of the cost factor, the letter goes on to state—

Mr Wordsworth also states that fruit and vegetables can be delivered twice weekly by

road. This may be true, but what he neglects to point out is that the Metropolitan Markets are held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and the road transport company only receives goods for delivery to Norseman on Mondays and Tuesdays. Norseman retailers therefore have access to Monday's market only, if they wish to use refrigerated transport.

Fruit and vegetables available in Norseman on Monday mornings, if transported by road, must have been marketed the previous Monday. Until the council and the public of Norseman complained strongly, a similar situation existed with respect to milk deliveries.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: Milk deliveries have nothing whatsoever to do with the transfer.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: No, the transfer of milk deliveries from Westrail happened some time previously, and perhaps this is symptomatic of the type of thing that is occurring. First one commodity is affected and then another, in a sort of extension of the domino theory, until all commodities have gone from Westrail.

All members would have received from the railways union a letter addressed to the Premier in connection with this matter. Some of the examples enumerated include vegetables for the Margaret River-Augusta area being left at the Busselton railway goods shed for Westrail road vehicles to deliver, obviously because it is not profitable for the private firm to cart them further; boneless beef carcasses marked "Keep Chilled" consigned to a supermarket in Busselton being carted in the unchilled baggage compartment of a Westrail road bus; the rate per tonne to cart vegetables to Norseman being increased by 250 per cent, to which I have already referred; and an incident at Morawa which was also quoted.

Members can see that all over the State the public are complaining about the refrigerated services being transferred from Westrail to private companies. The people are saying the change has been detrimental. I have received a number of letters, including instances of meat that had gone bad by the time the truck arrived. In one instance of which the Minister would be aware, because a letter was sent to the Transport Commission, the meat involved was worth \$89.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: It is strange that we are getting complaints now but there was never anything wrong when the railways did this. Would you like me to tell you of the complaints about the railways? I have a book full of

complaints. But now you are complaining about the private companies.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: It is the public who are complaining, not just I. If the Minister shifted the transport of furniture from Westrail because problems were being experienced, that would be acceptable; but he has taken away from Westrail a service with which the people were very happy, otherwise we would not have so many problems now.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: They were not very happy when it was dropped on a railway station at midnight.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: They must have been, otherwise what is all the hullabaloo about now? People are complaining from Geraldton in the north to Albany in the south, and from Meekatharra to Kalgoorlie in the east.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: There are one or two groups being egged on by the "save the railways" campaign.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: That is not correct.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: They are always minorities; we have very strong minorities in this State, don't we?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: The unions have shown commendable restraint, and I believe they should have initiated their campaign before the matter became a *fait accompli*. Why has Westrail lost this service? It is because OD Transport went to the commission and said its business was not viable and that it would have to get more freight in order to be viable; therefore, it was decided to give the company the refrigerated traffic.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: Who decided it?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: The Government.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: It was a decision taken by the commission on the recommendation of Westrail.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Yes, but after OD Transport went to the commission to see what it could get from Westrail.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: I would not know about that.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: That is what I have been told on reliable authority; the pressure to hand over this freight came from road transport firms and, in particular, OD Transport.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: I cannot see how that firm could exert any influence on Westrail, unless it decided to withdraw advertising from your union paper or something of that nature.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I do not know

what happened, but we find that Westrail officers are on a subcommittee in respect of this matter, and refrigerated traffic has been taken away from Westrail. I can understand the position of Westrail, because it is being starved of funds; and it has to get out of those areas in which it provided what could be called a subsidised service to the public, and especially to people living in isolated areas. One such area of freight which is profitable is the heavy stuff; but bit by bit these things are being taken away from Westrail. Who will pay in the end? The people are the ones who will pay, and the Government is abdicating its responsibility to the people, particularly the people in isolated areas. It is handing over its responsibility in respect of the provision of refrigerated freight services; soon there will be no services; it will be a case of, "take it or leave it". When that happens people will leave country areas and the towns will cease to exist.

This handing over of responsibility so far as Westrail is concerned has not occurred only in the area of refrigerated freight, because other States have accepted their responsibility and are developing urban railway systems. However, in this State the system is falling away, bit by bit.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: Perhaps you would like to run through the losses made by the various State railways. How much has the New South Wales system lost?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: That is the point I am making: instead of the whole community sharing the burden, a few people in the country have to carry all the additional cost. That principle is wrong. Who will pay for increased freight rates in the long term? The communities in isolated centres are the ones who will pay, and the more isolated they are, the dearer it will cost them, because road transport operators will not provide the service Westrail has been providing.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: Are you going to tell us the freight to Meekatharra is now dearer?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Yes. I know the Minister will say it is cheaper, and I must agree that it is in some respects. However, let me point out to the Minister that if large quantities of commodities are required to be transported in the event of development occurring in that region, rail freights would leave road freights for dead. If the Minister is referring to small consignments, then those should have been subsidised to a greater extent.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: You are referring to isolated communities?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Of course. Initially the rate might be cheaper, but for how

long has the contract been let? The length is undetermined.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: You have not read the contract; it is for five years.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: The companies can control the rate for themselves. When will tenders be called? Will they be called every year?

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: Do you think rail freights never increased?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: A lot of dissatisfaction has been expressed in respect of the tenders for transport of goods to the north. The dogs were barking it at Meekatharra and throughout the Murchison that Bellway would get the contract, so the calling of tenders was in fact a subterfuge; in fact it was the subject of a legal writ which has since been lifted, thereby enabling the matter to be voiced in the Parliament. I have no doubt that the matter will be voiced in the Parliament often, because people in that area have been tremendously disadvantaged as a result of Bellway gaining the freight contract.

The Hon. N. F. Moore: What do the pastoralists think about wool cartage rates?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I have not asked them.

The Hon. N. F. Moore: There is a substantial reduction.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: That is just one small area.

The Hon. N. F. Moore: That is what the whole country is based on.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Then obviously Westrail was charging too much, and the rate should have been reduced.

I have said enough on the matter of refrigerated transport. I do not know whether the matter is finished, but I hope it is not because Westrail still has its refrigerated vans. I advise the Government to hang onto those vans, because probably the last of this matter has not yet been heard. Once those vans have been lost to Westrail, we will be faced with the problem of capital expenditure for the provision of more vans if necessary, because they are a very expensive item; and once the vans are gone they will be lost forever.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Wait until the domestic price of fuel rises to world parity, and see what the freight rates will be then.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I would now like to refer to the Mullewa-Meekatharra line. Members who represent people living in the

Murchison know they are not happy about that decision.

The Hon. N. F. Moore: Some are.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: How many?

The Hon. N. F. Moore: I do not know any more than you do.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: The President of the Australian Railways Union (Mr Collie) spent a week in that area, and he did not meet one person who was happy with the proposed closure.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: I suggest that he go to the hotelkeeper at Mt. Magnet, for a start.

The Hon. N. F. Moore: And the one at Meekatharra, and many of the pastoralists.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I know what the member is getting at.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: You said Mr Collie could not find even one person who was happy with it.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: He said he did not meet one person.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I know the Minister is talking about the price of beer, because the freight rate for beer has been substantially reduced. I have looked at the freight rates; I appreciate the action of the Minister in allowing me to obtain a copy of the rates.

The Hon. Tom McNeil: Did it reduce the price of beer?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: That is what I am getting at. It is all very well for the hotelkeepers to be happy with a reduction in the freight rates; the question is whether they will pass on the reduction to the community. The action of the Minister could satisfy the hotelkeepers, but will the price of a middy of beer be reduced by 1c or ½c? This is what the Government ought to ensure: that the reduction be passed on to the community.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: If the freight rates go up I am blamed for the increase in the price of beer, but if the freight rates are reduced I am also blamed for the price of beer being unchanged. I cannot win either way.

Sitting suspended from 6.02 to 7.30 p.m.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Prior to the tea suspension I was speaking about refrigerated services in connection with the railways. I do not wish to dwell upon that subject any longer. I shall move on to the next aspect which I wish to cover. It relates to the closure of the Mullewa-Meekatharra railway line.

I have touched on that subject during the course of my speech as a result of interjections

which caused me to drift away from the main theme and onto the closure of the Mullewa-Meekatharra line.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: We would be disappointed if you did not.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I want to quote from an article in *The West Australian* of Wednesday, the 25th January. It states that the Government was lifting the ban on road trains. In that regard the article contained the following passage—

The State Government has lifted restrictions on the operation of a type of road train to give the Murchison and other northern areas a better road freight service.

Double-bottom road trains may now operate on Great Northern Highway, between Muchea and Wubin and on the Geraldton-Mt Magnet road between Geraldton and Mullewa.

The lifting of restrictions affects only double-bottom combinations—a prime mover pulling two trailers—up to a length of 31 metres.

This is one of the problems which will occur as a result of the closure of the railway line. These road trains, 31 metres in length, will be brought into areas where they did not operate previously. The President of the Australian Railways Union (Mr Collie) made a statement in an article in *The Sunday Times*. The article is headed as follows—

Drivers' Lives Risked by Government.

I believe that is correct. I have driven on the Great Northern Highway between Muchea and Wubin. That particular stretch of road is fairly hilly in places and it contains also a number of curves. When these big trucks operate on this particular road it becomes a very hazardous section to traverse. I believe that as a result drivers will be forced to take risks in order to pass these road trains and there could be quite a number of accidents. That is one area which will become apparent in the future when the line closes on the 1st May. When the big road trains operate on that section of road without any additional amenities being provided, I believe accidents will occur and people will be killed, maimed, and injured. These are some of the side effects which never show up in economic terms.

The Hon. M. McAleer: It is a fairly lightly trafficked road.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Does the member mean there is not much traffic?

The Hon. M. McAleer: Not a great deal.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: This might be so; but whether the traffic be light or otherwise, but particularly if there is little traffic on the road, people are more inclined to take risks. It is similar to a situation where rail crossings are used. If few trains run people are inclined to take risks when crossing the line, and if a train happens to be crossing also they get in the way of it. There is not much left of a person when that happens.

The Hon. V. J. Ferry: You are talking yourself into your own argument.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: There certainly used to be more traffic on that road, but I acknowledge the fact that the Brand Highway has removed a great deal of the traffic. However, people still utilise the road and accidents will occur. When that happens I will be saying to members opposite, "This is the wisdom in closing the Mullewa-Meekatharra railway".

The Hon. R. G. Pike: That is a very simplistic view. You are saying you should not close the railway line, because there will be an accident on the road. That is just too simplistic.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Members opposite will not see my argument, but I will remind them later.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: Sometimes simple propositions are true.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Do you not think that the state of the railway line there might have caused an accident?

The Hon. R. Hetherington: You could upgrade the railway line, could you not?

