

Legislative Council

Thursday, the 10th November, 1977

The PRESIDENT (the Hon. Clive Griffiths) took the Chair at 11.00 a.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Questions without notice were taken at this stage.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE: SPECIAL

THE HON. G. C. MACKINNON (South-West—Leader of the House) [11.08 a.m.]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until 2.30 p.m. on Tuesday, the 15th November.

Question put and passed.

ACTS AMENDMENT (CONJOINT ELECTIONS) BILL

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by the Hon. R. Hetherington, and read a first time.

MINING BILL

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by the Hon. A. A. Lewis, and read a first time.

RESERVES AND ROAD CLOSURE BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 8th November.

THE HON. R. F. CLAUGHTON (North Metropolitan) [11.11 a.m.]: As the Minister has informed us, this Bill comes up this time every session. It is a Bill in which all the changes to Crown reserves are contained. It is a Bill which is of interest to many members in the Chamber as the changes to classifications are those which have taken place in many parts of the State. I draw the attention of new members to this Bill in order that they may ascertain whether the changes to reserves taking place in their own electorates are in accord with the wishes of the local people.

We on this side of the House have examined the proposals and do not object to them. In the main, they will be beneficial and sensible changes. It is uncertain who has been responsible for the various reclassifications which have taken place. Perhaps the Minister would like to inform us whether the proposals emanate from the Lands Department, from local authorities, or as a result of the pressure of commercial interests. If we

are furnished with this information, we will be aware of the processes involved in these reclassifications.

I would like to refer to the Conservation Through Reserves Committee which would appear to have been influential in bringing about some of the changes. This committee was set up during the Tonkin Government and it has played a very important role in setting aside areas in order to conserve scenic beauty, fauna, species of indigenous flora and fauna, as well as areas which may be important for some similar reason.

The recommendations of the committee have in large part been accepted by this Government and large tracts of land have been set aside for the enjoyment of the population of Western Australia today, and also for the benefit of future generations. It is as a result of the activities of this committee that a concerted study has been made of various proposals to work out a scheme which will give balance to the various interests and to ensure that the significant aspects of our State, as far as landscape, flora and fauna are concerned, have a chance of surviving the assault which is a consequence of human activity.

While I am saying that, I should perhaps mention a subject which may be seen to be in slight contradiction to what I have already said. Western Australia is a very large State and if we wish to travel to an area which is different from the area in which we reside, we must cover very great distances. The Minister for Tourism would know there are large numbers of people who travel around the State, particularly in the northern part. The distance between Geraldton and Carnarvon is approximately 400 kilometres. People who wish to view the scenic points between Geraldton and Carnarvon would wish to stop somewhere overnight.

Just north of Geraldton is a place called Horrocks Beach which is situated in an area affected by this Bill. It is on the coast, west of Northampton. Recently when I was on a visit to that area in relation to other matters concerning this House, I camped at Horrocks Beach. We arrived there at night and wanted to have a camp fire. However, I could not find any trees which would provide the wood for the fire. The vegetation in the area was of a very low and pulpy scrub type. As we had travelled a long way and had been driving for a number of hours, we were arriving late at night and this was a little disconcerting. The fact is we pulled up on the beach and camped there. The proposal contained in this Bill will prevent people from doing that in the future.

It is a matter of concern, of course, that people who camp indiscriminately may cause damage and perhaps create a health hazard. They may also cause a litter problem. However, I think we must remember that we live in a very large State and the distance between towns is quite vast. Provision must be made for Western Australians to be able to camp in a place of their choice if we are to enjoy our State. It has been made almost impossible to pull up along the road and camp in the south-west. There are very strict regulations which prevent that. If one is within 15 kilometres—it may be 15 miles, I am not sure of the exact distance—of a camping area one must use it. People have objected to me about this situation. They believe it is an unnecessary restriction of their personal liberties. They believe also that it is designed more to line the pockets of the people who own the caravan parks than to preserve our environment.

Probably that is an unjust accusation, but that is the effect it has. Often people travelling leisurely around the countryside want to stop for a meal or spend a little time at a pleasant area. Therefore, they want to camp overnight, but if they do so they are in danger of coming into conflict with the law. Some compromise has to be found between protecting the environment and keeping the State beautiful, and providing reasonable freedom for people.

As there are many campsites in the south-west, this aspect is not as important as it is in the north-west. Nevertheless, even in the south-west people from Perth, Bunbury, and rural areas want to tour around or go fishing. These are the people who have complained most strongly to me. Many farmers take a holiday to go fishing, and when the fish are running at a certain place they want to stay overnight to take advantage of the first light. I hope that further study will be made of this problem to devise some compromise between absolute freedom or licence to do what one likes, and the tight restrictions applying at present.

Several amendments in the Bill deal with the establishment of local museums. Clause 14 concerns the Pingelly Courthouse which would have unpleasant connotations to our earlier citizens and, I imagine, many Aboriginal people. In the establishment of the museum there I believe that some provision should be made to remind the people of the inhuman way we treated this group in our community. The longer we are established as a separate nation, the more important these reminders of our past will be. Old buildings are of great value in the establishment of local or

State museums. It is far more costly to erect a new building than to renovate an old one. The old commissariat building in Fremantle is being renovated in order to establish a branch of the WA Museum. Moves such as those envisaged in clause 14 are extremely desirable and would meet with the approval of all members.

The Bill contains other provisions dealing with road reserves, and are designed to close some sections and open others for parking and other purposes; they also provide for the reassignment of the land for those purposes. Two of such clauses affect the city of Perth.

Another clause provides an area of land to be added to a reserve in lieu of a site which has been used for a rubbish dump, when it should not have been used for this purpose. Those responsible should have been told they had been extremely naughty and that they must not do it again. However, as the area has been destroyed as a nature park, the only sensible thing is to allow the continued use of the site for rubbish disposal and provide another piece of land for the reserve.

I support the Bill, as do my colleagues, and I draw the attention of new members to its provisions.

THE HON. G. W. BERRY (Lower North) [11.26 a.m.]: I rise to support the Bill and to refer only to clause 15 which concerns a large reserve at Cocklebidy. It comprises 625 343 hectares which is in excess of 1.5 million acres, and an excision of about nine acres is being made. This is not a significant amount in such a large area.

The point I wish to make for the benefit of new members is that the reserve is of Class "A" and even though the Main Roads Department wants the area for a depot in which to store valuable equipment, the Parliament must give its approval before the area can be excised. I thought it might be interesting to bring to the attention of new members the fact that the approval of Parliament must be obtained before any area of an "A"-class reserve can be excised.

THE HON. I. G. MEDCALF (Metropolitan—Attorney-General) [11.27 a.m.]: I thank members for their support of the Bill. As Mr Berry stated, it is necessary for parliamentary approval to be given for a change in an "A"-class reserve.

In regard to the comments made by Mr Cloughton, generally speaking all the proposals emanate from the Lands Department. Of course some of them have been made as a result of

representations by local or public authorities, such as the EPA. I am not able to give particular details of how each of these arose because I am only acting for a Minister in another place. Of course, although representations are made, everything must be processed by the department.

If the honourable member would like me to obtain the information about which he was speaking, I will do so. As he is supporting the Bill I assume he would not want it delayed and therefore I undertake to have the information supplied through the Minister for Lands and Forests.

Obviously Mr Cloughton has given a considerable amount of attention to the background of some of these reserves in the short time available to him. The question of camping in national parks has always been a bone of contention. There was a time when every Australian considered it his right to camp anywhere he chose, whether that was in a national park or anywhere else. However, as the honourable member knows, because of the present thinking about the environment, this practice is not now always encouraged. We all know that the intrusion of man into many of these areas can completely destroy their natural environment and this applies particularly to the coastal strip and the sand dune area which are extremely fragile and capable of being spoilt by the intrusion of even only one or two vehicles.

Even the act of people walking across some areas does have the effect of causing the vegetation to diminish and the sand to start moving. On one occasion a few years ago I flew over the coastal strip from Albany to Perth. It was most revealing to see the intrusion of the sand hills even in that area. We are aware of the intrusion of sand to the north, near Lancelin, where we have a terrible desert. However, the intrusion of sand into comparatively unoccupied areas, such as that along the south coast near Windy Bay is quite surprising. I am talking about the intrusion of sand into the interior; into the hinterland.

I was particularly horrified to observe on one stretch—which I do not doubt is well known to scientists now—a large forest in the process of being submerged by sand. The sand had encroached three or four miles inland, and it could be seen building up against the boles of quite tall jarrah trees. That process was probably started by what was regarded as a harmless intrusion of a camping or fishing party. No harm was intended, but the mere fact that someone moved into the area was enough to start the movement of the sand. It is a frightfully windy section of the coast.

Camping on reserves is not to be encouraged; in fact, it is to be deliberately discouraged. It is necessary for us to establish camping areas so that campers have somewhere to go. Obviously, we have to cater for this particularly national way of life. With those comments, and with the indication of support from the Opposition, I commend the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Third Reading

THE HON. I. G. MEDCALF (Metropolitan—Attorney-General) [11.33 a.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

THE HON. R. F. CLAUGHTON (North Metropolitan) [11.34 a.m.]: In order to save the time of the House I did not rise to speak during the Committee stage so that the Bill could be taken as a whole. I thank the Minister for his reply to my comments. My question was not in relation to the specific genesis of all the proposals. I did not want the Minister to go to a great deal of trouble to supply an answer to my question which was, "Who were the active bodies in determining these things?" I thought the Minister may have known, and been able to reply so that I, and other members, would know to what extent the Lands Department and other departments are active. It is not something I regard as highly important, but it would have been interesting to know.

There is an area, on the south coast, of the nature mentioned by the Attorney-General where sand dunes are intruding into a reserve, and where a less sensitive area is to be made available for camping purposes. I do not know that any member would quarrel with that. I support the Government in all its endeavours to restrict the activities in sand dune areas, but very often the first spoilers are probably developers and farmers who clear the land and remove the vegetation over a relatively large section, and then the elements take their toll.

We know also that vehicles such as beach buggies, which tear up and down the fragile dunes, remove the growth to the extent which creates danger to the dunes and starts them

moving. I do not like to see that sort of thing happening either, so in making a plea for some easing of restrictions it is necessary to have indicated areas where people may camp. There should be a better system of public relations.

It was pointed out recently that other countries adopted a very different attitude from that adopted in Australia. In fact, I think it was the Minister for Tourism who made a comment which was reported along those lines. In Western Australia there is a more negative approach of "Don't do this, and don't do that", whereas in the United States there is a positive approach of encouraging the public to look after what can be seen to be its property. If they want to continue to use it, it is in their interests to see that it is not altered or spoilt. We should have that different sort of approach, along with the easing of restrictions.

We agree with all that the Minister has said. We all recognise the damage which can be caused by indiscriminate use of our coastal areas by careless, thoughtless, and insensitive people. Therefore, it is very necessary that controls be exercised.

Another side of the matter is to direct the public into areas which are less sensitive. We should not make access into more sensitive areas easier. There is a lot of psychological direction involved. We pick up clues as to what is happening by the visible signs.

If one is driving along a road that is broad, long, and clear, one thinks, "I can put my foot down here." Whereas, if the road is narrow and curving, one tends to take more care. It is that sort of landscape clue that directs us. So if a track is already provided, a person walking or the driver of a vehicle will travel down the track. If there is no track, people will take the easiest path. So we tend to guide people by the landscape clues we leave.

These clues, combined with a different approach in the printed messages we leave, should mean that we could adopt a less restrictive attitude, and we could attempt to educate the public to be more careful and concerned about the environment. I realise that is the sort of programme that will have to be undertaken over a long period of time. It is not something we can change overnight. The authorities would have to adopt a different attitude in order to bring it about. I am asking the Government to give some consideration to that matter.

The Hon. I. G. Medcalf: I will see that your comments are referred to the Minister.

Bill read a third time and passed.

URANIUM

Endorsement of Governments' Decisions: Motion

Debate resumed, from the 27th October, on the following motion by the Hon. G. C. MacKinnon (Leader of the House)—

That this House endorses the decision of the Government to permit in Western Australia—

- (a) The mining of uranium; and
- (b) The processing of uranium, including the production of yellow cake (U_3O_8), and the upgrading and eventual enrichment of uranium to a level suitable for use in nuclear power stations.

For these purposes—

- (1) Exploration for uranium shall be encouraged.
- (2) All phases of uranium exploration, mining and processing shall be subject to—

- (a) adequate personal and community health safeguards,
- (b) adequate environmental safeguards, and
- (c) adequate mining, transport, handling and processing safeguards,

which are covered by existing statutes and regulations, and by those to be amended and proclaimed from time to time.

- (3) There shall be continuing research in Western Australia, in co-operation with the Commonwealth and appropriate overseas authorities, into—
 - (a) the methods of exploration, mining, processing and end use for peaceful purposes of uranium and products derived from uranium, and
 - (b) the need for, the timing, and the methods of introducing nuclear energy into Western Australia.

- (4) The policies in respect of uranium enunciated by the Federal Government in the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, in Canberra on 25 August, 1977 shall be endorsed so far as they relate to the Commonwealth's constitutional responsibilities.

and further,

This House is of the opinion that active participation in uranium exploration, mining, processing and export of uranium and products derived from uranium, on the lines proposed by the Western Australian and Commonwealth Governments, is the most practical way of ensuring—

- (1) That Australia has a voice internationally in the end uses of uranium and products derived from uranium, with particular reference to the ability to require conditions of sale directed at non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and
- (2) That Australia and Western Australia have the right and the opportunity to be kept up to date with international research and development on nuclear and alternative energy sources.

THE HON. D. K. DANS (South Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) [11.42 a.m.]: The Opposition simply wants to make a statement in reply to the motion moved by the Leader of the House. It is as follows—

The Opposition in the Legislative Council will not take part in debate on the Court Government's motion endorsing Federal and State Governments' policies on uranium. Instead we challenge the Court Government to nominate representatives for a full-scale debate on the issue in a fully public forum.

It's interesting that the Premier should be seeking more parliamentary debate on the uranium issue when he's on record as saying there's been sufficient debate on the whole issue and the time's come for action.

Despite having expressed these sentiments, recently he had the matter debated in full in another place and now seeks an identical debate in this place.

The excuse which the Government's offered for adopting this course is that it wants parliamentary approval for its policies.

The excuse is a sham. The Court Government virtually never seeks an expression of parliamentary opinion on its policies in any area, except when legislation is required to put them into effect. No legislation is required to put its uranium policy into effect, yet it's introduced this motion—and done so when the Premier has claimed there's been sufficient debate.

The attitudes of the Government and opposition parties to the uranium issue are well known. The outcome of any parliamentary debate is a foregone conclusion.

These facts expose the Court Government's introduction of the motion, already agreed to in another place, into this place as a parliamentary stunt.

The Government's only motive in bringing the motion to the other House was to seek publicity for its views on the issue.