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: You never did. You were in government for three years and never touched it. The maintenance you did on that railway line over three years was disgraceful. That is one of the problems we inherited.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I should like to remind the Leader of the House that Westrail's record is unsurpassed. It has not lost one paying passenger. That is a fact. Never has Westrail lost one paying passenger.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: That is because it has a co-operative Government that closes the railway line when it becomes dangerous.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: The record is there and the record should remain in the future, but I am quite sure that it will not. For that reason I feel I will be able to remind members opposite of the situation after the closure of the line. When people are killed I will remind members opposite of the decision to close the railway line.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: You look as if you are getting pleasure out of it.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: It is not like you to say things like that. It is almost wishful thinking.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: The railway has not yet been closed. It will not be closed until the 1st May. I am giving members an opportunity to rethink their decision. If members do not rethink their decision, I shall be reminding them of it later.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: It is a doomsday attitude.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I will be reminding members of the opportunity I gave them.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: "I told you so". Is that the sort of attitude?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I should like now to move on to the urban rail system.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: I wonder how much the maintenance of the road is going to cost.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I have heard a great deal said and many members opposite have hammered home the question of federalism and centralism. They have remarked consistently about the Labor Party's policies in regard to centralism and how wonderful the federal system of Government is. Members opposite have also said that the States will benefit greatly as a result of federalism.

The Hon. R. G. Pike: We have always said that the Labor Party is a socialist, centralist party and that is right.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I shall tell members opposite what happens as a result of their federalism policies in regard to urban road transport grants. In an article in *The West Australian* of Saturday, the 11th February, we find that Western Australia will receive \$10 million out of an Australia-wide allocation of \$300 million. If that is the federalism policy of members opposite, Western Australia is missing out very badly. We are receiving one-thirtieth of the total of the Australian grant. That is a disgraceful situation.

This State Government was one of the Governments which championed the cause of federalism. Why are we missing out so badly? What have the colleagues of members opposite been doing in Canberra? Western Australia should have topped the list; instead we are receiving \$10 million which is one-thirtieth of the national allocation. That probably explains the situation in respect of the urban transport system.

I believe that if the Federal Government will

not provide the assistance, it is incumbent upon the State Government to find money from its own funds in order that something may be done to upgrade the system. I have mentioned previously that in other States of Australia tremendous expenditure is being allocated in respect of the urban transport system in so far as the railways are concerned. Before I remark upon what is taking place in those States, let me remind members opposite of the census population figures for each of the capital cities that are closely allied to Perth: Brisbane has a population of 957 710; Adelaide has a population of 900 379; and Perth has a population of 805 747. There is not a great deal of difference between Brisbane, Adelaide, and Perth; but what do we find? We find that in Western Australia the Government in the next three years will spend \$1.2 million to purchase three additional rail cars and three trailers. What is being done in the capital city of Adelaide, which is our nearest capital city? The Government there is spending \$17 million on the purchase of rolling stock for the railways.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Do you think it might possibly be because they have neglected their railways so badly for so long they have to do this to catch up?

The Hon. R. Hetherington: They are just catching up on what Tom Playford neglected to do; that is what they are doing. They are taking public transport seriously.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Would you let Mr McKenzie answer the question?

The PRESIDENT: Order! Will the honourable member direct his remarks to the Chair and ignore the interjections?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Thank you, Mr President. I will do that.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: What about answering my question?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I am glad that my colleague from the same province has answered the Leader of the House.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: No, he has not. I am asking you.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: At the present time the railways has the following trains: one AY coach built in 1924; four AYs built in 1945; two AYBs built in 1946; nine AYEs built in 1955; five AYFs built in 1955—they are the corridor-type coaches. They go into service during peak periods. Members must admit from looking at that list that no coaches of that make or type have been built in this State since 1955; that is 22 years ago. This gives members an idea of the state of the

present rolling stock. There are also 18 ADGs built in 1954—they are motorised rail cars—four ADHs built in 1955; 10 ADKs built in 1968—they are the stainless steel type.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: What is the ADH?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: That is a motorised rail car, but of the older type. It is not the stainless steel type. They were built in 1955.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Equipped with the diesel motor?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: That is right; they are equipped with a diesel engine. To continue, there are 10ADKs built in 1968; 10ADXs built in 1959-60; 10 ADAs built in 1964-66—they are trailers; and the last vehicles are the 10 ADB trailers built in 1968 which comprise part of the stainless steel set.

There has been nothing new since 1968, and a great deal of rolling stock is, in fact, over 20 years old. There is definite neglect so far as urban passenger train rolling stock is concerned, and there is an insufficient number of coaches to co-ordinate the services between bus and rail and to place people at strategic points. A sum of \$1.2 million will be allocated in the next three years for the purchase of three additional cars and three additional trailers.

A report came out some time ago which stated that 23 per cent of the rolling stock was near the end of its useful life, and an additional 35 per cent would have to be replaced by 1985. If funds are to come in to the extent of \$10 million over the next five years for the whole of the urban transport programme—which also includes buses—I wonder where we will end up. More and more people will be forced out of their cars and onto road transport, and that is a very sobering thought.

I recently asked a question in this House with regard to placing an upper deck on the Causeway, because of the postponement of the Burswood River project. I consider that as the road system already existed, but became clogged during peak periods at the Causeway, a simple solution would be to construct an upper deck so that traffic could flow in each direction.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: Why not ask how much it would cost? You have no idea of the cost involved.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: It is only a suggestion.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: The Government ought to try to do something, otherwise we will

have to spend more than was spent in South Australia when we get into government.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Mr Hetherington should wait a minute and allow Mr McKenzie to reply to the question.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: Next week Mr Hetherington will be saying that we need more money for schools.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: I will do that, all right.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: No doubt, he will tell us where to get the money.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Something should be done to upgrade the public transport system in the metropolitan area.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Mr Masters should be sitting on the Salaries Tribunal with me. That is something we never argue about.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: The people are being forced away from public transport, because it has become inefficient. As it becomes older and outdated it becomes less attractive to the people, and they are forced into their motorcars.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: A few minutes ago you said the people were forced out of their motorcars. Now you are saying they are being forced into their motorcars.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: They are being forced both ways.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I am not asking the question of Mr Hetherington; I am asking Mr McKenzie.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: I do interject occasionally.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Why do you attempt to take over Mr McKenzie's speech?

The PRESIDENT: Order! Interjections are not allowed at any time.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: That is one thing I never do; I never interject!

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Regrettable as it is, the number of people utilising public transport is falling away in this State.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: The honourable member will be interested to read his speech in *Hansard* where he said five minutes ago that people were being forced out of their cars onto public transport. I will not mind if he corrects his statement tomorrow.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: That will not be necessary. I should have said, "into their cars and onto roads."

The Hon. D. K. Dans: The policy of the present

and previous Governments has been to do that by constantly increasing the price of petrol.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I thought it was the Arabs who did that.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I wish members opposite would give Mr McKenzie a go.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: The last report on transport indicates that fewer people are using public transport in this State, and that concerns me.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: Do you think that is a bad thing?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: It is bad. However, in New South Wales the Wran Government was prepared to grasp the nettle.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: After years of Liberal neglect.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Within six weeks of taking office the Wran Government took action and did something about the public transport system. I am pleased to see it is having an effect, and that is what this Government ought to be doing; grasping the nettle instead of expecting the public to accept the responsibility. The public have to pay for the utilisation of motor vehicles to the extent that they are supporting the Government, instead of the Government providing a better form of transport. I have mentioned the position in New South Wales and I will quote from an article which appeared in the *Melbourne Herald* on the 20th January. The article is headed, "Heaven is just along the track." The correspondent who wrote the article, at that time, stated—

I AM a railway commuter in Sydney... and loving it.

The recent daring measures taken by NSW with its "Operation All Aboard" should be compulsory reading for our transport administrators and political leaders.

By cutting all fares on public transport 20 per cent, the NSW Railways has won back millions of commuters.

And the mentality that train services should be whittled back is strictly taboo north of the Murray.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: And their fares are still higher than ours.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: The policy is to increase schedules and the standard of service, and provide new coaches. The article I am referring to is a quotation from the statement of a

spokesman for the Public Transport Council in New South Wales. It continues—

We reckon that in five years we will have spent \$1 000 million upgrading track, building new lines, bridges and improving rolling stock, buying new carriages and installing computerised signalling, he said.

It continues—

The N.S.W. Minister for Transport is Mr Peter Cox, 51, the man in charge of the biggest spending program in the history of NSW railways.

The NSW public generally feels the curtailing of Sydney's inner urban freeway plans by the Wran Government is a way of covering the huge expenditure on public transport.

And the public does not seem too worried about it judging from newspaper letters.

I thought I would enlighten members in this House of the forward thinking with regard to transport in other parts of the world.

The Hon. W. R. Withers: What would you do for the part of the State represented by myself and Mr Tozer which has no railway carriages at all? Would you do something up there in that one-third of the State?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I am talking about urban areas and this is where the allocation of Federal grants will be made. There is no allocation for the area mentioned by the honourable member. It is an isolated area.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: So you do not care what happens there?

The Hon. W. R. Withers: Do you not think we should get some start before we go in for any grandiose scheme in the urban area?

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: He thinks that all money should be spent in the city.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: It seems that more and more we mention what is happening in the United States of America. It worries me that the policies of this present Government are short term, and it is time the Government changed to more long-term policies rather than those which are expedient and apply only in the short term.

All members have read about the looming energy crisis, and the need to conserve fuel. I read an article recently in which even the President of the RAC—I think it was—was advocating that we ought to be aiming to educate people to conserve fuels. If the Government does not lead in that area, how in the name of goodness can it be expected that the public will do anything about

it? There has to be some lead from the Government.

I will refer to what is happening in New South Wales. The *Daily News* of Tuesday, the 28th March, carries an article under the heading, "America's car love affair cooling off". It is heartening to know that people like myself are advocating the use of public transport. The article reads—

Americans, especially young Americans, are willing to cool their long love affair with the car and spend more tax money on public transport, a major new Transportation Department survey shows.

The article continues—

Transportation secretary Brock Adams said the findings of the 54 000 survey—the first of its kind in more than a decade—already are being translated into policy.

He said some findings came as a surprise, including strong support for passenger rail travel and the fact that "the American people basically support spending more on public transportation even though they are still out there in using the auto."

So the change is developing in the United States of America, and it ought to be developed here. However, I am afraid it is not happening.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Do you use public transport?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Yes, I quite often do, I am pleased to say.

The Hon. R. Hetherington interjected.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Cannot the honourable member answer the question before Mr Hetherington answers it?

The Hon. R. Hetherington: I did not provide the answer. I like to have a little to say.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I am glad to receive a little support.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I would take the word of the honourable member, if he has time to answer me.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: In fact, I notice that someone picked up the fact that Mr Hetherington is starting to take notice of what I say. He is to take a train trip.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Is he?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: It is only natural.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: I am afraid so, yes.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: That is where I would start with my colleague. I hope that having

convinced him I will be able to convince some members opposite, and everyone else, that they ought to take a few train trips. What I am saying is having an effect, and I intend to keep going on that path.

I have had a look at the latest report which has been brought down and I would like the Minister for Transport to explain to me, when he is replying to the debate, the reason for the additional expenditure now being incurred in the rail section of the Metropolitan Transport Trust. The report was tabled in this House on the 16th March of this year, and I obtained a copy of it because I wanted to try to find out where the expenditure was going. However, it is very difficult to understand the expenditure from a reading of the document; so I hope the Minister will clearly outline to me the reasons for the additional expenditure.

Under the item, "Traffic and Motor Power Expenditure", in 1976 the amount was \$5 296 271. In 1977, the expenditure was \$3 767 826. That was a reduction in that particular area of \$1 261 445. I think that is commendable, but I cannot understand the next two items which appear. I would like them explained to me. In view of the reduction in one area, why was there such a massive increase in expenditure in the other two areas?

I have previously mentioned in this House in one of my speeches that Westrail might have been fiddling with the figures. Well, the Minister has an opportunity to reply. At the time the Minister doubted what I said and I had no positive proof, but one does form in one's mind some doubt when this type of thing occurs.

This is why I am giving the Minister the opportunity to explain. In 1976 the expenditure in the "Mechanical & Ways and Works" section was \$2.944 million. In 1977, the expenditure in this section was up to \$3.947 million—an increase of \$1.003 million.

We then come to the next item of expenditure, "General Administration". This figure has increased from \$1 287 074 in 1976 to \$2.096 million in 1977. That was an increase of \$807 000. It is very mystifying to me how the section "Traffic and Motor Power" can be down by approximately \$1.25 million and the other two sections are both up—in one case up by over \$1 million and in the other case up by just under \$1 million. I think that needs explaining.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I am sure there is a very valid explanation for that.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I hope the Minister can give me a detailed explanation of

that matter. That concludes what I have to say about public transport. I wish to conclude briefly on one matter—

The Hon. G. E. Masters: Promise?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: —that I neglected to mention earlier. I have received a number of queries from State Housing Commission tenants in my area, and one aspect of the commission's activities concerns me greatly; that is, the maintenance section. In most cases the commission copes with housing for people in times of emergency. Sometimes the accommodation provided may not be exactly what the tenant wants, but families in real pressing need can be housed. I have had a great deal of assistance from the officers concerned and particularly the Parliamentary Liaison Officer. I cannot speak too highly of the officers of this department. I do not know when this service was introduced, but it was a wonderful innovation. Speedy action follows one's complaints, and one meets a courteous reception at all times.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: It has been going a number of years.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I believe the maintenance section of the State Housing Commission needs to be overhauled drastically, including the method of tendering. Obviously there is something wrong with the whole system, because we frequently find that maintenance problems simply cannot be resolved. The commissioners and the people responsible to the commissioners for administering the commission ought to institute an inquiry into this matter.

I would like to give the House an example of the type of situation that exists. Recently I visited a block of flats at Bentley within my electorate. On this occasion I spotted five empty three-bedroomed flats, and this is at a time when people are screaming out for such accommodation. I returned to my office and telephoned the Parliamentary Liaison Officer. I told him these flats had been empty for at least six weeks, and in some cases longer. I thought that was a disgraceful situation, because not only is the commission losing revenue as a result of the nonoccupancy of the flats but also people are being deprived of accommodation, and simply because of a breakdown somewhere along the line.

Yesterday I received a letter in reply to my inquiries, and this was a very poor reply indicating there had been some breakdown between the commission and its cleaning contractors. What a ridiculous situation that is! People cannot move into flats because the

cleaning contractors have not cleaned them. This was only one block of flats, but no doubt the situation applies in other areas.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Who are you blaming? Do you think the cleaning contractors are remiss? Who are you saying was remiss?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I am not saying that the cleaning contractors were remiss, but I am saying that if the commission cannot get this work done with the cleaning contractors it has, it ought to employ its own cleaners for a few days to get this work done.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: You fascinate me! Next week you will say these cleaning contractors are workers and that they belong to a union, and yet you are standing up here blaming them.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: He is not blaming them.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: The moment Mr Hetherington goes, you have to come in. Mr McKenzie can look after himself.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I will tell you a little story about that.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The honourable member will address his comments to the Chair, and I ask other members to refrain from these most unruly interjections.

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: Thank you, Mr President, I will do that. I do not want to be misrepresented, and I believe the Leader of the House is doing that; so I must make the point—

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Are you blaming me? I am shocked to think you would blame me.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Did you not hear the President?

The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE: I do not care whether these people were working for a private firm or for the commission, but what I am saying is that the situation has occurred as a result of maladministration by the commission. If the problem rests with the cleaning contractors, if they are not doing what they ought to do, then the commission ought to employ its own cleaners—probably these would be the same people who presently work for the private entrepreneur. The important thing is that these flats should not be left vacant for six weeks simply because they need cleaning. That is the point I wished to make and I will finish on that note.

THE HON. NEIL McNEILL (Lower West) [8.06 p.m.]: I am very pleased to rise to support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-Reply. Firstly, I wish to express an apology as I

was not able to hear the speech by the Hon. Winifred Piesse. Members will be aware that I was absent on that occasion, because I was otherwise engaged on behalf of this House.

I am pleased that during the course of the debate some reference has been made to the role of His Excellency the Governor and his Speech in opening this session of Parliament. I think it was the Hon. Don Cooley who first drew attention to the fact that no speakers before him had referred to this. I am glad he did so because other speakers have followed suit. It is widely acknowledged in Western Australia that His Excellency the Governor, Sir Wallace Kyle, and Lady Kyle have made a tremendous contribution to Western Australia. Certainly their presence in this House for the opening of Parliament was deeply appreciated, I am sure, by all members of this Parliament and by all the people of the State. They are certainly most fitting representatives of Her Majesty the Queen in this State.

Mr President, as you and other members are aware, it is some time since I spoke in this House. I will avoid mentioning the period in case members fear that I may try to make up for lost time tonight.

Over this period that I was not able to speak in this House, members will be aware that I attended the 23rd General Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association held last year in Ottawa, Canada. I believe it is appropriate in my first speech following that conference that I should make some acknowledgments. Firstly, I must express the gratitude I felt in being able to represent this branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. I express my appreciation to Parliament on my election to represent the branch. Others members of this House have attended such conferences, and other members here have been overseas and visited Canada, including notably yourself, Mr President. It was my first opportunity to do either or both of those things.

I have been in Parliament, both Federal and State now, for a number of years, but undoubtedly this was one of the greatest experiences of my parliamentary career. In recent years I attended a great United Nations congress in Geneva, and therefore I could compare that congress with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference.

The revelation—and I can describe it only as a revelation—that came to me at that CPA conference was the unique nature of that association. Probably members of this House who

of course are members of the association do not always recognise or are not aware of the atmosphere that envelops the Commonwealth of Nations, and so I speak of it as a revelation.

Some 93 branches of the CPA were represented at this conference. There were 179 delegates, a considerable number of secretaries and observers, and the wives of some of the delegates. In all nearly 300 people were there.

The atmosphere is extremely difficult to describe, and even after comparing it with that of the United Nations congress I attended some two years previously, I can say only that the most lasting and deepest impression it made on me was the fact that there could be such a degree of kinship, a feeling of family relationship between representatives of people of such vastly differing religious, racial, and colour backgrounds. I would never have believed it could be possible in a conference where there are so many participants who are engaged—and very directly engaged—in some of the most sensitive, political, international subjects of our time, including the colour question, to speak with such tremendous frankness on these subjects. At this conference there were representatives from Africa, from Southern Africa, and from what I might describe as the white branches of the association, and yet one could speak with any other delegate with absolute frankness on the most sensitive subjects. This in itself was a tremendous experience, and once again it is something that perhaps we do not fully appreciate because of our remoteness from that scene and from so many of these international activities. I repeat it was a very great experience to attend a conference of this nature.

The representation at this conference was made up of some 34 Ministers, 10 Parliamentary Secretaries to the Cabinet or Assistant Ministers, and 32 Presiding Officers. These members made up the major proportion of the total representation at the conference; and even more importantly a large number of these delegates were attending such a conference not for the first time, not for the second time, but for the third and even fourth time. This is important, because clearly in the atmosphere of such a forum one needs to have a certain confidence in one's ability to convey certain stories and to be able to speak on behalf of one's branch or on behalf of one's country, as clearly that is what it boils down to. This conference has now become a forum for the expression of international attitudes, particularly because so many representatives have ministerial or similar positions and can speak with the authority of their Government and their country;

and so very definite national attitudes and policies are expressed in that forum, and this I believe places some delegates and some branches at a little bit of a disadvantage.

That is the way of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association General Conference. Whether it is a good thing that the representation should be made up of such persons is something for the branches themselves to decide. I do not take issue with that.

Perhaps it is well to mention that if, in fact, this conference is to be regarded as a national forum—almost a mini-summit of Commonwealth Prime Ministers—there needs to be some clarification of the delegates attending to ensure they are up to date on national attitudes and policies, and at the same time are in a position to declare them should the occasion arise.

I will mention some of the agenda items to give members an indication of what is involved, because I am sure they would appreciate the sensitivity of some matters in such a forum. In the plenary session the items of the Commonwealth and world security; problems of Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa; and Parliament and the preservation of human rights were debated. During the fourth plenary session the world energy crisis was debated; and in the fifth plenary session the topic was the conflicting interests of members of Parliament between their parliamentary/constituency/party national responsibilities.

In addition to those subjects there were a large number of panel discussions such as Parliament's role in the control of Government expenditure; challenges to Government and Parliament by external groups; assistance to developing countries in the Commonwealth; and preservation of environmental wildlife; and particularly, as it shows the need for members attending the conference to be well and truly abreast of their countries' attitudes and policies, the law of the sea, fish, and minerals. So the subjects are of very special importance not only to the association itself but more particularly to their Parliaments and their countries.

One subject which I will make reference to is the world energy crisis, and members may care to read the proceedings of this particular debate. This subject has come in for mention in the debate today and at other times. For members' edification I would like to refer to two addresses made at the conference. One was the opening address on the energy crisis by Dr Maurice Foster, the leader of the Canadian delegation, who gave a tremendous address; and another by

the Right Honourable John Davies, of the United Kingdom delegation. They were two outstanding addresses. In the case of the Right Honourable John Davies, he delivered his speech off the cuff and he showed himself to be a man with a wide knowledge of energy and the energy resources of the world. I have the report of the conference and it is freely available to any member who may wish to study it.