I've been reliably informed that the motive for now bringing the motion to this House is that the Premier's dissatisfied with the amount of media publicity given to the motion when it was debated in the other place. By bringing the matter before this House, he's seeking more publicity for the Government's pro-uranium sentiments.

This is an improper and cynical use of the Parliament for partisan propaganda.

The Opposition won't be a party to it.

It's not parliamentary debate or the use of the Parliament as a propaganda forum which is needed now on the uranium issue.

What's needed is more public debate.

All the opinion polls show that the public is still making up its mind on the uranium issue and that there's still significant uncertainty about what Australia should do.

Major shifts in public opinion are still going on.

In the last year there's been a big increase in the percentage of people opposed to the mining and exporting of Australian uranium.

All the polls also show between 12 and 18 per cent of people still aren't sure what our policy should be.

With this significant degree of uncertainty and with the significant shifts in opinion still occurring, it's quite clear that Australian's need more time and more exposure to the facts.

Therefore, although we're not prepared to play a part in the Government's parliamentary charade, we are prepared to have the issue aired further in public. We want it aired further in public.

If the Premier and his Government are really serious about wanting this issue debated, they'll drop their cynical parliamentary exercise and take the issue to a public

forum where speakers can put their cases on an equal footing and be subjected to questioning.

If the Government isn't serious, it will ignore this challenge and simply press ahead with a meaningless and empty debate in the cloistered parliamentary environment.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: What forum is more public than this?

THE HON. O. N. B. OLIVER (West) [11.45 a.m.]: I was very disappointed to hear that statement read by the Leader of the Opposition.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: He is not game to debate it.

The Hon. J. C. Tozer: We will assume that the Opposition will not make the statement available to the Press.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: The statement has already been made available to the Press.

The Hon. J. C. Tozer: There is no doubt about that!

The Hon. D. K. Dans: And we will meet you in Forrest Place to debate the matter publicly.

The **PRESIDENT**: Order!

The Hon. O. N. B. OLIVER: Really, it is government by Government, and surely it is not unreal for the Government to spell out its policy on the mining of uranium. I believe that the Government should be commended for spelling out its policy as it gives the people a lead so that they know what the intentions of the Government are. So I come back to the same fact: this is government by Government, and I support it.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: The ALP screamed like wounded pigs in the Federal Parliament that it did not have enough time to discuss it in the Parliament and now it is not game to discuss it.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: It is government by Government when you are in Government.

Several members interjected.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: You are not game.

The Hon. O. N. B. OLIVER: It becomes clear that the Opposition is just not certain where it is going on the matter of uranium. One minute the Opposition is for it, the next minute it is against it, then there is a moratorium, and all the rest of it.

The Hon. R. G. Pike: The Opposition is debating it by interjection.

The Hon. O. N. B. OLIVER: I would like to make the point that the Government of the Commonwealth controls the exporting of uranium, and the Government of Western Australia, or any State Government for that matter, controls the mining of it.

The Hon. R. G. Pike: The Opposition is doing an excellent job of debating this by interjection when its members said they would be quiet.

The **PRESIDENT**: Order!

The Hon. O. N. B. OLIVER: For this reason I believe the Government should be commended for giving leadership. It is letting the people know where the Government stands. Is that not what government is all about? Should not the Government say what its stand is? Should it not give the lead to the people who elected it?

It is regrettable that the Australian Labor Party has said that if it is elected to Government it will repudiate any contracts or any undertakings implemented by the Government now in office. What a sabotage.

The Hon. Lyla Elliott: The Fraser Government did that over Fraser Island.

The Hon. O. N. B. OLIVER: Let us face it, nuclear energy is not a future development. If anyone likes to travel around the disadvantaged countries, which members opposite say they are so concerned about, they would realise that there would be no power in many places—such as India and Pakistan—if there were no nuclear power.

I was in Calcutta when the nuclear reactor was being installed there by the Canadian Government. There were troubles with the trial operation of the plant. I was staying at the hotel and at one stage the lights went out and the lift stopped. These problems occurred while they were installing the plant into full operation. These are real things; there are millions of disadvantaged people in the emerging nations of the world.

We are all aware of the fuel and energy crisis. No-one can dispute the fact that by 1985, even Australia may be dependent on nuclear energy. In addition to that, based on real terms, the import into Australia of petroleum products is likely to cost an additional \$2 500 million on top of our existing balance of payments situation. Therefore, understandably, even Australia from approximately that period or shortly thereafter also will be dependent upon nuclear power until suitable alternative forms of energy in economically viable quantities are available.

We recently discussed solar energy; it is known that the economic production of solar energy is a long way away. It could be 25 years or more before we see solar energy becoming a viable alternative form of energy.

It was suggested by the Leader of the Opposition in another place that we use sawdust to produce energy. I assure members that I am talking about dust from timber, not the other sort! Quite frankly, there is insufficient sawdust to provide economically viable energy for Western Australia.

Therefore, from 1985 onwards, uranium will become an integral part of our overseas trade. It is hoped that the sale of uranium will correct our balance of payments deficit. I am sure every member would like to see a healthy economy, with a favourable balance of trade, resulting in benefit to all Australians. I could not be contradicted in making such a statement because I have heard it said many times by members from both sides that their main concern is for a healthy economy.

Apart from calling for a moratorium—which is purely a method of sabotaging this country and placing it in a state of chaos—the main theme of this debate is the potential danger of uranium. Some years ago, the US congress commissioned the Rasmussen report, which involved over 60 consultants and scientists, to examine the possibility of danger to the public from uranium. A total of 70 man-years' effort went into this report and among its findings was the following statement—

No member of the public has ever been injured or killed during the operation of the commercial nuclear power plants, of which there are 223 operating today throughout the world.

Taking into account every possibility of error which was known to the members of the tribunal, in their opinion the likelihood of a death resulting from the use of uranium could occur only in the future, with the development of a new set of circumstances which was impossible to predict.

Another issue which has been raised is the problem of disposing of the spent fuel rods leaving the nuclear power reactors now in commercial operation. However, this spent fuel is already being safely stored. Members should regard as acceptable the code of practice prepared by the International Labour Organisation and the International Atomic Energy Agency, based on their great experience in this field. Before arriving at the code of practice,

the bodies drew from all the various organisations involved in the mining and use of uranium, and worked in conjunction with the World Health Organisation and the Ford Foundation, which were commissioned to undertake a study of the production of nuclear energy.

Naturally, there will be a requirement that the effluent produced by the nuclear reactors be regularly monitored; this already is being undertaken as a continuing programme in populated areas.

The real problems arise when the spent fuel is reprocessed and the plutonium is separated from the highly radioactive fission products. Technology has enabled reprocessing of this waste to take place, but hitherto the quantity of commercially produced waste has not warranted a reprocessing programme. The United States Government has placed a moratorium—it is not a word I like to use regularly—on spent fuel reprocessing.

One of the reasons we have had no debate from our friends opposite is that we are about to go through a moratorium of the type we saw in America in the late 60s and the early 70s, where a small group of academics debated imposing a moratorium on an issue. So, some people in Australia have followed the same reasoning and recommended a moratorium in Australia. They lacked the originality to come up with conclusive arguments based on Australia's situation in the world and its proximity to and relationship with South-East Asia. They have failed to put forward their own arguments but simply chose to follow the academic moratorium movement in the United States.

Because plutonium is a material suitable for the manufacture of nuclear explosives, Australia has imposed the condition that no purchaser may reprocess waste materials without the prior consent of the Australian Government. Obviously, we will have to be satisfied a need exists to reprocess the waste material for legitimate energy purposes. International safeguards and controls will be intensified to ensure adequate and effective protection against the diversion of plutonium for non-peaceful purposes.

The Swedish Department of Defence was asked to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into whether it was possible to make nuclear weapons of any real importance from power plant plutonium. Their report was on the difficulties of either poorly developed countries or illegal organisations producing a primitive explosive device from these materials.

I quote as follows—

Firstly, from 25 to 50 high calibre scientific and technological experts covering many different disciplines would be required.

These would be almost impossible to recruit. To continue—

Secondly, the product might require many years of hard work. It would be difficult to conceal and the cost would be in excess of \$2 million.

It will be noted that the work would be over a number of years, not just a few weeks or a few months. On the subject of the use of waste material for nuclear terrorism I will quote from the Fox report as follows—

In our view, the possibility of nuclear terrorism merits energetic consideration and action at the international level. We do not believe that this risk alone constitutes a sufficient reason for Australia declining to supply uranium. It does, however, provide a further reason why the export of our uranium, including what is proposed to be done with it, and where, are matters which the government should keep under constant scrutiny and control.

If Australia does not export uranium as a producer, how then can it become an effective force in achieving improved international safeguards and controls? As I see the position, exporting is not an option but a reality; it is already happening throughout the world. In this regard the Fox report said—

A total refusal to supply uranium would place Australia in clear breach of article 4 of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and could adversely affect its relations with countries which are parties to the non-proliferation treaty.

There have been six years of indecision, and surely the time has come when we must put aside party or sectarian issues to ensure the standard of living improves, not only in Australia but also in many disadvantaged countries; and to do this energy is required.

This may be a simple outline of the need for uranium, but I believe that one must keep debating it in simple terms and not have it complicated by many academics who have no real scientific knowledge to support their arguments. Only by supplying uranium can Australia be a part of the world influence on the future of nuclear energy.

The Hon. R. F. Claugton: Rubbish!

The Hon. O. N. B. OLIVER: Only by participation and supplying substantial quantities of uranium can we hope to have a credible voice in the international forum. Australia's voice in the moves against the proliferation of nuclear weapons is already well known and accepted by all Australians. However, we cannot set aside our representations in the provision of energy to a world which is deficient and hungry for energy.

I am amazed to be standing here today talking about nuclear energy. Back in 1953 or 1954 I was among a group of people who were subjected to a demonstration of the use of uranium. A gentleman removed from a lead box an isotope with uranium on it and a geiger counter was placed on my chest. That gentleman went around the group of about 50 people, none of whom stood back in fright, and as he passed the geiger counter began to tick very fast. Yet here I am standing in this Chamber today, having been subjected to that exercise some 25 years ago.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: How many children have you had?

The Hon. O. N. B. OLIVER: I have had three and they are all very healthy. When I make out my taxation return I find I hardly claim any medical benefits for them.

The nuclear safeguards as set out in the motion, which happen to be acceptable to the Australian Labor Party, I believe—they were acceptable to it unless it has changed their minds—indicate the Government's recognition of the requirements for safeguards in the use of spent fuel and waste disposal.

It surely recognises also that any denial of the mining and treatment of uranium in Australia will have serious effects on the energy requirements of Australia in the 1980s, and of the world generally. The Price Anderson Act, as set forth in the United States Congress, included in part the following—

With one hundred reactors operating, the probability of an accident causing more than \$560 million worth of property damage is conservatively estimated to be once in 5 000 years.

Alternatively, to put the question of safety in another way, the average citizen's chance of being injured in an automobile accident is one in 130 per year. His chance of being killed in an automobile accident is about one in 4 000 per year. The chance of an individual living in the vicinity of a nuclear reactor being injured is one in 75 million per year. His chance of dying from such an accident is one in five billion per year.

In conclusion, I would like to quote again from the *Australian Financial Review* which I know the Leader of the Opposition regards as a very fair and well-reported newspaper. In the issue of the 19th September it was stated that—

Every knowledgeable person in energy was "well-aware that time is desperately short, particularly in a world-wide perspective."

Little or none would be controversial, or matters of general public interest, were it not for the activities of those campaigning against nuclear energy.

Why they do so, with no underlying body of scientific evidence to support their opinions, is something that has deeply worried Hoyle for the last two years.

His hypothesis is persuasively simple.

Whatever the failings of its economic system, unlike the West, the USSR is not entirely besotted with the importance of paper money, and recognises that energy is more important than money.

It recognises also that it either controls or adjoins most of the world's fossil fuel resources.

It has well over half of the world's coal within its own borders.

I repeat that it has over half of the world's coal. If members look at the map in this paper they will see that the USSR possesses 70 per cent of the oil and gas reserves. To continue—

And, as the map shows, a crescent embracing 70 per cent of the earth's oil and gas can be drawn through the USSR, the Middle East and North Africa.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: They would not worry about nuclear energy.

The Hon. O. N. B. OLIVER: The member is right on the spot. To continue—

What would stop the USSR dominating the world when the real energy crisis descended on the planet? asks the author.

Only the fact that the West has a powerful nuclear technology to insulate its economies against fuel scarcity.

So, concludes Sir Fred, you instruct your friends to operate through a mild, pleasant "save-the-whales" movement which you observe is growing popular throughout the Western Democracies.

I believe the Government should be commended, and the Leader of this House should be commended for moving this motion so that the people

of Western Australia will be aware of the attitude of the Government in this State.

THE HON. R. G. PIKE (North Metropolitan) [12.11 p.m.]: I want to talk briefly about the significant hypocrisy of the Labor Party.

The Hon. R. F. Cloughton interjected.

The Hon. R. G. PIKE: The member opposite will get into trouble for speaking to this motion.

We get back to the sincerity of the Australian Labor Party. Quite recently, members opposite spoke about the so-called very slow process by which they will remove the bicameral system of Parliament in Western Australia. Here we have actual evidence. During a recent sitting we saw a walk-out by members of the Labor Party at the third reading stage of a Bill to amend the Electoral Act. Now, they are virtually taking their marbles and going home!

The Hon. R. F. Cloughton: No, we are still present.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: Parliament is the place where these matters are debated.

The Hon. R. F. Cloughton: No-one knows what happens here. There is only one Press reporter present.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! I would like to hear the honourable member who is on his feet.

The Hon. R. G. PIKE: I must say the attitude of criticism by the Opposition is not inhibited by ignorance; members opposite tend to ignore this House altogether. They will use the very democratic process to achieve a role of authority and power, and then destroy the system as we saw in the past Federal Labor Government.

I think we are entering what I would call the golden age of unctuous humbug so far as the Labor Party Opposition in this House is concerned. We saw members opposite playing to the gallery quite recently; they were not talking to members in this House. They played up to the response from the gallery. We have heard the Leader of the Opposition putting forward the proposition that this House is of no importance. Members opposite now show they have no real responsibility to the constituents in the electorate.

To use a "Hetheringtonian didacticism"—and that is included for Mr Hetherington—what is the basis of the election of a member of Parliament, and what is his responsibility to represent his constituents? The word "Parliament" comes from the verb "parlo" which means "to speak". How well represented are the constituents who elected

Labor Party members to debate on this vital issue which concerns the use of uranium within the Commonwealth of Australia? How really concerned are they? Perhaps the constituents of Labor Party members will be reminded as to where those members were and what they did, and what they did not do in this Parliament.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: They have been banned from speaking in this House of Review.

The Hon. R. G. PIKE: Not only have they been banned from speaking, but they have been banned from making any comment. It is a cheap political trick to draw attention in a very puerile way to the lack of constructive comment which should be forthcoming from a properly organised Opposition in the Parliament.