The Hon. F. E. McKenzie: Where can you get that?

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: I have the report here and it is available in the parliamentary precincts. It is fitting that in making these acknowledgements of the conference, I refer to a motion agreed to in this House which confirmed the support of this Parliament to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and which, in fact, was adopted by the House on the 15th March, 1978. Reference was made in that motion to the fact that a revised constitution had been adopted at the general meeting of the association held during that conference. I do not think this is necessarily the time to enlarge on or to discuss the matters discussed at that conference other than to make reference to it. I think there is another opportunity available to me to speak in more detail on it.

The conference itself occupied a period of a fortnight. With the arrangements I had been able to make privately prior to the conference I was able to make a visit and spend a little time in more than one of the provinces of Canada. Actually, one week of the conference was taken up in travelling throughout Canadian provinces. A second week was taken up in the conference itself dealing with the agenda items to which I have referred.

I cannot let the opportunity pass without expressing my personal appreciation and I am sure that of all the branches for the effort the Canadian branch and its provincial branches put into conducting the conference. The arrangements were superb and their hospitality was beyond belief. I came home with thoughts of Canada as being a wonderful place with wonderful people. There is a very great kinship with Australia and Australians, but once again there is little in common with Australia or Australians. Canada gave me a great many surprises in so far as things I saw which I had not expected to see. It was a totally different country from that which I had expected. For one thing, having heard all my life of the great Canadian wheat industry of Manitoba and Winnipeg, I was not prepared for what I saw at the end of their summer. It was nothing like our own wheat-growing areas of

Western Australia. Mr Gayfer would agree that it is very different. In fact, it is far more like the countryside of England or Europe.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: What about the wooden silos?

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: Yes, I noticed those. Mr McKenzie might be interested to know, in view of his address to the House tonight on the topic of railways, that I took the opportunity of travelling throughout North America and Europe by rail. Apart from the fact that I preferred to do my travelling this way, I also wanted to make some comparisons with the rail systems as I know them in Australia.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: Their freights have not gone up since 1922.

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: I know Mr McKenzie is in some difficulties in trying to join in this debate, but in view of the fact he has been somewhat mildly critical of the railway administration in Western Australia he might be interested in my comments.

I travelled on the *Canadian Pacific* and the *Canadian National* and I am sure it will be appreciated there are two main line railways. I did not travel on AMTRAC, the main US line, but I heard about it. These lines appear to be suffering greatly, because of competition from other forms of transport such as planes and buses. This leads me to a point that perhaps ties in with the interjection of Mr Gayfer that while I have heard almost all of my life about the *Canadian Pacific* I think it barely compares with our *Indian Pacific* in Australia. I say this without wishing to be too critical of the Canadian system and I say it as a person who enjoyed their hospitality. I will go a step further in regard to their local trains and say their local systems undoubtedly would equal ours. On some of their main lines they have magnificent trains and their star train is a most outstanding piece of rolling stock. We do not have one to compare with it, but I repeat that it is just one train.

In the course of going to Canada I went to California. I arranged this myself, mainly because I had heard so much about the place. It was here that I first started to gain an impression that became stronger the longer I stayed overseas and the more countries I visited. It will not surprise members that I am speaking now of agriculture. Before I speak on this, however, I wish to mention that California had suffered from two severe dry seasons. It experienced a severe drought and suffered from bushfires; so it was at the end of that period that I visited Los Angeles and San Francisco. As a side point I might mention their

water shortage. It was rather interesting to go into their hotels and restaurants and see little notices propped up on the tables indicating that water would be served on request. The significance of that would not be lost on members. Most American families and households make it a practice to serve water at the beginning of a meal.

I do not believe that little notice about water being served on request only necessarily made a great deal of difference to their water shortage, but it undoubtedly had a psychological effect of conveying to people the need to conserve water. Despite the film, motor, and other industries of California the agricultural industry still remains the greatest. Never would I have believed the extent of the irrigation system which is fed by the snows of the Sierra Nevada, despite their water shortage. Literally hundreds of miles of irrigation channels cover the land, and I have not seen the like of them in Australia either at the Snowy Mountains or the Ord River. Even the main channels from the Ord River would not compare with those running across California.

Despite the difficulties and problems of great industrial developments in these countries, and particularly in California, there is a keen recognition and appreciation of the place of agriculture in the economy. I make special reference to that, heightened by the discussions I held with a leading agricultural administrator in Ottawa. He thought that they had all the troubles with the dairying industry and that Australia had none, and he was surprised and relieved to learn that we are in a very similar situation. Cattle numbers in Canada would be of an equivalent proportion to those in Australia, yet their Government has provided a subsidy of \$250 million for the dairying industry. I was certainly interested to know the degree of acceptance by the taxpayers in Canada of a subsidy of that nature. When I asked the question it would seem I had almost committed an act of heresy.

He asked me what I meant. I said, "Surely there must be a taxpayer reaction, particularly from those on the border adjacent to the United States with the opportunity perhaps of consumers buying more cheaply across the border." The gentleman was almost horrified. He said that they would not do it, and he was quite genuine and sincere. He said that agriculture and the dairying industry are so important and people know they are so important that they must accept a subsidy or there would be no such industries. That they could not tolerate.

That was another revelation to me. I am not necessarily supporting the payment or receipt of such a tremendous subsidy. What I am concerned

with is the acceptance of the importance of the industry to a country, and in so many countries I visited this was so. Although a deep impression was made on me first in California where the idea crystallised, it was certainly strengthened the further I went around the world. It was the same in Europe, across the Arctic Circle into Sweden and Norway, and right down through Europe. There was an appreciation of the importance of agriculture as an industry.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: With Government support.

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: Certainly with Government support. There was a tremendous amount of Government support. It was not necessarily a good thing, but it was there.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: It is essential though.

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: There was Government support and an acceptance by the people that if they wanted the food, that was the price they must pay for it.

Australia has just come to accept the great agricultural industry which provides 50 per cent of our income. Never to my knowledge have we suffered a food shortage in Australia. Never have we had to use our valuable dollars in order to buy food from overseas; but this is a situation which applies in many other countries, and I am sure it is one of the reasons the agricultural industry is so important to them.

So I would like Australians to return—if "return" is the right word—to a realisation of the importance of the agricultural industry. I am not referring to this as a spokesman for the agricultural industry but as a concerned Australian. I am concerned about Australia's opportunities on the international agricultural market, not just for today but also for the future—in fact, for all time. We must ensure that we retain our food-producing industry; that it is not in any way neglected or becomes a Cinderella.

I referred to the water position in California, but the same situation applies in other places. I wish also now to refer to the position in Western Australia, particularly bearing in mind the severity of our summer and the water restrictions we have suffered. I want to ensure that no inroads are made into agricultural water supplies in this State to supply urban and metropolitan areas. Other sources of supply are available for the people in those areas the cost of which can be borne by those communities. Water lost for agriculture is lost for all time and can never be replaced. Once again I am not speaking in a parochial manner. I am referring to this matter because water is vitally necessary. If heed is not

taken of the need to protect water supplies for agricultural industries, agriculture in Western Australia will suffer in the future.

I have been speaking for a few moments about the agricultural outlook but I would now like to make some reference to the messages you, Mr President, conveyed to the Chamber at the opening of today's proceedings. They were messages of sympathy and condolence from the Secretary-General of the CPA (Sir Robin Vanderfelt), and also from the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the CPA (the Hon. Datuk Musa Hitam) who is also the Minister for Primary Industry in Malaysia. This is another indication of the degree of kinship which is felt and put into practice within the member branches of the association; and I am sure the House appreciated the messages, as I did.

I referred to the energy crisis as it was discussed at the CPA Conference. I am sure it is of interest to members, as it was to me, to learn of the tremendous resources available in Canada. It was again something of a revelation to me, having left this country during a period of water shortage and drought, to see such an abundance of water in that country. I am sure you, Sir, had the same experience yourself. It was almost sickening to see so many trees, enormous forests, and water supplies, and to become aware that in all provinces of Canada they have their hydroelectric systems comparable to our State Energy Commission. Only their energy resources are quite incredible by our standards, because not only do they have those two sources but they are also still very much concerned about the energy crisis and are interested in uranium and its use.

One of the great energy developments in a province in Canada is known as the James Bay hydroelectric scheme. It can be compared to our own Snowy Mountains Scheme, but is much bigger. It had a sobering effect on me to learn in discussion with the director of the authority that the project would cost something in the vicinity of \$3 billion to \$4 billion which is an amount greater than that anticipated for the development of our North-West Shelf gas. That puts things into perspective, because that scheme is only one of the projects being developed in one of their provinces.

We received tremendous assistance and hospitality from the people of Canada, and in this regard I cannot help referring to one other point. Most countries have pet expressions. The American saying, known universally, is "Hi", and the response to any service is, "You are welcome". The point is that people mean it. It is a friendly country and it is certainly tidy and clean.

That in itself was quite a feature in my world travel.

The expression in Canada is different. It is, "Have a nice day". Every greeting and discussion is commenced or terminated with that comment, and it comes from all people including shop assistants and so on. Once again it was very pleasing to feel that the people really meant it. Canadians are going out of their way to make visitors feel at home and they express the hope that the visitors have a great day.

The greatest problem in Canada—and certainly the one most currently discussed—relates to Quebec. We had an absolutely delightful time in that province and city, but the problem to which I am referring is that of separatism. Members would not fully appreciate the problems and difficulties of living, working, and carrying on life in a bilingual country. Actually in Quebec French is virtually the *lingua franca*. The question of separatism is one which obsesses the people and is of concern to them. Although I had some knowledge of this before going there, one must be there before one can realise the full impact of the problem. Actually the situation is very little different from that which existed 30 or 40 years ago in Western Australia when it was in the throes of secession activities. That is the big current issue in that country, and the solution will have a considerable effect not only upon Canada but also upon the United States and other countries, certainly those within the Commonwealth of Nations.

The Hon. I. G. Medcalf: Did you gain any indication of what the solution might be?

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: Perhaps I could say that a certain amount of the discussion and discord existing in relation to this question in Quebec and Canada is of an emotive nature. It is true that a great many people in Quebec are of French extraction. It is also true that they are remarkably loyal as is the case with all other branches of the CPA. Despite their background they adhere very strongly to their history. There is one continuing feature which they make use of at all ceremonies. It refers to the history of the battle on the plains of Abraham. They make acknowledgment to both sides—to both Montcalm and Wolfe. There is no discrimination.