THE HON. N. F. MOORE (Lower North) [12.15 p.m.]: If I did not know better I would think I was making my maiden speech because of the lack of interjections which will result from the poor attendance of Opposition members in this House. However, that is rather pleasant to me.

Nuclear power generation, to me, is a fact of life whichever way we look at it. This question has been subject to a great deal of dispute, and unfortunately, not being a scientist, I do not have the knowledge or the understanding to interpret or comprehend all the scientific information which is available on this particular issue.

Many arguments have been put forward by various people with regard to the use of uranium for power generation. Because of the scientific arguments which have been advanced, it is difficult for anybody in this House to understand the issue fully. For every eminent scientist who can be quoted as being in favour of the mining of uranium, someone can quote another eminent scientist with an opposite view. Yet we must come to some conclusion with regard to our attitude towards nuclear power in this situation.

I must admit I have had a great deal of difficulty in reaching a decision, for the reasons I have outlined; there is so much evidence which can be quoted. As I said, we have to come to some decision, and that must reach the stage of a value judgment.

I have decided to support the mining and export of uranium from within Australia for two basic reasons. Firstly, I believe the world will have a shortage of energy resources as our fossil fuels, which we currently use, decline. From research I have carried out I am convinced that the technology is not available to develop solar and fusion power to fill this gap, which I believe will

arise as our fossil fuels decline. We must find an energy resource to fill the gap, and I believe the only source we have is nuclear power.

I am disappointed that we do not have the necessary technology at the present time to develop solar and fusion power. It is claimed there are environmental difficulties associated with the development of nuclear power, but I believe that the creativeness and resourcefulness of the human race will overcome those difficulties.

The second reason I support the mining and export of uranium is the very simple and plain economic reason. The economic benefits from the mining of uranium will be considerable. That is my own personal point of view, and it is the point of view of the constituents in the Lower North Province. The economic benefits to be derived are of great importance. Income derived—perhaps in the form of royalties—from the sale of uranium must be used to finance research into alternative energy resources.

With that particular proviso, I would now like to explain once again, as I did during my maiden speech, the economic significance to my electorate of the development of uranium. The only proven uranium deposit in Western Australia is at Yeelirrie. I want to see Yeelirrie developed.

I have been in this House only a short time, but I have found it necessary to continually repeat my comments so that they sink in. I say again that the development of uranium is essential for the development of the Lower North Province.

Discussions with the Western Mining Corporation about its proposals in relation to Yeelirrie indicate several rather good facts from the point of view of the electorate. Firstly, a new town of some 2 000 people will be necessary to carry out the mining operation. As I said in my maiden speech, this represents a 45 per cent increase in the population of the total Murchison area. Some people might say, "So what?" The Murchison area was a major mineral province, a major goldmining area, and for many years a very important part of Western Australia, contributing significantly to export earnings. As the goldmining industry has declined and the pastoral industry has experienced economic difficulties, the whole area has declined economically. We have the situation where the building of a new town could significantly reverse the trend. I have been trying to say in several speeches I have made in this House that we must do something for these remote areas, and here we have the opportunity.

Secondly, it will create employment for 800 people. Anyone who can say we should not go ahead with a project to create employment in this day and age makes no sense to me.

The Hon. W. R. Withers: Certainly no-one in the Opposition can.

The Hon. N. F. MOORE: That is right. We have a situation where 800 people can be employed at a time when unemployment is a big problem.

The third reason I support the development of Yeelirrie is that an investment of some \$200 million to \$300 million is necessary, and by the time the project gets off the ground the investment will be greater than that. Some people might again say, "So what?" This would not only provide employment in the town itself but would also bring indirect benefits to metropolitan areas and provincial towns such as Geraldton because there would be a great demand for goods and services.

I ask members to imagine the building of a new town where nothing exists at the present time except some sheep and the odd kangaroo. We must provide all the housing, roads, power, and water. We must start from zero, and anything we can see in any town has to be manufactured, bought, and assembled on site; the whole town has to be built. As we saw during the Pilbara boom, that creates a tremendous demand for goods and services in the metropolitan and manufacturing areas. Therefore investment of this kind of money and the building of a town such as this must be of considerable benefit not only to the Murchison but also to the metropolitan area; and that is not such a bad thing, either.

When the town is built—and I am confident it will be—the existing local area must obtain improvements and benefits. The first field in which this can occur is communications. Some members of the Opposition have made a tour through the area and have come back somewhat distraught at the conditions they have found—bad roads, bad communications, bad postal facilities, and bad airline services. These things will be improved if the population increases. I would see an improvement in roads, the possibility of a television service, an improvement in radio reception, and an improvement in the postal service.

In some parts of my electorate there is no postal service whatsoever and people have to drive 100 miles or so to a town to pick up their mail. There is no delivery at all. With a new town of

course these facilities come closer, and with an increase in population the airline services would have to be improved. We have seen of late that Civil Flying Services flights to the Murchison have had to be reduced because of lack of demand. I hope, with a development such as Yeelirrie, that these services can be reinstated. So, in the area of communications, the people who are at present in the area will benefit.

They will also benefit from the provision of community facilities which are an integral part of a town. For example, in regard to sporting facilities, there will be an oval, which does not now exist—perhaps a grassed oval. There will be recreation facilities and religious facilities with the building of a church. These facilities will be modern—the kind of thing people in more populated areas take for granted, but which the people in this outback area do not have. With a new town these things come much closer to their immediate area.

Another improvement will be the provision of education. I have been successful to a degree in convincing the Education Department to reopen the Sandstone School. Without that, an area of many hundreds of square miles has no education facilities whatsoever and people either have to educate their own children, use the School of the Air, or send their children away to school—and we all know the cost of sending children away to school these days. So with the new town better education facilities will be available for the people who already live in the area, and nobody could argue that that is not a good thing.

From my point of view, a fortunate situation has arisen for my province, because the Yeelirrie deposit has been located where it is. I might point out that when speaking to the caretaker of Yeelirrie I learned only one Labor politician had ever visited Yeelirrie; that was John Tonkin. That information was given to me some months ago and the situation may have changed since.

Yeelirrie is located in an area which needs an economic boost, so from my point of view it is fortunate the deposit is located where it is. The mining company would not think it is fortunate because Yeelirrie is so far away from the coast and it has to face the cost of transport and develop infrastructure. But from my point of view it is fortunate Yeelirrie is where it is and that the mineral is uranium, because at the present time, of all the minerals which have been discovered in the Murchison, this is the one most likely to be developed and it is the only one which at the moment can be developed economically.

Another reason it is fortunate the mineral is uranium is that it is a type of ore which must be processed on site. It is not economical to transport the ore somewhere else for processing, so the processing must be done on site and this, of course, is of benefit in the sense that it will be necessary to employ more people in the area. This is a good thing in this age of decentralisation about which we all keep talking.

Finally, I am delighted Yeelirrie is located where it is because it will provide an economic boost for an area which is at the moment depressed. I have said previously and I will continue to say in this House that we must do something for outback areas. The area I represent is probably the most depressed area in Western Australia in terms of the economy. As I have said on several occasions, it does not have to be that way; but if we take a shortsighted attitude that there will be no mining or export of uranium and no Yeelirrie, it will remain as it is—an economic backwater. I have outlined the benefits which can be derived if we allow this deposit to be mined.

THE HON. V. J. FERRY (South-West) [12.29 p.m.]: This motion sets out to do a number of things. It refers to endorsement of the decision of the Government to permit in Western Australia the mining and processing of uranium. It refers to encouragement of exploration for uranium; and it says that all phases of uranium exploration, mining, and processing shall be subject to safeguards.

The motion also refers to the policies enunciated by the Federal Government, and it says that the House should be of the opinion that active participation in uranium exploration, mining, processing and export of uranium and uranium products is in the best interests of this country. In doing all these things, Western Australia and, indeed, Australia has the opportunity to join the world league in technology. Why should we do this? Primarily for energy. The civilisations of this world, be they good, bad or indifferent, depend on energy.

We talk about human rights and the rights of the individual and the benefits to people; and these all depend upon energy. Our whole social structure and existence, no matter what country we are talking about, is dependent on energy.

When I heard this morning the Leader of the Opposition stand in this House and opt out of and negate the responsibility of himself and his colleagues by not being prepared to debate such

an important issue for mankind as the matter of uranium, it made me sad and disgusted. I am sad and disgusted that representatives of people should opt out of their responsibility. According to the statement I heard members opposite are not prepared to be responsible and to debate this issue in a public forum.

Apparently I have been under a misapprehension ever since I have been capable of understanding; I thought our parliamentary system was a public forum because it is under public scrutiny and the glare of publicity attaches to everything we do. For at least 99 per cent of the time we sit here the Parliament is watched over by representatives of the Press, and long may that be so.

For a great deal of the time we sit we have people in the public gallery listening to the debates and making up their own minds as to whether what happens in this Parliament is good, bad or indifferent. Recently we had an exhibition in this place which may or may not have been good; but at least people came here to a public forum to see what was happening.

No forum is more public than the Parliament, and for members of the Labor Party to negate their obligation in this manner is a very sad indictment of their responsibility as representatives of the people. I for one will make it widely known as I am able to in the highways and byways of Western Australia that representatives of the people who came here to speak for the people in a public forum chose not to do so.

The Hon. R. G. Pike: Hear, hear!

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: By choosing not to speak on this matter, members of the Labor Party have negated their responsibility; but some of them have inadvertently participated in the debate by way of interjection. I liken this action to dingoes snapping at the heels of poor, sickly animals, hoping to trip them up. It is not good when members of Parliament adopt such an irresponsible attitude in a public place.

This motion deals with the means to provide energy. It seems to me that many people are concerned that uranium and its products may in fact cause loss of life. That is a reasonable enough concern; I am concerned about many things which cause loss of life. None of us lives forever.

However, above us in this Chamber there is electricity which provides light for this place and that electricity is a source of energy. We know that the electricity above us can kill. You, Mr President, would be well qualified to understand that.

I suggest that not only you, Sir, but almost every person knows that if an electric switch is faulty and live current is running through exposed wires or is in contact with exposed metal, in some circumstances that can kill. Yet we have harnessed electricity for the benefit of mankind; and what a strange world it would be without electric power. I suggest that all members of the Australian Labor Party, no matter where they may be—and I do not know where they have gone, apart from one who is still here—

The Hon. G. E. Masters: He is keeping a check on the members.

The Hon. V. J. FERRY:—would agree with me that if electricity supplies were cut off we would all be screaming at the Government of the day to provide power to run our hospitals and to enable our people to carry on with their ordinary community life. Television is a luxury item, I suppose, but it is just a simple example of the type of thing we use and which is powered by electrical energy.

Electrical energy is more important than that; it is life itself. When we are talking about caring for people and looking after them we must realise that we rely on electric power as a source of energy. Uranium and its products provide another means to further the interests of humanity and in particular of Australians and Western Australians.

Therefore, I am very sad when some people negate their responsibility in this way. It has been said to me by well-meaning people—not in the course of this debate because the only ones who have spoken and contributed anything worth while have been responsible and would not say it—that uranium and the misuse of its energy could have a serious effect on humanity. That may be so. Such people have also said that this power source will kill and cause untold harm for generations to come. It has been suggested to me by these well-meaning people that millions could well be affected.

I do not deny that, but human beings have faced such problems on countless occasions throughout the ages. Goodness me, consider World War I in which some 37.5 million people were casualties. That is a staggering number; the casualties in all wars are staggering. However, when we talk about casualties and deaths resulting from this source of energy, let me say I have great faith in human technology and I am sure that mankind in the main will do the right thing in the interests of fellow human beings.

I have the utmost faith that scientists and technicians—call them what one will—who are hand-

ling this source of energy will in fact harness it for the benefit of mankind. It is well known that countries such as Japan, Canada, the United States of America, Britain, and some European countries are operating nuclear power stations. Indeed, more and more of these nuclear power plants are being constructed. These are not recent events; some have been operating for a good number of years, as Mr Oliver rightly pointed out.

These power plants have a tremendous safety record; indeed, if all our industrial factories had such a safety record the world would be a much better place in which to live. Certainly when one is concerned about loss of life, one could argue that we should ban all moving vehicles and ensure that people remain stationary—then they could be struck by lightning, which is another source of energy!

The Hon. W. R. Withers: We could also ban the stuff they put in cars.

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: I find it completely beyond my comprehension that responsible people will not enter this debate in a public forum. I for one thoroughly endorse the motion before the House.

I endorse the motion in all respects. If we do not continue to progress and if we do not accept the challenge to master the technology and develop our resources, and everything that goes with that, we will not deserve to take our place amongst the nations of the world. So many countries are backward by comparison with our standards. If we are to help them we have to be strong ourselves, use this energy, and master the technology and the resources at our command.

If we can help others by making our energy resources available, surely that is playing our part in the world but if we do not—if we do nothing—what will be the result? Australia is one of the most remote countries in the world. Anyone who has travelled around the world will realise that so little is known of Australia that it is considered to be a down-under and backwater country. It may appear that way on a map of the world. But that does not give us the excuse or the right continually to hide our heads in the sand.

We are a proud people. We have dignity and we have regard for our fellow beings. Let us join the big league. Let us use our resources to the best advantage not only for our own citizens but also for the rest of the world so that we can take our place in world affairs. I thoroughly support the motion.

Sitting suspended from 12.42 to 2.15 p.m.

THE HON. W. M. PIESSE (Lower Central) [2.15 p.m.]: I support the motion. Although a great deal has been said in relation to the safety of using uranium for nuclear energy, I believe we must be realistic and recognise the nuclear age is here. Uranium is being used for nuclear energy. We already have nuclear reactors, and people are using nuclear power. If we do not mine our uranium it will not stop the development of the nuclear age.

It is not so long since electricity became the commonly used power supply in the domestic home. I can remember the fear with which many women viewed the introduction of electrical appliances into their homes. Indeed, it is true there were some catastrophes even with the use of the common vacuum cleaner. We must remember what has occurred in the past. I would say that 90 per cent of the people who use electricity would no more understand the mechanics behind the harnessing and production of electricity than I do. My knowledge on the subject is almost nil. However, we use electricity. I believe the same situation applies in relation to nuclear power. We must realise this fact.

When we look at safety from the point of view of defence of the nation, we must remember very clearly that in Australia we have a large amount of uncommitted and unmined uranium. This, of course, can only make us the focus of the envy of other nations which are currently using nuclear power, currently using uranium, and will continue to need more uranium than is committed to them at the present time.

One of the most dangerous attitudes we can take is to look around us and say, "Yes, we have a very great percentage of unmined uranium and we are not going to let anybody have it." It is well known that most of the wars we have seen in the world have started because of the covetousness of one nation for the possessions of another nation.

We know also that where there are nations which have something which other nations want, it is not very long before there is disruption of the peace and stability within that nation. This is usually brought about under the pretext of liberating someone from something; but in actual fact it is brought about because of the covetousness of one nation for what another nation has. We must be aware of this, although these days it is very old hat.