Referring back to the question of the Attorney-General, maybe in the past there has not been an acknowledgment and use of the French language. Perhaps that has made a difference. In the past there has been a tendency federally, and certainly in the provinces of Canada, not to encourage but

to resist at all possible levels the use of the French language.

It might be said that the present Government of Quebec came into office a matter of only 18 months ago; so it is a very new Government. It took office with a very challenging policy and charter and expressed its intention to introduce separatism in a matter of one Parliament. Without wishing to be in any way patronising, I believe its youthfulness as a Government may have led it to enthusiasm for a policy which will not resolve the problem as quickly as it thought.

In speaking with a leading member of the Government about this question, I was told it was an emotional issue and also an economic issue. I refer to the secession period in Western Australian history, when because of an economic question—namely, the tariff situation—Western Australia felt it was at a considerable disadvantage compared with Victoria and New South Wales. I believe Quebec has a similar feeling towards its neighbouring State, Ontario, and that economic disparity has given rise to the move towards separatism.

Basically it is an economic problem but it appears the solution is not necessarily separatism. Quebec will not gain any economic strength from separatism; in fact, the reverse seems to be true because of the loss of commercialism in Quebec. Quebec is suffering a recession as a consequence of that move.

Having returned to Australia through Europe and Singapore, apart from gaining lasting and deep impressions and appreciation of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, I can find no better word to describe the Commonwealth than "family". That is exactly what it is. The great adherence to the family, and the kinship, friendliness, and frankness between delegates on sensitive subjects are centred around a hard core of dedication to one great institution and principle which we in this Parliament also observe; namely, the great British system of parliamentary democracy. That is clearly the centrepiece of the remarkable and unique Commonwealth body.

I returned with another impression in regard to agriculture. Despite the great developments in Europe, the industrial scene in West Germany, and developments in other parts of the world including Canada and California, from the Arctic Circle to Esperance agriculture is undoubtedly the most incredible industry in the world, because of the extent to which it can adapt itself to any conditions in the economic atmosphere which prevails in this country and everywhere else.

I now pass on to something very much closer to home, to a matter which is currently occupying the minds of members of Parliament and the public; namely, our forest country, and in particular the town of Dwellingup. My interest in this matter was heightened just after Easter by some Press photographs of a family enjoying themselves on the Murray River at Dwellingup. Members may recall seeing in *The West Australian* on Monday, the 27th March, pictures of a family marroning on the Murray River at Nanga Brook, south of Dwellingup.

I mentioned that by way of introduction to a matter which has been of interest to me for a number of years; that is, the proximity of the Mandurah-Murray subregion to the metropolitan area and the opportunity to develop a more balanced recreational area in the vicinity of the metropolitan area. I received from the Dwellingup Progress Association a letter, which I think was also sent to the Minister for Tourism, expressing a plea for Dwellingup to become a thriving tourist area for visitors to Western Australia. In that letter the Secretary of the Dwellingup Progress Association (Mr Edgecombe) said—

This zone is within close proximity to Perth and the developing centre of Mandurah. Such a development in the forest area would serve as an alternative to the traditional estuarine, beach and sea shore recreation.

Although the Minister has replied to the letter, I do not think he exactly expressed enthusiastic support of the proposition. I want to expand on it a little and compare the area with another area of which most members of this House have some knowledge; namely, the Gold Coast in Queensland.

The McPherson Range serves as a backdrop to the recreational area of the Gold Coast, and we have something similar in the Mandurah area. Everyone knows what a popular place Mandurah is for metropolitan folk. It has a population—not necessarily permanent—of about 10 000, but last Easter the population expanded very rapidly to 40 000, with resultant traffic congestion.

There is a need not just to provide a better balance in recreational areas, but also to provide an additional outlet to enable people to enjoy something a little different from the water sports of fishing, crabbing, and swimming at Mandurah itself. We have a very good opportunity to expand those facilities along the Murray River on a subregional basis. It is a valuable and highly attractive area, and use could be made of a settlement such as Dwellingup, which has a

history in relation to forests and timber, and of the South Dandalup dam, which is very close to Dwellingup. Use could also be made of other reservoirs in the locality for marron and trout fishing.

The wetlands in this area have unique flora and fauna which are being jealously guarded by the environmentalists. There are also beach and fishing facilities. More comprehensive use could be made not only of Mandurah, but also of the forest areas. I hope the Minister and the Government will give more thought to the proposals contained in the letter from the Dwellingup Progress Association, because I believe there is merit in them and the area is within a 130-kilometre radius of the metropolitan area.

I now come to another topic which has been uppermost in members' minds recently and to which reference has been made today; namely, the disaster on Tuesday, the 4th April. I will not speak in any detail on the catastrophic consequences of the cyclone and the fires associated with it, but I suppose not since the summer of 1961 have the people of the south-west been involved in a disaster such as this. I was directly involved in the Dwellingup fire in 1961, but it was not comparable with the disaster suffered in the south-west last week. The lives lost, the properties destroyed, and the death and suffering of stock are only part of the toll. The full assessment will take months and perhaps even years, and the realisation of it will take a long time for the people who suffered so severely.

I am not concerned only about the material losses in the disaster. I suppose there are very few instances in Western Australian history of such a spontaneous and effective voluntary effort by so many people. I will not mention even one of them, because many individuals, organisations, commercial concerns, and instrumentalities were involved.

In saying that, I must acknowledge the part which has been played by the Government itself. Governments are subject to criticism because they do not act quickly enough or they do not do enough. In this case I do not think much criticism can be levelled at the Government. The Administration went into action very quickly and people were given relief within a matter of hours of suffering tremendous loss. In that context, I want to refer particularly to the provision of assistance to all manner of people who have been affected by the disaster, the latest relating to overcoming what proved to be one of the major problems; that is, fencing.

I want to make grateful acknowledgement to the Government for the fact that it has now announced that in an endeavour to cope with the reported loss of something like 1 000 kilometres of fencing, with an estimated need of up to 200 000 fence posts, it will supply 20 000 steel fence posts which will be distributed to farmers in the Shires of Pinjarra, Donnybrook, Capel, Boyup Brook, and Bridgetown in particular on the basis of need, having regard to the length of fences, and particularly boundary fences destroyed. I might add the posts are being delivered to Westrail immediately and will be despatched to country areas either overnight or tomorrow.

The Government has also given an assurance—which will be comforting to so many of my constituents—that adequate supplies of sawn posts and strainers are available. Also, royalties on timber supplied for refencing are to be waived. I believe this is a most generous offer, and I would like to make a genuine and sincere acknowledgement to the Government on behalf of my electorate for that assistance.

Apart from the material aid and the material damage, I was referring to a matter of concern; that is, the effect this disaster has had on the spirit and resilience of country people; not just farmers, but all country folk. We know they have resilience, the capacity to bounce back no matter what the difficulty with which they are faced. However, I wonder just how much more they can stand.

For years now country folk have suffered poor seasons, including some of the worst on record. Certainly they have suffered disastrously low returns, and all the agricultural industries have faced crippling burdens and costs. I am aware all industries have suffered increases in costs, but I am referring particularly to the agricultural industries.

These are matters that affect the attitude of country folk. I refer also to the increasingly wide disparity between the living and working conditions of country people and those in urban communities.

All these things have been adding up year after year and season after season, and have culminated in certainly the worst summer on record in the current season. As if all these things are not enough, what else can happen?

Of course, something else has happened; it is not the first time, but certainly it has happened with great severity. I refer to something I describe as a calamity and as absolutely infamous sabotage of what little remains to the economy of the agricultural people as a consequence of organised

industrial action. I am sure every member knows what I am talking about. When this organised industrial action follows as it does all the other setbacks over the years, is it any wonder that agricultural people feel the situation has gone far enough and are wondering how much more they can stand?

It is one thing to be able to battle and use one's own devices to try to overcome the vagaries of nature and so on, but it is quite another thing to face up to what is in fact a completely unrealistic situation in which the whole economy and future of farmers are once again being destroyed, but this time on a man-made basis.

I make no apology for describing this action as industrial sabotage and infamous sabotage of the economy of farmers. The agricultural people of this country are close to breaking point, and it is no wonder when they are faced with this situation.

From time to time, and again tonight, we have heard members of the Opposition expressing warnings in this Chamber. We heard one from Mr McKenzie tonight in respect of railways; we have heard in the past the Leader of the Opposition in this House giving dire warnings about what will happen to our economy. He has warned us about those who do not heed the danger signs, as he reads them, in the economy and in the community.

I want to say to Mr Dans and to any other member of the Opposition, particularly those who claim to speak for the unions in this State: Let them now for a change go and talk to the unions. I want them to say to the unions that the people of this country will not and cannot stand up to the situation I have recounted in which their economy and their very livelihood are brought down. As members opposite have issued warnings in this place, I now wish to issue a warning: Do not misjudge the temper of the country people, and bear in mind that I am talking about the militancy of trade unions. We have heard many times in this House, and we have heard many times in respect of the recent elections, of the castigation of the militancy of trade unions as expressed at the polls, and I am sure that is true.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I do not believe it is. I believe there is a third force in the country, and you know that to be true. In the most militant area of this State, the Pilbara, you have all Liberal members, and you know it. You are still having stoppages, because this country is so far behind the rest of the world in respect of industrial relations that it is not funny.

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: I do not claim to

be an expert on this matter, but I have given some account of my journeys overseas. I did not intend to make particular reference to this, but I have seen terrible situations in Europe, and I have seen the consequences of dreadful industrial conditions in the United Kingdom. The conditions suffered by people in the United Kingdom—at least up till the time I left last year—were almost unbelievable. We have seen other things happening in Europe such as terrorism, hijacking, and so on—things which fortunately we do not see in this country.

I could not be persuaded that the situation in Western Australia and in Australia is not being deliberately brought about. As Mr Dans has pointed out, there is no question that the industrial hot spot of the Pilbara is represented by Liberal members, but that has nothing to do with the matter. I do not believe the meat workers of Western Australia and of Australia are ignorant of the true position in regard to the export of live sheep. Why is it that this situation is still allowed to continue?

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I don't know.

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: I would like to know where members opposite stand on this issue.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Did you hear an official of the Fremantle branch of the waterside workers make a plea to meat workers over the radio the other day?

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: No.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I did.

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: As I have said, members of the Opposition often claim to speak for the unions, so what is their attitude in respect of this matter? Do they agree with the activities of the militant meat workers and with the activities of other trade unions which have become involved? I remind Mr Dans of what he said.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Did you hear the president of the cattlemen's association on "AM" this morning?

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: No, I did not.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: He is one of your own people, and he criticised the farmers of Western Australia and South Australia.