If we are to defend this country with its nuclear and uranium possibilities, one of the best ways of ensuring its defence is to trade—and we are a trading nation—in uranium, to the best possible advantage. By that I mean we should not commit our uranium to one country alone. I believe we

should make sure that we engage in trade in this commodity with several nations, thereby building in the means of our own defence.

I would like to mention another matter in relation to defence. I support the comments made by the Hon. Norman Moore in regard to population. The mining of this commodity would attract population, particularly to the Pilbara and to the northern areas of Western Australia. I fully support this. I see this also as a means of defending our country. I have long thought about what would have happened if another race had populated this country. Long ago they nearly populated those northern areas. We now have such advanced knowledge in relation to water and conservation—and that is another matter on which I wish to speak—that it is possible we could very well populate the northern areas of this State. However, at the present time the couple of F111 aircraft we have will not save us if people of another nation want to take up residence there and mine the uranium themselves.

The last matter I wish to mention is in relation to conservation.

"Conservation" has become almost a dirty word. I am very sorry about that because we have a real need for plans for conservation when mining the minerals we have in our country. I say this because of our climate and our rainfall, and because of the need for water in all areas. It is true we have had problems over the conservation of water, but this again, I think, can very well be assisted onto a much better balance if we look at it squarely and try not to make the same mistakes that have already been made in many areas.

I support the motion.

THE HON. G. C. MacKINNON (South-West—Leader of the House) [2.23 p.m.]: I thank members for their comments. No member asked any questions, so I do not intend to go over those speeches. However, I feel I must comment on the statement issued by the Leader of the Opposition in this place.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Can I accept the challenge to a public debate?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: These kinds of things which endeavour to undermine the proper authority of Parliament always make me genuinely sad. I wish there were some way one could orally underline the words "genuinely sad".

I have listened to a number of speeches by Mr Dans in which he made attacks in this way

and took this kind of action. We can understand it, but in understanding it I do not think we necessarily have to condone it. Indeed, I think it would be quite wrong of us to condone it. To suggest there is any better place than Parliament for a Government to discuss the subject is, of course, absurd because in this place we can discuss the subject with a great degree of freedom and put the matter on record.

I think perhaps the Leader of the Opposition underestimates the amount of general reading of *Hansard* that takes place. I think perhaps—and members might strongly disagree with this statement—Mr Dans might even underestimate his own influence. For the record, let me state that I consider Mr Dans to be a man of considerable influence. I also consider—and all of us must accept it—that he can put words together with great skill. I am sorry if I hurt any of his colleagues, but I think he puts words together with better skill than anyone on his side of the House.

Had he put on record some statements with regard to the use of energy in general and the problems which confront the world with regard to energy in general and with regard to uranium in particular, it would have been quite helpful to the general debate.

We appreciate that Mr Dans and his whole party are on the horns of a dilemma in respect of their attitude towards any form of energy which is as available as uranium will be, and they are still stuck with a schism in the party. We who sensibly cope with the vicissitudes and difficulties of an open coalition cannot appreciate the difficulties they face with their closed coalition. Historically, the Labor Party has represented a far greater range of people than we have.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: And it is getting bigger and bigger every day.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: We are called a coalition and any political party must of a necessity be a coalition. We frankly admit we are. We have two wings with whom we occasionally have a row, as was openly evident the other night. It was quite civilised.

We appreciate the fact that Mr Dans and his colleagues, Mr Jamieson and his colleagues, and indeed Mr Whitlam and his colleagues are on the horns of a dilemma in this tremendously serious problem. Nevertheless, even that does not condone the statement Mr Dans made and the action he took, and I sincerely hope members will clearly indicate their view of that argument by voting solidly in favour of this motion.

Question put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes 16

Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. O. N. B. Oliver
Hon. G. W. Berry	Hon. W. M. Piesse
Hon. V. J. Ferry	Hon. R. G. Pike
Hon. H. W. Gayfer	Hon. J. C. Tozer
Hon. G. C. MacKinnon	Hon. R. J. L. Williams
Hon. T. McNeil	Hon. W. R. Withers
Hon. I. G. Medcalf	Hon. D. J. Wordsworth
Hon. N. F. Moore	Hon. G. E. Masters

(Teller)

Noes 6

Hon. D. W. Cooley	Hon. R. Hetherington
Hon. D. K. Dans	Hon. F. E. McKenzie
Hon. Lyla Elliott	Hon. R. F. Claughton

(Teller)

Pairs

Ayes	Noes
Hon. N. McNeill	Hon. R. H. C. Stubbs
Hon. T. Knight	Hon. R. Thompson

Question thus passed.

WUNDOWIE CHARCOAL IRON INDUSTRY SALE AGREEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Receipt and First Reading

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

Second Reading

THE HON. I. G. MEDCALF (Metropolitan—Attorney-General) [2.32 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time. The Wundowie Charcoal Iron Industry Sale Agreement Act of 1974 provided for the ratification of an agreement between the State and Agnew Clough Limited for the sale of the undertakings and business maintained and carried out on behalf of the State at Wundowie.

After the takeover on the 1st January, 1975, the company went into the continuous production with great enthusiasm and spent a considerable amount of capital and managerial expertise for higher productivity and more efficient performance.

However, towards the end of 1976 and the beginning of 1977, it became more and more evident that the international economic climate and world trade had deteriorated, particularly as far as the steel market and its contributory products were concerned.

It is against this background that the Government has acted to assist Agnew Clough Limited in its operations at Wundowie.

It is pointed out that the industry at Wundowie is reliant on export sales for about 90 per cent of its total pig iron production. Due to the difficulties that have arisen in the world market for iron and steel products, the ability of the company to sell its products has been severely restricted.

In March of this year Agnew Clough Limited advised the Minister for Industrial Development that it was unable to perform all of its continuing obligations under the 1974 sale agreement and sought relief pursuant to clause 29, the delays clause, of that agreement.

Details provided to the Government revealed that the company had at that time accumulated an inventory of about 40 000 tonnes of pig iron while merchant distributors in the United States and Europe held a further 18 000 tonnes of Wundowie pig iron.

At current rates of usage the accumulated stocks represented in excess of one year's demand and were equivalent to one year's production with two furnaces.

The Government recognised that a suspension of production pursuant to clause 29 of the 1974 sale agreement would greatly disadvantage the work force and residents of Wundowie.

Had the Government not acted it was probable that the industry would have closed and due to the circumstances in which the company found itself, we would also have seen the Coates vanadium project shelved to some indeterminate time in the future.

Due to the isolated location of the works, little if any alternative employment was available in the immediate vicinity and many residents would have been forced to leave the town in order to find work opportunities.

In such circumstances it was realised also that the prospects for the company ever recommissioning the works would be poor due to the difficulties in again attracting a stable work force to Wundowie, and because of the high cost in re-opening what can only be recognised as an aged plant.

The accumulation of unsold stocks and the pressure to reduce the sale price of pig iron as other world producers endeavoured to quit stocks, has had a dramatic effect on the financial results of the Wundowie division of Agnew Clough Limited.

Operating results before tax for the period since the company acquired the industry have been—

6 months to June 30, 1975—\$135 000 profit

12 months to June 30, 1976—\$536 000 profit

12 months to June 30, 1977—\$1 662 000 loss

In addition to the accumulated operating loss of almost \$1 million experienced by the company, it had and still has the burden of financing almost \$5 million of unsold pig iron stock. This situation was aggravated by the otherwise very commendable fact that the company has outlaid about \$1.25 million in capital expenditure on the industry since the date of acquisition.

Under the circumstances the Government could readily appreciate the difficulties which the company faced as it is a locally-owned company without access to unlimited capital resources.

It must be understood that the problem which confronted and is still facing Agnew Clough Limited is not unique. *The Metal Bulletin* of the 18th January, 1977, reported that Kawasaki Steel in Japan had been forced to suspend part of its pig iron production due to falling demand and rapid inventory accumulation. The report stated that monthly pig iron sales by Kawasaki had fallen from an average in excess of 15 000 tonnes per month to only 7 000 tonnes per month, and that stocks had risen to almost 60 000 tonnes. Similar reports have been noted from producers in the other major industrial countries.

The action by Agnew Clough Limited to shut down one furnace in April and thereby reduce production from an annual rate of 60 000 tonnes to about 40 000 tonnes was in keeping with the action by Kawasaki and other world producers.

Despite the grim market position and the massive financial burden which the company has had to bear, it continues to be optimistic about the future viability of the industry under normal world trading conditions.

Consequently the Government has moved to support the company by providing a generous package of financial assistance aimed at ensuring the future of pig iron production over what has been demonstrated clearly to be a very abnormal and very difficult trading period.

The agreement which is before the house has two main objectives—

- (a) to ensure commitment by the company for the continuing production of pig iron at least until June, 1978, and
- (b) to achieve a commitment by the company to the starting of construction of the Coates Stage I vanadium project before February, 1978.

Both of these commitments are undertaken in this amended agreement by the company irrespective of the delay clause. In other words the company cannot delay these commitments for reason of unviability of either the pig iron production or the vanadium project.

The assistance provided is a composite package and individual items should not be viewed in isolation from the two objectives mentioned. The Government does not deny that the value of the assistance is substantial, but in view of the total reliance which the Wundowie community of about 300 workers and 1 000 people has on the industry, such generosity is not regretted.

The amendments to clause 8 set out quite clearly the obligations of the company both to proceed with construction of the Coates project and to continue pig iron production. The Coates project which is estimated to cost \$8 million must be commenced by February, 1978, and must be in production of vanadium pentoxide at the rate of not less than one million kilograms per annum within 18 months; that is by the 31st August, 1979.

It is understood that the average construction work force will be 100 and that an operational work force of 90 will be required for the project.

As provided for in the new clause 8B the Minister for Industrial Development has a discretionary power concerning the timing of a notice to the company which will provide for the release of the company from its obligation to make further payments in respect of the loans set out in the seventh schedule of the sale agreement.

The five loans were for a total of \$700 000 and have varying repayment provisions. Four of the loans totalling \$500 000 require interest only repayment with interest rates fixed between 6.2 per cent and 6.4 per cent.

Principal repayments are due in either 1982 or 1992. The remaining loan requires annual principal and interest repayments of \$17 673.30. The remission of the company from this obligation is to be retrospective to the 1st May, 1977.

The decision by the Minister to give the required notice will be based on his belief that construction of the Coates stage I project is irrevocably committed to proceed to completion. A concurrent provision with this declaration of irrevocable commitment to the Coates project is the release of the company from its pig iron production obligation set down in clause 8(1) of the agreement.

New clauses 15A and 15C are the basis for immediate assistance to the company which will

allow it to continue pig iron production at a cost of production sufficiently low to allow it to sell the product on the depressed world market.

The extra freight subsidy to be provided on iron ore railed from Koolyanobbing to Wundowie will be \$3.92 per tonne which is additional to the subsidy of \$1.96 per tonne provided in the original agreement. The extra subsidy is payable on iron ore carried between the 1st May, 1977 and the 30th June, 1978.

The agreement provides for the extra rail subsidy to be repaid to the State in the event that the company defaults on its undertakings before the 30th June, 1978.

Clause 15B limits the extent of the freight subsidy to the total amount provided for in the original agreement even though the form of its disbursement has been altered.

The decentralised nature of the Wundowie operation was recognised when the company sought and was granted the assistance provided in clause 15C. Pay-roll tax reimbursement to decentralised operations experiencing financial difficulties is a recognised form of assistance which has been extended to the company's operations at Wundowie and Koolyanobbing.

The assistance provided is substantial but the Government recognised the serious consequences for Wundowie if it did not act and act positively.

The Government had no choice but to assist in this generous way to ensure the continuing pig iron production at least to a point in time when the vanadium project is under construction and can accommodate a proportion of the Wundowie work force even if the pig iron market situation further deteriorates.

The agreement will enable the company to continue pig iron production and has secured a firm commitment from the company that the \$8 million Coates stage I project will be commenced by the 28th February, 1978.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. Lyla Elliott.

STAMP ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Assembly's Message

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the amendments made by the Council.

CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Second Reading

THE HON. R. HETHERINGTON (East Metropolitan) [2.43 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time. The aim of this short Bill is to introduce a method of breaking deadlocks between the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council, should they occur.

The Hon. R. G. Pike: Would you just wait until we get copies of the Bill?

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: Members will find that the entire Bill in fact is in clause 3, which is quick and easy to read.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: You have to have a Bill before you can read it; that is the idea of the rule.

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: Mr Alfred Deakin, who was later to become the first Liberal Prime Minister of Australia was recorded at page 74 of the *National Australasian Convention Debates* as making the following statement in 1891, when referring to Houses of Review, and particularly the Senate—

The powers entrusted to it should be those powers which have always belonged, under responsible government, to a Second Chamber, namely the power of review, the power of revision, and the power of veto limited in time.

When Alfred Deakin said that, the House of Lords in fact had the power of veto completely—as had its newly established Chamber which was set up in Western Australia in 1890 under responsible Government. However, it was a convention in 1890 that the House of Lords would not hold up a Bill indefinitely.

In 1945, with the election of the Atlee Labour Government, the convention was reiterated by Lord Salisbury, who was then Leader of the Conservatives in the House of Lords, when he said that the House of Lords would accept any measure for which the Government had been given a mandate—that is, proposals which the Government had put in its election manifesto—but that it would treat any other measure on its merits.

But this, of course, was after the time that the power of the House of Lords had been reduced by the Parliament Act of 1911. However, the convention was later given statutory form in Great Britain so that the House of Lords should have the power of veto, limited in time.

This is the idea of a House of Review. If this House really is to be a House of Review, I suggest that it, too, should have a power of veto, limited in time.

The Hon. W. R. Withers: But you are comparing it with a non-elected body.

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: I am talking about Houses of Review, and when Mr Alfred Deakin was speaking he was talking about an elected body, or at least a potentially elected body, because the Senate was not in existence at that time. Alfred Deakin was one of those people who very carefully wrote into the Australian Constitution deadlock provisions.

So, I am talking about a House of Review; I am talking about the second Chamber in a bicameral system; I am talking about what some quite learned and able people have talked about—and people who are not on my side of politics either. In this particular case I am talking about Mr Alfred Deakin, for whom I have the greatest respect; he was one of the great Prime Ministers of Australia. I also mentioned Lord Salisbury.

If members look at the report of the Bryce Commission on the House of Lords they will find set out there criteria for the behaviour of a House of Review. I have heard from the Hon. W. R. Withers—before he gets in another interjection—that over on that side of the House, or that three-quarters of the House, there is a group of independents who carefully review legislation. Mr Withers seems to think this is not a proper party House. I would not agree with him here; I think it is, but it should be a House of Review.

So, I am really saying that if this really is a House of Review or if we want it to be a House of Review, let us make it a House of Review by not giving it absolute veto over Bills which come up from the lower House. Let us adopt the system—

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: This is like the Alsatian Dog Act; you are taking the teeth out of the place.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I think he is working on both ends.

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: It might take the teeth out of this House, but it would still leave the House able to give a fairly nasty suck.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: It would still leave us with the dog.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer interjected.

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: I will explain that, if I may. Mr President, perhaps I made the mistake of not talking up to you so

that Mr Gayfer might be able to hear me. Be that as it may, what is proposed in this Bill is something quite simple, which allows the people to be consulted a second time to make sure whether or not they want the Government in the other place to be re-elected, and whether they are going to support certain legislation.

This seems to me to be quite proper behaviour. It does not take the teeth out of this House; it may file them down a little but what the Bill proposes—I know members can read it but I will put it in simple terms—is that if this House rejects or amends a Bill in an unacceptable form to the lower House twice in one session there should be at least three months intervening between the readings. Then, after an election, and the Bill is passed again in the lower House and then rejected again by this House it will nonetheless become law.

The Hon. R. G. Pike: You cannot disguise what you are proposing to do with verboseness.

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: When I hear some of the contributions from members opposite I feel as if I am boxing with shadows, because I have not heard many arguments from members opposite. Last week I introduced a Bill which I thought was a good one, but the Government had it adjourned until Christmas Eve. So, if I am shadow-boxing it is because members opposite are sitting there as shadows.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: Why are you always pulling the institution down?

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: I would suggest that the honourable member is overreacting and I would suggest to the Hon. R. G. Pike that if he keeps his remarks to the Bill rather than reading my intent he may do better. I remind him that if this Bill is passed and certain legislation is introduced into the Parliament next year—which will happen when the Whip is well and in his place to ensure members opposite are in the Chamber—it will then be difficult to effect further changes of this nature without holding a referendum.

What I am suggesting in this Bill is there should be at least three attempts to pass a Bill from the lower House with at least six months intervening between the rejection in this House the first time and the rejection in this House the third time. Further, I am suggesting that after two rejections of the legislation there must be an election of the lower House so that the legislation would have to be presented to the people and the Government would have to ask for a mandate to carry it out. If this were done I cannot see what members opposite could object to.

If members of this House rejected a Bill on good grounds they could take their arguments to the people and the people could then decide whether to object or accept the Government which had introduced the legislation in the first place.

Some of the members opposite who consider I am trying to drag the institution down are saying, "We are prepared to reject legislation but we do not want to allow the people to be the final arbiters on it." They are saying they do not trust the people. This Bill has nothing to do with dragging the institution down; it has a great deal to do with the contempt for democracy that some members show by their interjections.

The Hon. V. J. Ferry: Some people walk out and do not do anything about it.

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: I do not consider I am confusing anyone. I am talking about the role of bicameral Parliaments. I am sorry if I am confusing the Leader of the House, but I have found it is not always difficult to do.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Here we go.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: It is dead easy.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Will the honourable member proceed with his speech.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I am sure the member would get better examination results than I would.

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: Not necessarily in practical matters.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I wish you would write your speech out when you introduce a Bill.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The only member not making a speech is the honourable member on his feet.

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: Thank you, Mr President. When one follows what is not a usual custom in making a speech without notes, one is not helped by interjections; I accept that fact. I think it is a little unfair to be accused of not following my line of argument when members continually interject, and I think the responsibility there is not entirely mine. I accept that this is the way Parliament behaves, and I am not complaining. I am merely pointing out that had it not been for the interjections I would have finished my speech by now as I have only a little more to add.

The Hon. R. G. Pike: That means you are where you started.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members know that interjections are unruly and the honourable member is entitled to present his point of view.

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: Thank you, Mr President. What I am suggesting is that if honourable members do not like this Bill I will bring it up again during the next session—

The Hon. G. E. Masters: I am listening to you intently.

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: The member always does and I should look at him more often when giving a speech because I may have more chance of getting an intelligent response.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: More side rambling.

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: If this is to be a House of Review with the principles that Mr Alfred Deakin espoused—he later became the Rt. Hon. Alfred Deakin—

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: Why suddenly on the principles of Deakin?

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: You should not interrupt because you know he lacks concentration.

The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON: The reason I referred to Mr Alfred Deakin is that he was a liberal Liberal; he was the founder of Deakinite liberalism; he gave his name to a form of liberalism. He argued for a House of Review—the Senate—and he put forward the standard conservative arguments for a House of Review. I am using those arguments because they are adequate for my purpose. The Minister for Transport does not have to do anything; he can please himself whether he sticks to the principles of the founder of the Liberal Party; it is not my affair.

I am suggesting that the principles enunciated by Deakin for a House of Review include the point that a House of Review should have the power of veto limited in time and this would be well served by this Parliament. The power of veto would enable this House to hold up legislation, to have it discussed—in what the Leader of the House said earlier was a public forum—by this House three times before it was passed. This would enable the legislation to be aired and if the legislation was presented to the public during an election it would not only be aired twice in this House, but also it would be aired on the hustings. The views of the people could then be consulted and ascertained. In other words, it would allow this House to hold up measures and to cause them to be discussed more than adequately, and it would allow the people who elect us and to whom we are responsible to have the final decision. I think this is highly acceptable and I commend the Bill to the House.

THE HON. G. C. MacKINNON (South-West—Leader of the House) [3.00 p.m.]: Everyone knows that this House could be rising by this evening. This could be the last day of Parliament. It will certainly be the penultimate day. In all my experience I can remember one Bill being thrown out on a first reading, and that one was introduced by the late Hon. Ruby Hutchison at 2.30 a.m. on the last day of the session, and that Bill was designed to abolish the Legislative Council.

Obviously it is a trick to introduce a Bill in order to encourage us to throw it out. On the occasion of the late Mrs Hutchison's Bill it was dealt with at 2.30 a.m. and Parliament finally concluded at about 5.00 a.m.

We can form our own conclusions with regard to the measure before us. We have a Bill introduced by a gentleman who has never witnessed or experienced the sort of division about which he is speaking. He could have asked one or two of us who have, and who have seen the system work as it is laid down and the systems which operate in any institution and which are not laid down.

The Hon. F. E. McKenzie: How long ago was that?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: I would have to look it up, but it was a few years before Mr McKenzie came here too, but I have no doubt that while they are sitting in the same seats as they are both Mr Hetherington and Mr McKenzie will witness it happening again. They will only have to wait a while.

The fact remains that we have a system and now we are experiencing a resurrection of the sort of tactics adopted by the late Hon. Ruby Hutchison who used to bring these sorts of Bills in under these sorts of circumstances and make these sorts of speeches at almost the identical time in the session during the years she was here. God rest her soul. Now we have to put up with it again but, in Mrs Hutchison's favour, she had at least been here a while and had some idea of the practicalities of the system.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: The injustices of the system, not the practicalities.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: She claimed they were injustices. As a matter of fact her speech followed very much the lines of Mr Cooley's except that she was a bit more explicit. She was quite sure that members of the Liberal and Country Parties ate their young.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: Don't you?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: That is the sort of reply Mrs Hutchison would have made.

We have had constant talk about our concern for democracy while Mr Hetherington himself has his own special brand of democracy. I move—

That the Council do now divide.

Motion put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes 18

Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. O. N. B. Oliver
Hon. G. W. Berry	Hon. W. M. Piesse
Hon. V. J. Ferry	Hon. R. G. Pike
Hon. H. W. Gayfer	Hon. I. G. Pratt
Hon. A. A. Lewis	Hon. J. C. Tozer
Hon. G. C. MacKinnon	Hon. R. J. L. Williams
Hon. T. McNeil	Hon. W. R. Withers
Hon. I. G. Medcalf	Hon. D. J. Wordsworth
Hon. N. F. Moore	Hon. G. E. Masters

(Teller)

Noes 9

Hon. D. W. Cooley	Hon. F. E. McKenzie
Hon. D. K. Dans	Hon. R. Thompson
Hon. Lyla Elliott	Hon. Grace Vaughan
Hon. R. Hetherington	Hon. R. F. Claughton
Hon. R. T. Leeson	

(Teller)

Motion thus passed.

Question put and negatived.

Bill defeated.

Point of Order

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: On a point of order, I wish to say that I am in a quandary. I thought that the motion which was put was "That the Council do now divide". That motion was seconded and passed whereupon a division was called for. The division was held and lost so now the question is "That the Council do now divide", and we should have another division.

The PRESIDENT: The Council did divide, and that division decided that the question be now put and I put the question which was "That the Bill be now read a second time". I put that question and it was decided in the negative.

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: With due respect, I distinctly heard a motion passed that the House do now divide on this question. That is the motion *in toto*. Mr Hetherington said we will divide on that question *in toto* because he disapproved of that total message. We have had that division so we approved of that total motion and that motion still stands in my book and it is that the Council will now divide on the issue.

President's Ruling

The PRESIDENT: I refer the honourable member to Standing Order No. 99 which clearly indicates that if the motion "That the Council do now divide" is passed the Council will vote on the question immediately before it, and the question immediately before it was that the Bill be now read a second time.

The House having decided that question in the negative, the Bill will not be read a second time. That is my ruling.

Point of Order

The Hon. R. G. PIKE: On a point of order—

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: We have not concluded the first point of order.

The PRESIDENT: I have concluded it. I have given my ruling.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Very well.

The Hon. R. G. PIKE: My point of order is similar to the one that has just been dealt with. The House decided by a division to determine the question on whether the House will divide on the Bill. The question was carried in the affirmative; and since it was carried in the affirmative I would have thought that would be an instruction to the House that it must divide to determine the question.

The PRESIDENT: The honourable member is raising the same point of order which I have just answered. Standing Order No. 99 provides that in the event of the question that the House do now divide being decided in the affirmative, the question immediately before the House will be taken. The question immediately before the House was that the Bill be now read a second time; and that was decided on the voices. No division was called for. In any case, I have made my decision.

BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 9th November.

THE HON. R. F. CLAUGHTON (North Metropolitan) [3.11 p.m.]: This Bill seeks to amend the Bush Fires Act. The Minister informed us it contains 48 clauses, so it is quite an extensive revision of the bushfires legislation. The main change is in the method of issuing warnings of bush fires. In place of what is now known as a hazard, in future it will be known as a fire danger. In this House we sometimes face hazards and dangers, but as there is a difference

between the two perhaps we cannot judge whether the change will make any real difference to the application of the legislation.

When I saw bushfire warning signs in the country areas indicating the degree of fire hazard, I understood they indicated whether the bush was likely to go up in flames at the slightest provocation. However, we must accept the advice that has been given by the Bush Fires Board and its staff, who are the specialists in the implementation of this legislation.

The Labor Party supports the changes being made to the legislation through the amendments in the Bill.

THE HON. W. M. PIESSE (Lower Central) [3.13 p.m.]: I, too, support the amendments in the Bill. The Hon. R. F. Claughton has said that he does not know a great deal about bushfires, and I can quite understand that. Unless one has lived in the country and experienced bushfires one would not be aware of the hazards, or of the need for bushfire prevention in this State.

Western Australia with its varying climatic conditions and vegetation in the different parts of the State requires these safeguards. Whilst the Bush Fires Act appears to be unwieldy, nevertheless it is important to the State. Now and then the Act comes up for review and examination in the light of new technology, new forms of communication, and new areas of clearings of forests. We have to take all those factors into consideration.

One of the main features of the amendments in the Bill is that they reaffirm the position that local authorities be given a fairly large degree of autonomy in relation to fire fighting and fire prevention within the areas. There is no doubt that the local authorities know the most about the conditions in their areas.

One amendment appearing on page 28 of the Bill states—

(5a) A local authority may, with the approval of the Governor, make by-laws—

(a) requiring owners and occupiers of land in its district to clear firebreaks in such manner, at such places, at such times, of such dimensions and to such number, and whether in parallel or otherwise, as are specified in the by-laws and to maintain the firebreaks clear of all inflammable matter;

In framing a by-law, a local authority may consider that the last portion "to maintain the firebreaks

clear of all inflammable matter" goes too far. It can then make its own arrangement to cope with the situation in its area.

It is very important that legislation of this nature is not framed too tightly, because if we try to cover all areas in a blanket manner, we can very often upset the balance in one area so as to put the position right in another area. Therefore, it is best to leave these matters to the local authority to determine.

Another feature of the Bill is that it restates that local authorities are answerable to the Minister. This is a very necessary provision, because the Minister has to make decisions in relation to matters affecting the State forests and land. So it is important to relate matters of decision back to the Minister.

Certain amendments appear on the notice paper in the name of the Attorney-General. A person to be nominated by the Bureau of Meteorology is to be appointed to the board. This is important, particularly in the light of our new knowledge in this field. It is true that the Minister may delegate some of his or her authority, but that Minister will be answerable to the Government of the day.

That is a very important aspect where we have wages and salaried staff working side by side in conjunction with volunteer fire fighters. In our country bushfire brigades all the members are volunteers, and they know the seriousness of bushfires and the danger to their lives if bushfires cannot be put out or prevented.

The second schedule to the Bill contains the penalties. This is a very necessary schedule, and it should be examined and updated more often, in order that the penalties have some real meaning.

I support the Bill.

THE HON. A. A. LEWIS (Lower Central) [3.19 p.m.]: I support the Bill. There are certain amendments appearing on the notice paper, and one of them seeks to increase the membership of the Bush Fires Board. I do not know whether the Bureau of Meteorology in this State has done a good job. Probably a person licking his finger and putting it up into the wind would have a better idea of what the weather will be in an area, than the person who is to be nominated by the Bureau of Meteorology.

I wonder why there is a need to have a nominee of the national parks or the flora and fauna authority on the board. The increase in membership will take the number from the existing 13 to 16. I think that the bigger the board becomes the fewer will be the decisions.

Having said I support the Bill I would like to say I believe the great thrust of the measure is to put more responsibility into the hands of local government. I agree with the Hon. W. M. Piesse that it is time local government had more say in the control of bushfires. Too often as a policy we are told from Perth, about 200 miles away, what to do with our bushfires.

It seems to me that again the theorists have taken over and this Bill—in respect of which I congratulate the Minister—is beginning to place responsibility back in the hands of the people who have to fight bushfires; and very few people, numerically, in this State have to fight bushfires. In the main, those who fight bushfires are land-owners and Forests Department workers. The employees of the Forests Department are paid to do it, and the landowners do it to survive because they need pastures on which to graze their stock.

At times when I hear people from certain areas say they have experienced drought for four years and are worried about bushfires, I wonder whether they are worried more about their townships or their pasture and productive areas. However, if there were no productive areas there would be no townships.

The thrust of this measure is to allow each local government authority to make its own decision, and one wonders why each local authority is not permitted to assume complete control of bushfires in its area, governed by a simple set of rules possibly administered by a board, rather than have an Act which goes on for page after page after page. The present Act has 73 pages and after the Bill is incorporated in it, it will probably have 78 or 79 pages.

In reality, Mr President, you in South Perth cannot really make decisions in respect of fire-fighting which would be applicable to the Hon. Des Dans in Fremantle or to myself in Boyup Brook. The three of us realise that we know our own conditions best. Let me use the analogy of a member of Parliament. If I used in my electorate the tactics that the Hon. Don Cooley uses in his electorate, I would probably be defeated hand over fist; and if Mr Cooley used in his electorate the tactics I use in my electorate, probably he would be defeated also, as has been proved by Labor Party candidates in my electorate year after year.