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: I remind Mr Dans of what he said, and I wonder whether members opposite will speak to the unions.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Mr McNeill, I have every sympathy in the world for people trying to export sheep. However, instead of one dispute you now have three.

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: Whose fault is that?

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Why don't we make time in this place to debate the issue properly, and I will use some of the facts put forward by the president of the cattlemen's association on the radio this morning?

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: In relation to this matter, on the 21st March the Hon. A. A. Lewis made reference to this dispute, and he was interjected on by Mr Dans after he said it would be interesting to hear from Opposition members what they thought should be done about the live sheep market. Mr Dans said, "Send all the sheep to Fremantle and we will load them. There are 15 ships at Fremantle."

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I did not say there were 15 ships. I said we would load anything that came under the hoof, but you brought in strike breakers and you are now right back to 1919.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: We did not bring in strike breakers; they walked in.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: You had better speak to the management of the Fremantle Port Authority.

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: Could I please make my speech?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: If Mr Dans disagrees with what appears in *Hansard*, I suggest he take up the matter with *Hansard*. However, in fact the *Hansard* report agrees with my recollection of what he said. Remember that apart from being Leader of the Opposition in this House, Mr Dans also has considerable background and reputation on the waterfront in this State. He was expressing his view, and I applaud him for it. One wonders whether he was extending an invitation when he said send the sheep to Fremantle and they would be loaded.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: That view was taken up by a very courageous union official on the radio the other day. Why don't you examine all the aspects of the dispute, and why don't you use your good offices to clean up the dispute that you have started, that has caused every ship in Australia to be tied up, and that has placed the farmers in dire straits?

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: There are people who are determined—

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. G. E. Masters: Are you disputing their right to take some sort of action to protect themselves?

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Do you dispute our right to protect our jobs on the waterfront?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: I am sure Mr Dans would be the first to acknowledge that the country folk of Western Australia are reasonable, tolerant, and patient people, and it would take a tremendous amount to spur them to the point of taking the action they have taken.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Does the Farmers' Union condone the use of scab labour on the waterfront?

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Of course not; it would be delighted to have waterside workers load the sheep.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I ask Mr McNeill whether the Farmers' Union condones the activities of the farmers at Fremantle.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: They are protecting their rights.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Tell me, Mr McNeill.

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: I have not actually seen the Farmers' Union—

The Hon. D. K. Dans: If you don't know, that is fair enough.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: I will go down and give them a hand any time.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: You would be a scab.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: If you people go back to terms like that—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! I would like the Hon. Neil McNeill to continue without inviting interjections.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: No wonder you get confrontation when first of all you use that sort of filthy language.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Honourable members, I have been fairly tolerant in the debate, and interjections are tolerated within reason. However, I believe the honourable member is entitled to be heard as other members have been heard. The Hon. Neil McNeill.

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: Thank you, Sir. I am not disputing your ruling or statement about interjections, Sir, but I am beginning to wonder whether in fact they were interjections, because I was not speaking.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Good point.

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: My question as to where members opposite stand on this matter has been answered; so I do not need to say anything more.

The Hon. I. G. Pratt: Did you see on television the flock of burnt sheep that should have been exported a week ago?

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: I did not see that, but needless to say I read reports.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Did you see the cartoon at the back of the *Daily News* tonight?

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: In view of the fact that we have been warned on previous occasions by members opposite, it is now my turn to issue a warning: Do not misjudge the temper of country people. It has taken a great deal to move this tolerant, patient, and reasonable group of people, and they do not take action such as they have taken unless absolutely provoked.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: They look very much the same sort of people to me—

The Hon. G. E. Masters: You should be ashamed of yourself, using language like that in this House.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, please!

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: I did not hear the words.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: I support scabs any time.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: I know you will and you support unions too. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, Mr Cooley! I should like members to conduct the debate in an orderly way. I realise that some points of view are a little acute but the member on his feet has priority and I crave the indulgence of members to give him a fair hearing.

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: I do not really mind, with all due deference to you, Mr Deputy President.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I am trying to uphold the Standing Orders.

The Hon. NEIL McNEILL: I am expressing a point of view, and I was not really in any doubt that I would attract interjections. But how can members of the Opposition possibly defend an indefensible situation? However, I shall not talk on that subject any longer.

I wish to pass to something else which concerns me and which, it will be said, has political connotations. I refer to statements which have been reported in the Press. On the 16th March, 1978, in *The West Australian* there was a headline which read, "Parliament told of caustic leakage". The article stated—

Ponds holding a caustic-soda solution at Alcoa's refinery site at Kwinana leaked into

the ground-water system between 1974 and 1976, the State Parliament was told yesterday.

There then follows an account of questions asked by the member for Rockingham and the replies given by the Minister for Education (Mr P. V. Jones) on behalf of the Minister in this House. I draw attention to that, because in the *Sound Advertiser* there was an article on the same subject reporting the comments of the local member. The headline of this article was, "Experts are guessing says MLA". The article went on—

Experts assessment that 160 000 cubic metres of caustic soda had leaked from the Alcoa refinery mudlakes at Kwinana was nothing but a "guestimate" Rockingham MLA, Mike Barnett, said yesterday.

Mr Barnett was commenting on the disclosure. . . .

I ask members to note the word "disclosure". To continue—

. . . in State Parliament last week that caustic soda had leaked into the groundwater system between 1974 and 1976.

I do not take exception in any way to reporting of that sort of matter, because it is a serious subject and should be adequately reported. But what does concern me is that it was not the first report of that leak. What perturbs me even more is the use of reports of this nature to build up a scare campaign, because that was its effect. People become unduly concerned. If it had been the first report and if the newspaper reporter had not used the word "disclosure", there might have been some justification. But reference to *Hansard* shows that on Wednesday, the 31st March, 1976—two years ago—in another place Mr A. R. Tonkin asked a series of questions on this subject of the Minister for Conservation and the Environment. Parts of one question were—

Are reports true that state that some or all of the red mud lakes into which Alcoa is depositing or has deposited sediment, are leaking? If so, what are the details? Is the water or soil surrounding the completed red mud lakes being monitored?

There followed a series of questions. Mr Jones replied in part—

A minor defect has occurred in the splitter dyke between B and C lakes. An area 6.8 hectares fully within the lakes boundary has been contaminated.

Mr Tonkin had asked a series of questions, some of which were of a complicated nature, and one of

them was in relation to monitoring bores. The reply from Mr Jones was—

Monitoring bores established about the lakes are being observed by Alcoa and the Public Works Department. Additionally hydrogeological studies by consultants have been undertaken which include aquifer analysis, and means of removal of contaminated groundwater.

In reply to another series of questions Mr Jones said—

It is not considered practical to table the numerous results, but I understand that my colleague, the Hon. Minister for Works, is agreeable to have the member examine the results of the Public Works Department.

With the facilities available to me in this House I endeavoured to ascertain what publicity was given to that disclosure at that time. I am advised by Alcoa that the report of that leakage from the splitter dyke between B and C lakes is the same leakage which was the subject of the questions in the House a matter of a week or so ago by Mr Barnett and which gained a great deal of publicity. I endeavoured also to find out whether there were any Press reports of that question but unfortunately I was not able to find any, although I will not say there were not any. The other thing that surprises me a little is that in the Press at about that time there was a statement issued by Mr A. R. Tonkin on this general subject, but he made no mention at that stage of that particular leakage or of its consequences.

What concerns me is the use which has been made of the leakage which was never a secret and which was completely disclosed in this Parliament two years ago. It was never made secret by Alcoa, and the local authority was also aware of it. Yet, two years later it has become the subject of considerable publicity of which I would not be critical were it not for the fact that it caused people needless concern, and in so doing verges on the irresponsible. I repeat that if it had been a report of something that had been disclosed for the first time, there might have been some justification for it. But the incident happened nearly four years ago, was fully reported at that time, was reported in the Parliament two years ago, and has been the subject of general questions by the member for Cockburn, although not with regard to that specific leak. The reports in the *Sound Advertiser* on the 22nd March and in *The West Australian* on the 16th March are completely unjustified and amount to uninformed reporting, in view of the steps that have already been taken and the detail which was made

available to Mr A. R. Tonkin in another place as long ago as 1976.

I wanted to take this opportunity to raise this matter, because it may be said not only in this electorate but also in other electorates that a much-needed public information service is provided, but it has had the effect of creating absolutely unnecessary concern, particularly amongst those people who may have no opportunity to make their own assessment of the real significance of such a thing. Many people may not know that caustic soda itself is an ingredient of one of the articles most used in domestic life; namely, soap. Certainly in the condition in which it would seep into the groundwater its dilution would be so minimal as to be of no real significance and to have no real effect on the environment, the soil, or, as the member for Rockingham described it, the food chain, whatever that might be. I support the motion.

THE HON. I. G. PRATT (Lower West) [9.25 p.m.]: In supporting the motion I should like to join with previous speakers in congratulating the Hon. Win Piesse on the speech she made when moving the motion. In the time she has been a member of this place we have become aware that she is a lady who thinks deeply and speaks clearly about the matters she raises. Those two attributes are very valuable to a member of Parliament, and a member who does that is doing his or her job in this place.

Mention has been made by some speakers and in the speech just delivered by the Hon. Neil McNeill, my colleague representing the Lower-West Province, of the Speech of His Excellency the Governor. Some disparaging remarks have been made not about the Governor himself but about the authorship of the speech.

This year I took the opportunity to obtain extra copies of the Speech to take around my electorate. The reaction to it which I have received is that people have been very anxious to get hold of it, to read it, and to pass it around, because it gives an indication of some of the problems which face us in this State, of the way some of them have been overcome, and of some of the things which the Government will do about them for the future. That sets completely at rest the claims that have been made by some members of the Opposition that it is a completely empty and useless speech. In fact, besides the extra copies I managed to obtain I found it necessary to make several photocopy sets to meet the requests of people who also wanted to get hold of a copy to read.

I should also like to extend my congratulations

to the previous speaker, the Hon. Neil McNeill, on the report he has given us of his trip on behalf of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; in other words, on behalf of all of us. It was a nonpolitical trip and his report was nonpolitical. He has shown us very clearly that he has gained tremendously from his representation of us, the information he has brought back, and the insight into the activities of the association that he has outlined to us.

It is unfortunate that by reason of this wonderful opportunity he was away from this Parliament at a time when he would have liked to speak on many subjects in this House. For that he has my sympathy, because I know him to be a forthright speaker and I am sure that in recent months there have been times when he would have wished to speak his mind. It is his loss—and no doubt ours—that he was not able to do so. However, that is the fate of those of us who accept the responsibility to represent members of Parliament as a whole.