I believe the people in local areas should make the decisions. We have gone a certain way towards that in this Bill, but I feel we have not gone as far as we should. We still face certain problems which mainly relate to centralism and the decrees which come from the city. I refer to decrees issued

by the Bureau of Meteorology and the Forests Department; and now I think we are to get them from the Wildlife Authority and the National Parks Board. It is fascinating that such bodies as the Wildlife Authority and the National Parks Board should have greater decision-making powers in the matter of bushfires than people in the productive areas of the State.

We are the people who must pay for ecologists and other "eco-nuts"; that is, the farmers who pay taxes must pay for the National Parks Board and the Wildlife Authority and all other Government instrumentalities which will have a say in the matter of bushfires. Quite frankly, after looking at the Bill and the amendment on the notice paper it would appear the Government will take over from the people who are productive.

I wonder when the trade unions will get into the act and want a member on the board. I wonder when consumers will want a member on the board. I do not know who consumes a bushfire, nor do I know which trade unions would be concerned with bushfires. The only person I know in the trade union movement who knows anything about fires is Mr Bill Latter, of whom the gentleman who sits next to me always seems to be critical.

I am extremely grateful to Mr Bill Latter for what he did in helping to fight major bushfires in the south-west when he was the Secretary of the Collie Miners' Union. Whenever we asked him to provide manpower he provided it. That does not mean I support Bill Latter in any shape or form.

I am simply wondering when we will have union representatives and consumer representatives on this board. We have 16 on the board now, and I wonder how far we will go. I believe a decent board should comprise three or five members, and if they want evidence they can call for it.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: Three with two away sick is better.

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: Mr Gayfer has put it in a nutshell; he has run CBH like that for years!

We get to the stage where we are increasing boards one by one, and I have just given the Attorney-General three more people he could place on his board. It could end up like this Parliament where we have so many views expressed—except on the matter of uranium on which members of the Opposition will not speak but only interject. We could go on and on.

However, I believe, the true thrust of this Bill is eventually to get rid of the Bush Fires Board and give local government the responsibility. I believe there should be a board of three, five, or

seven members to make the final decisions, with local government having the authority to look after bushfires in their areas. The board should have on it a legal representative because every bushfire brigade in my area wants to know what the legal position is.

These are all men of decision; they have decided to go onto the land and farm, and they have farmed well. Mainly because they have become leaders in the farming community they have been promoted to positions within bushfire organisations.

I suggest to the Attorney-General that he pass to the Minister for Lands and Forests the suggestion that we look into the abolition of the Bush Fires Board and allow local government to take over the whole matter, having only a small board to advise on legal aspects.

I believe we could save probably \$700 000 or \$800 000 a year; and I know the Premier is interested in saving money because he has taken the motto of a business of mine: "What you save you earn and you can use for something else." I think it is about time this Government—which has been called conservative and Liberal, and I am sorry certain members here who are revolutionaries are not saying anything about it—

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Resolutionaries; I do not know about revolutionaries.

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: It is fascinating, is it not? What resolution have members of the Labor Party ever taken except to stick together and never have a thought of their own?

The Hon. D. K. Dans: You did not hear what I said. I said "resolutionaries".

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: That is what I said. The resolution members opposite took was to stick together and then they do not have a thought of their own. They could not review anything because—

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Do not catch fire because the Bush Fires Board might put you out.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I ask the member to stick to the contents of the Bill.

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: Mr President, if you would like me to stick to the contents of the Bill, and not to the "resolutionaries" of the Labor Party, or the revolutionaries—

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: People who live in glass houses—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Will the honourable member proceed and ignore interjections.

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: It is very hard, Sir.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: You wouldn't live long as a fish.

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: The Opposition shows a lack of interest in rural affairs when its lead speakers can talk for only five minutes on a Bill—

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: I do not think that is a fair comment.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: It is very unfair, as you understand. I was going to speak on the Bill but I was out of the Chamber because I had no alternative but to be out of the Chamber.

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: I apologise; I did not realise that the Hon. Des Dans was going to speak on the Bill. I hope he gives us some constructive criticism and I am sorry I spoke for him. I certainly will not interject on him.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I think you might.

The Hon. A. A. LEWIS: Last time I did it caused him great merriment. We have read in the Press that the Labor Party is going to make great promises for rural areas. One of our big problems in rural areas is bushfires, and this Bill has done more than any other Bill to kill the problem in country areas of centralism versus local government. It has given local government a great deal of autonomy and it has formed local committees, some of which I do not like but go along with because they are formed by shire councils and not by a sort of father figure from above. I support the Bill.

THE HON. H. W. GAYFER (Central) [3.32 p.m.]: I thank Mr Dans for allowing me to speak ahead of him, as I am supposed to be at a meeting right now. I support the comments made by the Hon. Winifred Piesse. Knowing a little about the Bush Fires Act, naturally—coming from the country—and having had a lot to do with local government, I notice that in the last paragraph of the Minister's second reading speech—

The Hon. I. G. Medcalf: The last paragraph reads: "I commend the Bill to the House."

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: The paragraph I refer to reads—

Although it is difficult to secure unanimity among country shire councils, farmer organisations, and people from widely separated centres with different interests, it is believed that undue contention is unlikely to arise over the proposed amendments. Certainly a strong body of opinion exists in support of the changes proposed.

That shows that somewhere along the line there must have been a degree of contention as to whether things are moving along correctly within

the terms of the Bill. There seems to be reflected in that paragraph a little indecision as to whether we are making the right move; possibly there is some conjecture in certain places as to whether we are doing so. I have heard that there is a lot of interest in country areas, particularly as the recommendations came from the Bush Fires Board which passed on requests from local government and the Country Shire Councils' Association. Because of those requests Mr Campbell solicited a written submission from local authorities and attended 15 regional meetings at which representatives of local government and their fire control organisations made further representations to him. They went to the point of ascertaining where there might be indecision, they got all their ideas from that, and finally, as the Minister said in his second reading speech, amendments were recommended by the board following a review of the Act as a whole.

In my opinion a review of the Act as a whole consisted of putting into the Act all the areas at which the representatives of local government had looked, and then reviewing the Act to see whether it was acceptable to the majority which is governed by the second last paragraph of the Minister's second reading speech.

I am glad that the Attorney-General is handling the Bill because the point that worries me—and I do not know how often it is repeated in the Bill because I have not had a close look at it—concerns words contained in clause 32 which says that a local authority may, with the approval of the Governor, make by-laws to do certain things and “to maintain the firebreaks clear of all inflammable matter.”

To start at the beginning, a local authority may make a by-law which has to have the approval of the Governor; and the approval of the Governor will be given to a by-law which in reality has been approved by Cabinet and which in turn has been approved by the department. I have been making firebreaks for so long that it does not matter and it is not possible to keep firebreaks clear of all inflammable materials. One can miss a little gutter which the big wheels of the plough left or a grader can kick on a rock. In fact this year without any rain it is impossible to turn the soil. So what we have been trying to do is to grade the hard grassy area around the paddocks. We are not being totally successful and as a consequence inflammable material is left on these firebreaks. We know that, but at least we are trying to reduce it as best we can.

We have been having these arguments for years, but what frightens me is the depth of what is provided in this clause as to how we shall make

our firebreaks. We know that we have to make firebreaks and we know that they have to be approved by the local authority, but usually it is “by and large” approval. “By”, one has done the best one can; and “largely” it is good. I hope Mr Claughton understands what I mean. My point is that the Bill will lay down specifically that a firebreak has to be cleared of all inflammable material.

The Hon. J. C. Tozer: What did the old Act say?

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: Mr Baxter has just passed me a note to say that the by-law is agreed to by the Minister—and nine times out of 10 by-laws would be dictated by the department—and approved by the Governor-in-Executive-Council. Who comprise the Executive Council but members of Cabinet? If I said that a by-law would be approved by Cabinet, Mr Baxter is splitting straws in my opinion; and they are inflammable too. The contention of all farmers in my area and in the pastoral areas beyond my property is that it is not possible to make a firebreak with a clear surface and without anything on it.

This cannot possibly be done. One might succeed in getting 90 per cent of it right; but one gets these odd pieces of grass here and there. If one uses the plough, one gets the clod that does not turn over and does not completely cover the grass. If one tries to grade it, one cannot take it away.

I believe the word “all” should be removed from that clause. If that is done, it would then read, “. . . and to maintain the fire breaks clear of inflammable matter”. With those few words I shall resume my seat.

THE HON. D. K. DANS (South Metropolitan) [3.42 p.m.]: We on this side of the House have indicated already that we support the Bill. I am sorry I was not present to be the first speaker on the Bill. As you know, Mr President, I had a slight accident.

All I want to say is, I was a little alarmed at some of the comments made by the Hon. A. A. Lewis. I hope I am wrong in my interpretation of his comments. He appeared to be saying that the Bush Fires Board should be disbanded and that in taking away the Bush Fires Board there would be no recourse to the Minister. I may be wrong in my interpretation and would like the Minister to clarify the situation. I would be horrified if that is what the honourable member meant. I would be horrified if that is the intention of the Government. Ministerial control through the Bush Fires Board would be relinquished and a small committee would be established. I think everyone in this Chamber would know, regardless of

whether one represents a rural area, that the Bush Fires Board has done a tremendous job. Under the existing legislation, the Bush Fires Board is responsible to the Minister.

I would be aghast and I am sure most people in the State would be aghast if ministerial control were removed and the Bush Fires Board, as it now stands, were abolished. It would certainly not have the unifying effect which ministerial control manages to accomplish.

In this Bill we are amending 42 of the 67 sections of the Act, as the Minister mentioned in his second reading speech. These amendments have come about as the result of a consensus of opinion among the people involved. It would be impossible to obtain 100 per cent agreement from all the parties concerned; but at least when a Minister of the Crown controls the whole operation through the board, with the resources of the Forestry Department, local government and other interested people, a consensus may be obtained. Surely this is the way it must remain.

Rather than bringing up this particular matter in the Committee stage, I would like the Minister to give some assurance that the present situation of the Minister, the Bush Fires Board, the Forests Department, and the district officers working together on this matter will be continued. Surely the involvement of the people in the areas is important, because they know their districts and can provide valuable advice.

THE HON. V. J. FERRY (South-West) [3.44 p.m.]: I support the Bill and I applaud the Bill for what it contains. As has been mentioned by previous speakers this Bill has, in the main, evolved out of practical experience.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Over many years.

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: It is being updated now in many good and practical respects.

A few years ago I made a contribution to an amendment to this Act in this House and compared the conditions and firefighting methods in this State to those in other States of Australia. I do not propose to do that today; but I think the speech I made on that occasion showed that we in Western Australia are to the forefront in the fighting of bushfires wherever they may occur in this State.

Because of the very nature of bushfires, they are always difficult and one cannot predict what will happen from one year to the next. Therefore, we will see, resulting from experience, further amendments brought to Parliament to amend the Act as the need arises.

I want to pay tribute to the bush fire brigades and the members of those brigades. In the main, of course, they are volunteers and there is nothing better than a volunteer in an emergency situation. It has been pointed out that most of the volunteers come from the farming community and I think this is fair comment. But augmenting this sort of protection in many parts of the State the Forests Department plays a very vital role in the control of bushfires or, as more commonly known, the control of wild fires. The Bush Fires Board has an interest, as does the community, in maintaining assets.

Sitting suspended from 3.46 to 4.02 p.m.

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: Prior to the afternoon tea suspension I was referring to the excellent work done by the Forests Department in combating bushfire outbreaks. The Forests Department has some special expertise in this regard. By the very nature of its organisation, it has appropriate equipment to handle fires in heavily timbered country. In fact, although the department does not come under the direct superintendence of this particular Bill, it does assist the fire division whenever the need arises. I can say with considerable confidence that the bush fire brigade and everyone associated with the fighting of bushfires is always terribly glad to see the Forests Department when it is able to assist.

The south-west area of this State, particularly the heavily timbered part, does have some problems inasmuch as there are rural properties almost surrounded by Forests Department land, or at best rural properties bordering on Forests Department land. Therefore, the department is very concerned that a fire on a rural property should not spread to timber reserves and, conversely, if a fire is in a timber reserve the department is particularly keen to extinguish it, and certainly to contain it from spreading to nearby farm land. Its services are well appreciated.

The method of combating bush fires has become very sophisticated over the last 20 years. In this regard, I refer to the use of radio. The radio network of the bushfire organisation is absolutely outstanding and is a thorough credit to those associated with it.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: Mainly as a result of the Kojonup Shire, which started it. A bloke named Ferry, a relation of the honourable member who is speaking, did a wonderful job of forming the network.

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: There were many people who were closely associated with it and I commend them on their initiative. It has

developed into a network which has been of benefit to the whole of the State.

As has been emphasised by a previous speaker, people in local areas will have a bigger say with regard to what is to happen. Local authorities, in their own right, will have some further say and that is to be applauded. I hope the co-operation will continue in that vein.

The Bill also contains a small measure to tidy up the section dealing with incinerators. I believe there was an oversight in the drafting of the legislation, and although there is reference to where incinerators can be placed, there is no reference to their use. That will now be clarified.

It is unnecessary for me to talk at length on this measure. The Bill is thoroughly worthy of support, and I commend the Government on introducing it.

THE HON. I. G. MEDCALF (Metropolitan—Attorney-General) [4.06 p.m.]: I thank honourable members for their support of this Bill. I have noted that generally speaking it has met with approval, especially the proposal to give local government some greater degree of day-to-day control in the matter of bushfires.

The Hon. Des Dans sought an assurance that it was not the intention of the Government to disband the Bush Fires Board. I have had an opportunity to discuss this matter with the Minister for Lands and Forests and she has assured me that the Government has no such intention.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: What a great pity.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I thought that is what the member opposite was saying.

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: I am able to give that assurance that it will not be disbanded.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: It is still a great pity.

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: The Bill indicates that the Government will give greater power to local authorities in respect of matters which are within their administrative areas.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I think that is good.

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: Local authorities will be able to more effectively control their areas.

The other point was raised by two members who are now absent.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: We are not supposed to refer to members who are absent.

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: I am simply stating the point was raised by two members who are now absent; I did not name them.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Attorney-General will proceed.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: If the Attorney-General had been here the other night to hear his leader speak about this kind of reference—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Attorney-General will proceed.

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: I repeat: the other point was raised by two members, one of whom is now present. I am not giving anything away!

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: You never have.

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: Mr Gayfer announced earlier he had to go to a meeting and that is the reason he is absent.

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: We understand your remarks were not intended in any way to be critical.

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: Certainly.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: None at all!

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: Perhaps Mr Lewis would like to speak for the second time during the second reading.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: He is speaking all the time.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: I talk sense.

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: If I may continue, the point was raised in connection with inflammable matter. I fully agree with the point made by the Hon. H. W. Gayfer which, I understand, was reflected in the comments made by Mrs Piesse. It is almost impossible to maintain a fire break because a leaf can drop onto it and then the owner of the land is technically in default. I can speak with some authority on this matter because I have participated in a number of prosecutions in this regard, unfortunately usually for the defendant who is in a situation of absolute liability. It is impossible to keep and maintain a fire break free of inflammable material. It would be just as impossible in the Simpson Desert because a piece of grass or a leaf could drop onto a fire break and under heat-wave conditions it could burn. In the long term, I feel that is absurd.

I have spoken to the Minister and she shares the view that local authorities will use their discretion and common sense in connection with the regulation. It is true that we are to include a regulation which will require that fire breaks be kept clear of all inflammable material, so there is no flexibility in that area.

I am prepared to accept the suggestion made by the Hon. H. W. Gayfer and which, no doubt, was also conveyed by Mrs Piesse. I will move to amend the Bill as was proposed.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (the Hon. R. J. L. Williams) in the Chair; the Hon. I. G. Medcalf (Attorney-General) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 4 put and passed.

Clause 5: Section 8 amended—

The clause was amended, on motions by the Hon. I. G. Medcalf, as follows—

Page 4, line 19—Delete the word “fourteen” and substitute the word “sixteen”.

Page 5, line 14—Add after subparagraph (iii) of paragraph (c) the word “and”.

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: I move—

Page 5, lines 15 to 26—Delete subparagraphs (iv) and (v) of paragraph (c) and substitute a subparagraph as follows—

(iv) by deleting paragraph (h) and substituting paragraphs as follows—

- (h) a person appointed to be representative of the saw-milling industry in the State;
- (i) a person nominated by the Regional Director for the State of the Bureau of Meteorology;
- (j) a person nominated by the Minister to whom the administration of the Wildlife Conservation Act, 1950 is for the time being committed to represent The Western Australian Wildlife Authority constituted under that Act; and
- (k) a person nominated by the Minister to whom the administration of the National Parks Authority Act, 1976 is for the time being committed to represent the National Parks Authority of Western Australia established under that Act.

The object of this amendment is to increase the membership of the board from 14 to 16 members. The additional people will represent the Western Australian Wildlife Authority and the National Parks Authority.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: I would like to refer to a few matters which perhaps I should have mentioned during my second reading speech. However, this is an appropriate place to mention them because one of the new nominees to this

board will be a person nominated by the Minister to whom the administration of the Wildlife Conservation Act is committed.

While speaking Mr Lewis made some remarks to which I took quite strong objection and I would also like to mention that in relation to the amendment before us a lot of harm is occurring throughout our community because of comments which imply that people living in the country are contributing more to the economy than are people who live in the city. Of course there are differences in the methods of production and in the actual produce of people in different areas, but both are complementary; we need each other.

Comments such as those made by Mr Lewis unfortunately reinforce cultivated attitudes that there is some sort of division between city and country people. It is of no advantage to this State for that attitude to be perpetuated. I very much wish Mr Lewis and his kind would desist from making comments like this because I believe the comments are made primarily for party political purposes and not in the interests of the State.

Contrary to what Mr Lewis and others may believe, many city people have lived in the country or they have visited relatives or friends in the country and therefore they have a real appreciation of what goes on.

I have taken part in exercises with volunteer organisations to create fire breaks in country areas. In my younger days I fought scrub fires in Bassendean when it was a much more open suburb than it is now. I vividly recall one experience because although the area of bush involved was not very large, the conditions of the day were such that a fireball situation developed; the fire created its own winds which increased the heat to inferno proportions. It was a terrifying experience.

The father of a pupil of mine was one of the people killed in the Dwellingup fire so I have had personal experience of what bushfires are like and so I very much resent the tone adopted by Mr Lewis. It was most unjust of him to suggest that we on this side do not care and have no interest in these matters. When Opposition members speak to a Bill with which they agree, there is little point in conducting a long debate on it, and I hope Mr Lewis will recognise that fact. His comments were particularly unwarranted in relation to this Bill.

With the increase in awareness of environmental needs, an area of possible conflict has arisen in recent years because the farmers are concerned that their properties are protected. Sometimes the burning practices of the various authorities

are not what the farmers see as being desirable. The same sort of thing happens in regard to fauna protection. For the preservation of fauna and flora, it is necessary for safe controlled burning to be undertaken in a particular way and at particular sites. The habitat of the animals and birds can be affected if an area is burnt over too frequently. So it is essential that people with an interest in these fields and with the responsibility should be members of the board so that they can express the needs involved in their particular field. It is a worth-while move to appoint a representative of the Wildlife Authority, and the same comment applies in regard to the National Parks Authority.

I thought that insurance was mentioned here.

The Hon. I. G. Medcalf: It is in the Bill.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: I agree that the inclusion of insurance representatives is essential because they have responsibility for payments made in the case of damage by fire. I agree with the comments made by the Attorney-General but in view of the comments made by Mr Lewis I wanted to take the opportunity to state my feelings.

The Hon. V. J. FERRY: The proposed amendment has my concurrence, but I would like to refer briefly to the proposed appointments. One of the changes proposed in the amendment before the Chair is to alter the designation of the representative of the sawmilling industry. I believe this is a question of updating the provisions of the Bill so that they are applicable to modern-day situations. We are not really replacing a person, we are altering the scope of the appointment of that person by changing the designation.

I would like to refer now to the nominee of the Regional Director for the State of the Bureau of Meteorology. I believe this is a very necessary appointment. Although it was said during the debate that weather forecasting is rather haphazard, I take the other view that with modern technology it is now possible to forecast more accurately weather conditions over a long period. While these forecasts may not always be completely accurate, they give us a sound basis on which to make judgments.

Under other provisions of the Bill there is scope for people in local areas to contribute in regard to any deficiencies that may occur in weather forecasts. I think that in the past an officer of the bureau had the privilege of giving advice to the board for a number of years in an unofficial capacity. That is not unusual, but it is a good thing that this representative will now be appointed as a full member of the board.

Again we could argue either way about the appointee who will represent the Wildlife Authority. We have created this organisation for specific purposes in regard to wildlife, and it is appropriate that the authority should have a voice on this board. The amendment provides also for the appointment of a representative from the National Parks Authority as this authority has responsibility over a vast area of Western Australia. This is not incompatible with what has happened in past years where the Forests Department has been represented on the board. Of course the Forests Department has the responsibility for vast tracts of land. I support the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 6 to 31 put and passed.

Clause 32: Section 33 amended—

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: The Minister has indicated that he is very happy to accept the amendment suggested by the Hon. W. M. Piesse. Therefore, I move an amendment—

Page 28, line 32—Delete the word "all".

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I thank the Attorney-General for contacting the Minister responsible for administering this legislation and moving the amendment. I am the owner of a property in a heavy pastoral area. The season this year and the seasons in the past several years in my area have been very good, and resulted in heavy pastures being produced. It is not always possible to cover the growth by ploughing or other means; therefore the land finishes up with a certain amount of inflammable material on the firebreaks.

Most pastoral properties are inspected by people in aircraft, and much of the country is not visible from the air. So, the amendments in the Bill would be of benefit, because if more than the usual amount of inflammable material appears on the fire breaks the provisions in the Bill would apply.

The Attorney-General has said that he would like the local authorities to use their discretion. However, on some occasions the discretion they use is not all that it should be. One local authority this year used its discretion and applied a rating on a pastoral freehold location. It did not take the minimum rating but the maximum rating as provided in the Local Government Act.

Let us take the case of a lot in a township, the unimproved capital value of which is \$20, and the rating imposed by the shire is also \$20; that is a rating of 100 per cent. This is a ridiculous situation of the shire not using its discretion; instead it went for every dollar it could get. I find it

difficult to believe that the rating on a block is \$20, and the unimproved capital value is also \$20. That is rather iniquitous. This shows that at times the local authorities do not use their discretion.

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: I thank the honourable member for his comments. It is very pleasing to me that the word "all" is to be deleted, and that Mrs Piesse has raised the matter. This could be the beginning of a new way in which some shires should administer the bushfires regulations. I agree entirely with the comments of the honourable member.

I do not believe it is excusable for shires to use the Bush Fires Act as a revenue collecting agent. I have maintained that for a long time. We have had a number of examples where shires have used the Act for that purpose, and such action is deplorable.

This Bill will, perhaps, bring about a slightly new look to the different parts of the bushfires regulations.

Amendment put and passed.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 33 to 48 put and passed.

First and second schedules put and passed.

Title put and passed.

Report

Bill reported, with amendments, and the report adopted.

Third Reading

Bill read a third time, on motion by the Hon. I. G. Medcalf (Attorney-General), and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

KIMBERLEY ELECTION

Allegation against Attorney-General:

Personal Explanation

THE HON. I. G. MEDCALF (Metropolitan—Attorney-General) [4.38 p.m.]: I seek the permission of the House to make a personal explanation.

The PRESIDENT: Leave is granted.

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: My personal explanation is as follows—

The allegation made under cover of parliamentary privilege in another place that I was involved in a so-called Liberal plot is not only utterly preposterous, it is scurrilous nonsense. Nor was I involved in any so-called plan. For the sake of the record, I should like to reiterate my only connection with the Kimberley election.

The Minister for Justice, who was in charge of the Electoral Act, had asked the Chief Electoral Officer to send out a particular memorandum to presiding officers containing certain instructions of a positive nature in relation to taking instructions from illiterate electors.

The Chief Electoral Officer saw the Crown Solicitor, who advised against the proposal. The Minister thereupon requested me as Attorney-General to confer with the Crown Solicitor as to the position, which I did.

I heard the Crown Solicitor's view on the Minister's proposal and agreed with it.

I asked the Crown Solicitor to consider what advice might be properly given by the Chief Electoral Officer to presiding officers and he prepared the draft of a telegram. This was expressed in quite different terms and took the form of advice of a negative nature. Together we settled the final form of the draft telegram.

In our joint opinion, the telegram as settled contained proper advice which we considered would be helpful to presiding officers in view of difficulties which it was anticipated could arise in the conduct of the election.

We also believed it was proper for the Chief Electoral Officer to send the telegram.

I only came into this matter at the request of the Minister. He did not instruct or direct me as to the contents of the telegram.

In fact, the telegram which was prepared was quite different from what he had proposed.

He accepted the terms of the telegram as settled.

He subsequently told me he had instructed the Chief Electoral Officer to send it.

To the best of my recollection I did not have any other discussions with the Minister or anyone else about the telegram or any associated matters. I certainly had no discussions or correspondence with any of the other parties who have been named.

It never occurred to me that anyone could possibly imply that the Crown Solicitor might be under coercion or influence. As a legal practitioner of impeccable reputation he could not have been. It is absurd to suggest it.

He formed his own professional opinion of the situation and gave proper professional advice both to me and the Chief Electoral Officer.

I did not draft the telegram; he did; and I approved its final form.

I was not aware of any proposals to send a team of lawyers into the Kimberleys to act as scrutineers, nor was I consulted by the Liberal Party as to campaign plans on election day.

Any "confusion" resulting from any portion of the advice in the telegram which may be thought to be connected with later events involving others is purely coincidental or conjectural as far as I am concerned.

I utterly reject the allegation that I was privy to or connected with any conspiracy or plot.

The Hon. A. A. Lewis: Hear, hear!

APPROPRIATION BILL (CONSOLIDATED REVENUE FUND) (No. 2)

Consideration of Tabled Paper

Debate resumed, from the 2nd November, on the following motion by the Hon. G. C. MacKinnon (Leader of the House)—

That, pursuant to Standing Order No. 151, the Council take note of tabled paper No. 245 (Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and related papers), laid upon the Table of the House on 21st September, 1977.

THE HON. R. F. CLAUGHTON (North Metropolitan) [4.42 p.m.]: I have already taken several opportunities presented by various Bills which have come before this House, such as the Appropriation Bills, to debate matters of general importance or of particular interest to my electorate. Unlike some members who spoke only in the debate on the Budget papers, I have dealt with many matters of concern which have arisen lately as a consequence of the activities of this Government and the Government in Canberra.

It is of some disappointment to me that the Press has so far ignored any of the matters on which I touched. I regret the Press failed to do so, more particularly in relation to matters affecting my electorate and the people therein.

One of the matters I raised related to the places available to students undertaking the physical education course at the university. They were not able to obtain an assurance that they would be allotted places at the secondary teachers' college next year.

The Minister, in response to some questions from me, gave certain information which are considered to be unsatisfactory; certainly it is

most unsatisfactory to the students concerned. I hope that even at this late stage, if something has not already been done, the position of these students will be looked at again. As I mentioned before, apart from one or two units those students were not unsuccessful, and if places are available they will be able to complete the requirements in the courses at the secondary teachers' college.

If places are allotted to them then at the end of their period of training they will become available to the Government to fill teaching positions. Unless they are able to obtain places at the college their training so far will, more or less, be thrown down the drain. These students want to follow their chosen vocation, but obstacles are placed in their way to make it extremely difficult for them to do so.

I do not think the reasons given are reasonable; rather, they are more related to an effort by the Government to keep down the costs of training, and not necessarily to produce a benefit; in fact, in an instance such as this it creates a waste.

It is like having a well-equipped factory and deciding to use only a portion of it. The cost of whatever comes out of that factory under those conditions will be far greater than if the factory is used to full capacity. We should use all the facilities and derive the greatest benefit from the capital expended.

The position in relation to these students is much the same. Already, three years have been invested in the students and it requires only a further year before they can be put into full production. I believe they are terms which members of the Government will be able to comprehend.

That was one matter I mentioned which had not been resolved satisfactorily, and their situation has been ignored by the media. Only a small number of students is involved—about a dozen—and I suppose it is not a matter of world-shattering importance to the public in general. However, it certainly is of great importance to the individual students.

Another matter I raised was the development of the Mitchell Freeway, which is in extreme contrast to the subject of physical education students, because, far from involving a small number of people, the Mitchell Freeway project affects all people residing in the northern suburbs. It is the lifeline of that section of the metropolitan area. Just as during a former period, the railway was a vital cord which was the nerve along which the life blood of the community flowed, so the Mitchell Freeway will fill a similar function in the northern suburbs. While it is not completed there are very great problems for the

people living in that area, and it will not function efficiently or to the greatest benefit of all the people.

The progress on the freeway has been slowed down due to the cutback in funds under the policies of the Fraser Government. I think more effort is required by this Government to persuade its Canberra colleagues of the importance of this project. It is not a question of freeways or no freeways; it is a question of that vital transport cord which all communities need. Communities cannot operate successfully without such a system. It is not the same question that is involved in the discussion of whether or not we have freeways. So, I hope the Minister for Transport will make further efforts to obtain more funds by way of special allocation, or that further resources may be found within the State funds themselves to complete the project.

I also mentioned how moneys available to the local authorities were going to be used on further work on the West Coast Highway, which is a road of much secondary importance, and that those moneys could more usefully be spent on advancing the Mitchell Freeway.