Some of the specific points I wish to raise in regard to my electorate have been touched on by the Hon. Neil McNeill. In the rough notes which I have before me one of the headings is "Rockingham", and one of the subtitles which I have written down is becoming an annual topic for me to talk about; that is, the fear campaign to which our electors are subjected with regular monotony. On this recent occasion it related to caustic leaks. A little while ago it was 1930-vintage bombs. Previously it was radioactive leaks. A short time before that it was the pollution of Cockburn Sound. Before that it was radioactive waste. It is a wonder that anyone is left in Rockingham if they read the *Sound Advertiser*!

I do not say that facetiously, because the results of the efforts of this gentleman and his publicity are such that at the time of his allegations about the 1930-vintage bombs people who lived in one part of Rockingham found that the value of their houses was dropping by up to \$5 000. He certainly performed a valuable service for the constituents of both my and his electorates! We know that the real estate market is in a very depressed state. The voice of doom is booming again.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: They were shells. They were not bombs. You are making false statements.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: They were not 1930 ones either.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: If the boom of doom is finished I suggest he read the newspaper I was

quoting from where these articles were referred to as bombs.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: They were not bombs. You do not know what bombs are.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: I am not arguing with the honourable member. I am talking to you, Sir. I am talking about what the paper said they were, and there is only one source from which the paper was receiving its information and that source was not Mr Cooley.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: They were not bombs that were found there anyway. They were shells.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: One cannot get through to the member. I was talking about newspaper reports. If the member wishes to argue with the newspaper I will pay his taxi fare down to the newspaper office and he can tell the people of Rockingham about the shells that were found there. I am sure they will be interested to hear that. The honourable member is not accepting my offer.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: That will be the day when I take something from you.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Have any of the bombs gone off?

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: If the honourable member wants to know the consequences he can go and talk to the people in Rockingham.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: You are only quoting the muck you read in the newspapers.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: The "muck" I get out of the newspaper is in fact quotations from the member for Rockingham. The newspaper has not been sued for libel. Perhaps he has avenues for increasing his finances; I do not know. However, I am quoting what has been placed in the newspaper from the source I have mentioned. Perhaps if Mr Cooley does not believe it is a reliable source, we may have a point of common ground.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: I am helping you with your speech. They were not bombs; they were shells.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: I admit that the honourable member claims responsibility for the shells. I will admit that the other gentleman involved in the controversy may not have known the difference between bombs and shells, but they were reported in the newspaper as being bombs and if Mr Cooley wants to carry on his irrational screaming he may do so.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: I was working when you were wet behind the ears.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: As I said before, the

Hon. Don Cooley is predictable and he has proved it again.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: He is just a name caller.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: We have settled it; they are pretty dangerous objects.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: This is the sort of situation where a fear campaign is involved. It results in honest working people losing a portion of the value of their houses built in an area where nothing has happened. There has been no obvious sign of danger to the people or to the houses, except that in the general area some unexploded missiles have been found and they date back to the early 1930s. Some members who were involved at a later stage may wish to accept responsibility for later dates, but they go back to that date.

The Hon. R. Hetherington: They could be dangerous.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: They are regarded as being unstable and dangerous and if any are found people are warned to keep away from them. However, that does not mean it is unsafe to live in one's house in that area. This is the impression that has been created. This is why honest working people who live there have suffered financial loss in their endeavours to go about their business of selling their houses and moving in their own reasonable travels from one part of the State to another. I do not consider that to be a service to my electorate.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: A very malicious statement.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: You are not serious that those statements dropped the value of the houses by \$5 000 are you?

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Of course they would.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: I suggest that if the Hon. Des Dans feels this is not correct he should talk to real estate agents in the area.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I know land prices are down that much in Bicton, but there are no missiles in that area.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: I am not interested in the Hon. Des Dans' electorate. I am interested in my electorate.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: He is a very thoughtless young member.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Who is that?

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Mr Barnett.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: He seems to hold his seat.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: You should qualify your statements.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: I take it from the honourable member's interjection that he is aware warning signs have been placed on private property. These signs warn people to be careful about what they are doing there.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Who put those signs up?

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: The question might be raised as to what these people would be doing on private property in the first place.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Who put up the warning signs?

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: I do not intend to involve myself in playing games with the Hon. Des Dans or the Hon. Don Cooley. I have made the point. If they want to play games they can play games with themselves. This has happened. If they want to treat the situation lightly, I am not prepared to do so.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I am serious. My relatives live around that way.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: There has been a series of incidents popping up locally which downgrade the area of Rockingham. I object to it and I object to it most strongly as I am sure the Hon. Des Dans would object to people downgrading his electorate.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I hope they do not blow up my cousin's house.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: I should like to move on from that point to another problem which also concerns the area of Rockingham. It has a close relationship with the one raised by the Hon. Tom Knight. It is not a State problem, but I think I should raise it. It relates to Commonwealth finance for homes for aged people. We need to make extensions to these homes but we are being held up, because we have difficulty obtaining finance for the buildings. I will spare the Opposition—

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Thank you.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: —the details of the background behind the backlog that we now have, but I should like to suggest, knowing that these matters are handled through the Public Health Department, that priority be given to Rockingham, because we have an urgent need for additions to the elderly people's housing in the area.

We have several groups of people in Rockingham who provide cultural entertainment to the area. There is a desire on the part of people who live in the area for a cultural centre where they can have a home of their own—probably a

multi-use type of centre which could be used not only for the performing arts, but also for such things as seminars, conferences, etc.

The shire council has some land which is available for the building of such a centre and I have no doubt that within the next 12 months or so moves will be made to get the planning of such a centre underway. When that time comes, I should like to think that both the Federal and State Governments will give the local area the encouragement it deserves by way of financial assistance with the project.

One particular group which springs to mind is the Rockingham Entertainers which does a wonderful job within the area. The money raised by that group is at present donated to charity. The group provides several services to the community. It provides an avenue for young people to be involved in the community. We often hear criticism of young people. It is said that they are not involved, or the community is not providing them with facilities; but a group such as the Rockingham Entertainers which involves young people in cultural activities is worth supporting. It also provides entertainment and money for charity. Looked at together, those achievements make it a very worth-while organisation and I hope we will be provided with some assistance for the group in the future.

I should like now to refer to the Mandurah section of my electorate where we have a very serious problem. I am sure this is a matter on which the Hon. Don Cooley and I will agree. He is always telling me how much he likes Mandurah.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: No, I am not.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: Did the honourable member say, "No"?

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: I do not believe I have said that.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: Mr President, apparently some of the member's interjections to previous speeches were taken out of context.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: He likes only Augusta.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: The matter to which I wish to refer is in relation to the Mandurah Bridge. At holiday time we always have tremendous traffic holdups on the bridge, because a large number of people use the Old Coast Road when they travel from Perth to the holiday areas south of Mandurah, and there are also people travelling in the Mandurah area to destinations south of the bridge. The Mandurah council has been pressing for a second bridge for some time;

however, as usual the problem is finance. When the bridge has been looked at in the context of metropolitan bridges it has been found not to be high enough on the list of priorities.

Last Easter the situation was catastrophic. It was the subject of several newspaper reports and frequent reports over the radio which directed people not to go through that area, because of the bottlenecks which had arisen.

There was an article in *The West Australian* of the 28th March which I should like to quote. The article is headed, "Worry over bridge traffic" and it reads, in part, as follows—

The Mandurah traffic bridge would continue to cause holiday car snarls till a start was made on the Mandurah ring road, the Mandurah shire president, Cr D. Tuckey, said yesterday.

Major delays were avoided yesterday because police at Bunbury had advised people, particularly those towing caravans, to use South-West Highway through Pinjarra to avoid the Mandurah traffic bridge.

But many of the holiday-makers who had decided to return a day early caused a record snarl on Easter Day.

Cr Tuckey said that four local councils were now asking the Main Roads Department for an urgent start to the ring road, which involved building a bridge about 3km inland to cross the Mandurah estuary.

He said that the Bunbury, Harvey, Waroona and Mandurah councils had combined forces to press for the ring road because of the hold-ups caused at Mandurah and particularly at the traffic bridge.

Three years ago the new bridge had been estimated to cost \$2.5 million. He did not think that the South-West could look forward to the ring road for about five years, by which time the costs would obviously have escalated.

Easter Day, when there were traffic queues up to 12km south of the traffic bridge, was the worst day for traffic that he had ever known in the area.

RECORD CROWDS

South-West towns, particularly those on the west coast, attracted record Easter crowds, and in many areas, notably Busselton, Margaret River and Augusta, the campers and caravans exceeded Christmas holiday crowds.

At the three towns, extra camp sites had to be made available on council ovals,

Mandurah attracted more than 40 000 people and Albany had about 9 000.

In an editorial the Editor of *The West Australian* saw fit to comment on the situation. The editorial appeared on Saturday, the 1st April, under the heading, "Traffic crush" and it reads as follows—

The frustration felt by thousands of holiday travellers caught up in the Mandurah bottleneck during Easter underlines one of the ironies of highway development—the more a road system is upgraded the greater the demand for related improvements elsewhere. The problems overcome at one point are transported—along with an increased traffic flow—to another.

The popularity of the revitalised Old Coast Road and the improvements to the Mandurah Road south from Kwinana have created funnels that pour traffic into Mandurah from two sides. It is a recurring nightmare of holiday-time congestion. With the expanding interest in boating, crabbing and leisure activities generally, coupled with the fast-growing population of the Mandurah district itself, the problem threatens to become worse each year.

The long-term solution—a Mandurah ring road and new bridge over the inlet about a kilometre upstream from the old one—is already a firm plan, but appears to be at least five years away.

It goes on to highlight the problem further.

One of the problems mentioned in the editorial is the fact that the upgrading of other roads funnels traffic into this congested area. That is a very real problem. There is now a beautiful road south from Rockingham to within a mile or so of the township of Mandurah. Speeds of 110 kilometres an hour are legal and traffic moves very quickly and builds up within the Mandurah town.

During a long weekend recently I was endeavouring to move onto the main road from Allnut Street. It took me half an hour to find a gap in the traffic. That occurred mid-morning on Monday of a long weekend. It is almost impossible to get onto the main road.

When the statistics are looked at in the context of metropolitan bridges it is hard to justify the money which would need to be spent; but when we are looking at the situation in the context of a bridge on a major road—one of the major accesses to the south of our State—it creates a new significance. Not only is the traffic congestion an inconvenience to the vehicles, but it is also a strain on the drivers, because when they

get through the bottleneck they have still to travel to their destinations.

Nerves become tattered and torn, and after having travelled for 12 kilometres through the traffic jam there is still the rest of the journey to complete. The town virtually shuts down during that part of the day because one cannot move. I think these considerations are important enough for the department to have another look at the problem. It should not be compared with metropolitan bridges. At Nicholson Road Bridge there can be a holdup for 20 minutes in the morning, but within that 20 minutes there is a fast-flowing volume of traffic. The proposed bridge at Mandurah should be looked at in the context that it is some distance from Perth, and at present thousands of people are held up on major roads. A recent traffic count at Mandurah showed 97 000 vehicles at one stage. So, it can be seen it is not an insignificant problem.

Turning a little further north in my electorate, to the Armadale-Kelmscott Shire, we have a very serious planning problem which I hope the various Ministers concerned—and it comes within the province of more than one Minister—will look at. It concerns the siting of the Forrestdale School, and the problems associated with it. The main problem is that the school has been sited on a gravel road just out of the established town. The school has been constructed without the shire having scheduled money to upgrade the road, and without any assistance being available to do so. We now have the situation where small children are riding pushbikes along the gravel road, some children are walking along it, parents are driving children to school along it, and they are all competing with two school buses at the same time. It is not a safe situation; it is a situation where something needs to be done. It should have been avoided at the planning stage, and I hope it will not be repeated in my electorate or anywhere else because, frankly, the planning is not good enough.

Moving south to the Serpentine-Jarrahdale Shire, I express my congratulations to its members on the recent elections—the successful candidates. Some members may be aware of the fact—but probably most are not—that recently a section of the Armadale-Kelmscott Shire decided to separate from the shire. The people concerned considered they were predominantly rural, but were becoming an urban local authority. That section of the community has joined the Serpentine-Jarrahdale Shire. An election was held recently for a complete new council. The transition was smooth and I think everyone is satisfied that the new composite shire is

successful. I will refer to that matter again a little later in my speech and mention a comment made to me by an Armadale-Kelmscott councillor recently.

There are a couple of pressing matters I would like to mention, and one concerns the water supply within the Mundijong townsite. It is inadequate for a number of reasons. A main was constructed to cater for a very limited supply but Mundijong, which was a small rural centre, has developed along with other outer and inner suburban shires and it has reached the situation where new subdivisions require reticulated water. We are unable to get water, because there is insufficient population. Again, this is a problem to which we have to find some solution. It will not be easy. It has bogged down, as many similar problems have, but it is something which we have to find a way around somehow or other.

Moving back parallel to the Mandurah Shire, I will refer to the Murray Shire. A couple of problems have been brought to my attention and, again, they are recurring worries which have been with the shire for some time. One problem has already been mentioned by Mr Bob Pike and Mr Gordon Masters, and it concerns the rating of rural subdivisions.

The problem in the Murray Shire is unique because many old subdivisions have been parts of composite farms. Because of rising costs and lower returns farmers are tempted to sell off their 30-acre lots—which they have every right to do. However, some of the very old lots have forestry land frontages, and although some have road frontages it is impossible to construct the roads.

Naturally enough, the people who purchase the land want to use it, and they demand road access. This has placed a tremendous strain on the shire.

The other problem concerns riverside reserves. As members are aware, when land is subdivided it is necessary to cede to the Crown a portion adjoining the river. The owners of the land have expressed the concern that these riverside reserves extend for considerable distances along the river, and the fear is that they will become fire traps and rubbish dumps. The finances of the adjoining owners are such that they cannot afford to upkeep those areas and they would rather take them over, so that they would become part of their properties with larger recreation areas spaced at intervals along the river. Perhaps that is a dream, but those people have asked me to pursue the matter and, as their representative, I do pursue it.

The recent cyclone has been mentioned by my colleague, the Hon. Neil McNeill, and I join him

in recording my sorrow at the damage caused within the area. I leave it at that.

I mentioned earlier that I would refer back to the Serpentine-Jarrahdale-Armadale-Kelmscott split when the new shire was formed. It may be recalled that the boundaries commissioners recommended that the Serpentine-Jarrahdale Shire should be amalgamated with the Armadale-Kelmscott Shire. That was not acceptable, and Byford joined the Serpentine-Jarrahdale Shire. The comment made to me was, "What a pity we did not take them when we had the chance."

The reason for the comment is the tremendous amount of assistance the shires within my electorate receive from Alcoa in the provision of recreational facilities. The contribution by that mining company is quite outstanding. The Shires of Serpentine-Jarrahdale, Murray and Rockingham have expressed their appreciation. If Serpentine-Jarrahdale had become part of the Armadale-Kelmscott Shire it might have received some assistance also. Unfortunately, it missed out; so it does not receive any assistance from Alcoa.

The Hon. Neil McNeill mentioned that last week it was our pleasure to invite Government members of the Legislative Council to tour the mining areas in the Lower West Province, and observe what is being done. Unfortunately, on that occasion, after joining with Neil McNeill in making the arrangements, I found I was a victim of the cyclone myself. I was caught without petrol on the Tuesday night, and on the Wednesday I was stranded amongst about 12 acres of cars for a couple of hours. However, those who were able to carry out the tour found it rewarding, and I hope that other members who were also caught up in the cyclone will be able to look at the work done by Alcoa.

Alcoa is to be congratulated for its efforts to rehabilitate the land, and for the contribution it is making to the communities involved. The company is making an outstanding contribution in the provision of recreational assistance.

Throughout my speech I have referred to various problems, but the overriding worry seems to be the lack of money. Nowhere is this more evident than in the area of road funds. We are reaching the situation where we will have to do something in an effort to save money. It is probably an unpalatable suggestion, but I think we will reach the stage where we will have to accept a lower standard of roads in future subdivisions. Under such a system major roads, which will be used more frequently and where safety is a major factor, will receive more emphasis in the allocation of funds.

Another suggestion which has been made to me—and again it is a hardy annual—is a surcharge on fuel. This tax would be given directly to shire councils for road funding. This suggestion has not been favourably received in the past, but I think it will be looked at. With the introduction of a surcharge, the people who actually use the roads will pay for them.

This is a question which is hard to argue against. I know that I have not been able to argue against it. I believe the local governing bodies are at present looking at the proposition. I repeat: We are reaching a stage in the funding of roads where we will have to do something in order to find a solution. I hope the Government will be able to do something about the matter. I support the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. R. J. L. Williams.

House adjourned at 9.57 p.m.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

LANDS

City of Perth

67. The Hon. T. McNEIL, to the Attorney-General representing the Minister for Lands:

- (1) What decision has the Perth City Council reached regarding the Endowment Lands Trust Fund?
- (2) What has the Council resolved regarding the interest accrued from the fund?
- (3) What plans does the Council have for the capital of the fund?
- (4) Does the Council have to alter its policy before funds could be applied towards pedestrian overpasses, cycleways, etc., within the South City Beach area?

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF replied:

- (1) to (4) These are matters within the control of the Perth City Council to whom the questions should be addressed. I understand the information is freely available to ratepayers.

RAILWAYS

Perth-Albany

72. The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Will the Minister advise whether the Perth-Albany rail passenger service is to continue operating?

- (2) If "Yes", will he indicate for how long it will operate before the service is again reviewed?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

- (1) and (2) The Commissioner of Railways has recommended in his annual report that the Perth-Albany rail passenger service be discontinued and the Government is presently considering this recommendation.

FISHERIES

Hunts Canning Company

73. The Hon. D. K. DANS, to the Leader of the House:

- (1) Was the Government's decision to order Albany fishermen to deliver all their salmon catch to Hunts Cannery taken as a result of an approach to the Government by the management of Hunts Canning Company?
(2) If so, when was the approach made, and who made it?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

- (1) Yes.
(2) 18th March, 1978; Managing Director of Hunts Canning Company.

POLICE STATION

York

74. The Hon. H. W. GAYFER, to the Attorney-General representing the Minister for Works:

- (1) In the advertising (*Government Gazette*) of Contract No. 20984 for the "York Police Department, Quarters and Lockup erection", closing date the 7th February, 1978, how many copies of "conditions" were available from the Clerk of Courts, York, listed as an office for the procurement of such documents?
(2) If the answer is "Nil", why was this so?

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF replied:

- (1) Three.
(2) Answered by (1) above.

FISHERIES

Hunts Canning Company

75. The Hon. D. K. DANS, to the Leader of the House:

- (1) What evidence has Hunts Canning Company given the Government in support of its claim that it will have to close down if it does not receive all the Albany salmon catch?

- (2) What steps did the Government take to check the accuracy of this claim before ordering Albany fishermen to deliver all their salmon catch to Hunts?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

- (1) Verbal.
(2) Verbal enquiries.

FISHERIES

Hunts Canning Company

76. The Hon. D. K. DANS, to the Leader of the House:

- (1) Does the Government have any information or evidence that some Albany fishermen are still selling salmon to West Ocean Canning, despite the Government order that it must be sold to Hunts Canning Company?
(2) If so, what action has been taken or is planned against such fishermen?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

- (1) No.
(2) Not applicable.

FISHERIES

Hunts Canning Company

77. The Hon. D. K. DANS, to the Leader of the House:

What action will the Government take against Albany salmon fishermen who continue to sell their salmon catch to West Ocean Canning, despite the Government order that it must be sold to Hunts Canning Company?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

This will be decided if and when breaches of the condition imposed on fishermen's licenses are reported.

MINING

Diamond Exploration in the Kimberley

78. The Hon. LYLA ELLIOTT, to the Leader of the House:

Further to paragraph (2) (d) of my question No. 9 of the 21st March, 1978,

concerning the proposed amendment to Regulation 8 of the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Act—

“Is it a fact that no consultation has taken place with the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs concerning the proposed amendment to Regulation 8.”;

and the Minister's reply—

“No”;

indicating that consultation had taken place—

will the Minister explain the inconsistency between his statement and that of the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs as reported in *The West Australian* newspaper of the 5th April, 1978—

“Mr Viner told the House of Representatives yesterday he had received a letter some time ago from the W.A. Government about the possibility of changes. He had noted comments by Sir Charles that W.A. would consult the Commonwealth when it decided what steps would be taken.”—

and the following unreported statement of the Federal Minister made in the Parliament yesterday—

“I have no doubt that pursuant to the provision of the legislation the Hon. Member referred to the State Premier

will be consulting with the Federal Government or directly with me.”?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

There is no inconsistency. The letter mentioned by Mr Viner in his statement to the House of Representatives on April 4, 1978 was part of a process of consultation which will continue.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF

Fishing Industry

The Hon. R. THOMPSON, to the Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife:

In view of the heavy losses of boats, gear and loss of production sustained by Rock Lobster and other fishermen in the fishing industry, will the Government consider financial aid on the same basis as that being provided to other primary producers due to cyclone “Alby”. If so—

- (1) to whom will they lodge their applications; and
- (2) what information and criteria will be required by the Government?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

- (1) and (2) Yes. Applications for a concessional loan should be made through their normal trading bank.