In connection with roads, I have also had correspondence from the Shire of Wanneroo. It has no complaints in regard to its dealings with the Main Roads Department. In fact, the shire clerk has assured me they have been treated quite well. The Wanneroo Shire expects within six months to complete the Marmion Freeway project. This will clear traffic fairly well from their area, even if it creates problems in the City of Stirling.

However, it is the northward extension of Wanneroo Road which is their main concern. It seems that just north of the Wanneroo townsite, the road touches the boundary of the national park and the shire has experienced difficulty in reaching agreement with the National Parks Board for the widening of Wanneroo Road; it seems that the board will not permit any further excision of lands necessary for this improvement.

This is a matter of which the Government needs to take hold; it should not allow departments to control such matters. The Shire of Wanneroo has pointed out that next year, we will celebrate our 150th anniversary and there are points of interest in and to the north of the shire which will be visited by tourists. I can well imagine the Government will be seeking to encourage tourists to visit the area either from within the State, from interstate, or from overseas. In its present condition, the road is not capable of offering people safe and comfortable transport to the area, and the shire feels that in view

of what the Government is planning for next year, it should take more interest in this matter and resolve the argument with the department.

Wanneroo, of course, is a fast-developing shire and because of its growth it requires facilities which were not needed 10 years ago. I regret the Hon. I. G. Medcalf has just stepped out of the Chamber; I had hoped to speak to this matter while he was here, since I will be mentioning him by name and quoting his correspondence.

The Wanneroo Shire wrote to the Minister in an effort to obtain court facilities for their district, which of late has been the most rapidly growing shire in the metropolitan area. I can understand that the Government is experiencing difficulties in meeting this request. It has sent officers to the town to see whether there are any premises available which may be used temporarily for this purpose. Of course, because the area is growing so quickly, there is a shortage of accommodation in the town, and the Government has not been able to provide short-term facilities.

Then, on the 17th January of this year, the Attorney-General replied to the Shire in the following terms—

It is understandable that your Council is concerned to have this type of facility for its ratepayers and general public. However, before committing funds for the building of a Court building and the provision of staff, it is necessary to establish a need—

I emphasise the words, "it is necessary to establish a need". The Minister's letter continues—

—in a particular locality for such services which are not or cannot be met from existing facilities.

In his letter to the Minister, the town clerk had informed him that the population of the shire was 64 000 as at December, 1976, and that it was expected to be 81 000 by June, 1978, and between 156 000 and 195 000 by June, 1985. As far as I know, the rate of growth of the area has continued unabated. So, it is clear that on population grounds, a need has been established.

When one looks at the court facilities located around the metropolitan area, the Minister's view that the Wanneroo Shire must establish a need seems quite strange. On the 31st May this year, I wrote to the Minister in the following terms—

I would be pleased for your advice as to the location of Court facilities in the Perth Metropolitan region.

Would you also advise the number of cases heard in each locality for the most recent statistical period?

I wish to cite for the benefit of members the figures supplied by the Attorney-General. I do not intend to read them all, although I believe that by reading the whole list of figures, I would make a more forceful case in respect of the Wanneroo Shire's request.

At the Perth Local Court for the period to the 31st December, 1976, the number of complaints entered was 40 430, the number of judgments, 15 312, and the number of defended actions heard, 1 846. At Henderson Street, Fremantle, there were 10 526 charges in the Court of Petty Sessions and 2 415 charges in the Children's Court. In the Local Court the number of complaints entered was 1 741, the number of judgments was 446, and the number of defended cases heard was 173. So, some 13 000 cases were dealt with at the Fremantle centre.

Rockingham also has its own court, in relation to which the following figures were supplied by the Minister: Petty Sessions charges numbered 3 020 and Children's Court charges were 1 010. In the Local Court the number of complaints entered was 536, the number of judgments, 54, and the number of defended actions, 23. So, we see that a relatively small number of cases were dealt with at Rockingham, which has a population nowhere near that of the Shire of Wanneroo.

Apparently the Government feels quite justified in retaining the courts at Fremantle and Rockingham. I could have gone on to refer to the courts at Midland Junction and Armadale, both of which are located in centres with a population less than that of the Shire of Wanneroo.

The other areas have their own courts and the Government obviously believes that the location of the courts in these areas is justified. When it comes to providing a court in Wanneroo, which is a rapidly-growing centre with a population probably considerably in excess of a number of those locations I mentioned, the Government has denied the provisions of such a facility.

The Hon. J. C. Tozer: You don't think perhaps we should have a major courthouse at Joondalup?

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: I am not going to enter into that sort of argument.

The Hon. J. C. Tozer: It could be a consideration.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: Yes it could be, but the Shire of Wanneroo is saying that on present evidence the location of a court at Wanneroo is well justified. The shire does not mind

if the court is established in temporary premises. It does not take much work to place a temporary building on a site and then have it removed at a later date. The shire is more concerned with the convenience of people they are dealing with, not the magnificence of the building.

No doubt in time a suitably awesome building could be located in the area to strike terror into the hearts of transgressors, but at this stage there are a considerable number of people who offend in a minor way and have to travel to Perth to have their cases heard. They have to spend time waiting around the court building and they have to find parking facilities. We have all heard stories of how people have been in court for a parking offence and in the meantime have incurred a further one. We could avoid that sort of indignity if a court were located at Wanneroo.

I believe the shire's case is well proved and there is a duty on the Government to find some way of providing court facilities. At this stage I believe suitable temporary premises, even of a prefabricated nature that could be transferred elsewhere when no longer required, could be established without a great deal of cost.

I would like to mention briefly the decision of the Government not to proceed with the registration of teachers. I think this was a very ill-considered move. The decision to introduce the legislation had been welcomed by members on this side as it had been our policy for some time. We were pleased to see the Government had been led to understand the good sense of the move just as we had been. The objective is to improve the teaching profession and to put it further up the status scale, not simply for status, but to ensure that those practising in the profession are able to receive recognition for the years they have spent in training and for the dedication they have shown.

Teaching is not an easy job despite the idea commonly held in the community. It is a demanding job and the younger the children one is dealing with the more demanding it is. The reasons given by the Government not to proceed with teacher registration seem to be very facile and not easily understandable.

The Teachers' Union had approached all members of Parliament asking them to make representations to encourage the Government to continue with the legislation. I think it is rather unfortunate that the Minister simply took this as an opportunity to abuse the union and to create a false impression in the public's mind about what was happening. I have before me a cutting from

The West Australian of the 2nd November with the headline, "Teachers use scare tactics". They seem to be the "in" words the Minister was using at the time and any criticism he made of teachers was along the lines that they were trying in some devious way to scare the public.

It would have been extremely difficult to read that sort of intention into anything said by the union. At another time I might have taken the opportunity to read the entire letter the Minister referred to so that we could examine whether or not this letter was scaring the public. I think all members would have to agree this was not the intention of the union.

The Minister denied some of the statements in the letter in which the union said that the registration board had asked the Minister to defer the application of the Act for a period of three weeks. The Minister denied that had taken place. I got in touch with the union and it assured me the statement made in the letter was factual, and the letter itself indicated that the union had three representatives on the Teachers Registration Board who would be well aware of what took place. If this view had been conveyed by correspondence the Minister might not have received it, but that would not be the fault of the administration because the Minister was overseas. I bring this matter up because I think it is most unfortunate that the legislation has been deferred. I think it was and should continue to be an important step in the professional development of teaching.

Earlier in this debate Mr Oliver pleaded quite strongly that stories of gloom about our economy should no longer continue. I think if I remember rightly he accused members of the Labor Party of conveying those gloomy stories to the public. If he had taken the trouble to read the Premier's financial statement to this Parliament—that is the 1977-78 financial statement—I think he would have had good reason to change his views because this statement contains a number of gloomy messages.

If the honourable member does not believe statements made by the Labor Party I think he would believe things said by his own leader. Or are his words an indication of another division within the Liberal Party? Is there conflict between the Liberal Party leader and his parliamentary colleagues?

On page 1 of the Premier's financial statement he indicated that the Government was concerned at the continued depressed condition of the national economy. I would not call that a cheery statement; it is a message of gloom made by the Premier of this State. The Premier went on to

say that he saw the essential first task of all Governments to be the control of inflation. That is another gloomy message; there is no sign of cheer or optimism. The Premier said there must be further drastic measures taken to control this dreadful thing, inflation. He said there was to be no cheer for the public until this ogre was beaten.

That is not a cheery picture and I am sure Mr Oliver would have been very depressed if he had taken the trouble to read this statement. I notice that in Mr Oliver's speech he did not refer to the Premier's statement yet in that statement is contained the message that things are gloomy.

The Premier went on to talk of the Federal Government, the slowness of the economic recovery, and the slowing down of the inflation rate. He said the Government could rightly point to the slowing down of the inflation rate to a current annual rate of less than 10 per cent. That figure, of course, contradicts what the OECD says is our inflation rate, which is 13.1 per cent. The Premier's message is not a cheery one and emphasises the current inflation rate.

The Premier went on in very emotive language to talk of the battle against inflation. The Premier said that if we are to restore profitability to the great primary export industries on which the health of our economy depends the inflation rate will have to be brought down. There again the Premier was using emotive words and portraying a desperate picture. The Premier continued and said there can be no doubt that an important factor contributing to the high inflation rate of recent years has been the excessive growth of Government expenditure and the size of the Federal deficit hanging over the economy. Again that is very emotive language portraying a picture that is not a cheery one. It is the Hon. Neil Oliver's leader, the Premier of the State, who is putting this picture forward; it is not the Labor Party.

The Hon. O. N. B. Oliver: Are you going to quote further?

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: I am pointing out to the member statements made by his leader. If the honourable member read this he obviously decided to ignore it. I am pointing out these things so that members will realise that the picture of gloom which is hanging over the economy is real and is not referred to only by members of the Labor Party. It goes on to say that too much of the nation's resources has been diverted to financing Government expenditure and too little has been spent on the

private sector. I have not referred to that as one of the items of gloom.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: Do you agree with that statement?

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: No I do not. That is one of the things about which the Federal Government is being criticised and I do not think the Premier himself agrees with it. Certainly the Treasury does not because on page 4 of *The Western Australian Economy 1976-77* is the following—

Private investment continued to be sluggish—

Again it is not very cheery. To continue—

—although some stimulus should be gained from planned major expenditure on mineral projects in the future. In the short term it is important—

I ask members to take note of this. To continue—

—that the public sector capital outlays be maintained to compensate as far as possible for the reduction in private investment.

So the Premier, if he has approved of this statement—and certainly the Treasury has—does not agree that there should be reductions in Government expenditure. In fact, the statement goes on to argue that there should be more—that it should be increased to soften the effects of the current recession. The statement continues—

Indeed there is a case for a substantial increase in public works programs . . .

I do not know whether the Premier read this, because he does not seem to talk that way. However, that is what is contained in the statement. Perhaps there is a division of opinion among those who manage the economy of the State.

The other aspect is that there is currently a \$4 million work stimulation programme and all the departments have been asked to list projects on which the funds can be expended. As I said on a previous occasion, it is the RED scheme all over again.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: That is not a RED scheme. It is a special fund.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: The Government calls it by a different name.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: Do you know what it is about? It is a special fund. It is not a RED scheme.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: That is precisely what the RED scheme was—a special

programme to create jobs in the short term. It was not meant to be a continuing thing.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: The programme is designed to encourage special building programmes for schools and the like. It is not a handout. It is not something that has no follow-on.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: I do not know what the honourable member knows.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: I have been involved in it.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: Of course Kalamunda is one of the areas where the scheme broke down. I rather suspect that happens a lot when the Liberals get their dirty sticky fingers on it. That is where the waste occurred.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: That is a silly statement.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: The honourable member has only to look through the programmes of works of Government departments to ascertain where the RED scheme funds were applied. Who carries out those projects? Who put up all those buildings now benefiting people throughout the length and breadth of the State? It was the private sector which benefited by those projects under the RED scheme.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: Tell us how.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: The Government is changing its tune a little. It now says there should be substantial increased spending on public works to compensate for the recession, and it has a special \$4 million project. If the Government approves the projects, the work goes out into the private sector. It is not undertaken by Government departments. If a new school is required, private enterprise builds it.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: But the RED scheme did not build schools.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: Mr Masters will have an opportunity to speak later.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: If you sit down I will.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: I could develop that argument a lot more. Perhaps I will refer to just a few more terms the Premier used. On page 2 of the 1977-78 statement he referred to high interest rates and the crippling burden they impose on business; to the necessity to restore a healthy balance of payments position; to the necessity to bring revenue and expenditure back into balance by imposing higher taxation or holding down tightly on the growth of expenditure. He said that we need to reduce

the burden of taxation and that it is inevitable a number of recurrent expenditure programmes will be reduced or held to more realistic growth rates.

The Hon. O. N. B. Oliver: Did you know there was a Federal Budget brought down about the 16th August?

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: The honourable member has had an opportunity to make a speech.

The Hon. O. N. B. Oliver: I thought it might be relevant.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: I cannot see the relevance.

Those comments were in the Premier's speech. Like many of his colleagues, Mr Oliver listened selectively, or simply made false assertions.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: You are pretty selective.

The Hon. O. N. B. Oliver: I will give you some more up-to-date material.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: If members looked at more responsible comments they would understand the serious situation we face. I have here the September issue of the "BHP News Review". The production of steel is one of the real indicators of economic activity.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: You had better be careful because Mr Cooley does not like that company very much. He gets upset if you mention it.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Don't you let them sidetrack you, Mr Cloughton. You finish so we can all go home.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: The honourable member should not attribute to others the things he dreams up in his own nightmares which are his speciality. I am sure he has nightmares every night about the Labor Party.

In the BHP publication is an article headed "Steel production curbed abroad" and it gives the figures on the downturn in steel production. We must remember that the steel producers are all in agreement. They are not fighting each other and undercutting each other's prices. They have available to them economic experts and they have their fingers on the pulse and are not going to run into serious financial problems if they can help it. The article states—

Crude steel production in July in the 29 countries which are members of the International Iron and Steel Institute was 35 652 000 tonnes, 7.1 per cent down on last July's figure . . .

The first factor in the downturn is a drop in steel output. I would not have thought that was a very cheery situation.

The Hon. O. N. B. Oliver interjected.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: Since the Government has been in office, and particularly in the last 12 months it has raised the protective barriers in order to support its friends, but it does not seem to be very interested in the shipbuilding industry for some reason. A country like Australia depends on overseas trade so one would expect a Government to give every encouragement to the shipbuilding industry and ensure that a large proportion of the goods shipped to and out of the country were carried on Australian ships. However, it does not do that because I suppose it has the ear of the wealthy people outside Australia.

I had intended to give some of the economic indicators regularly published in *The Australian*. These reveal the serious downturn in the mining industry which is a good indicator of the state of the economy. In *The West Australian* of the 10th August was an article with the heading, "Doubts on mine industry plans". No matter what we do in this State, we depend on overseas markets for our mineral products. If overseas countries do not want our minerals, they will not buy them. It is as simple as that. Until it is believed that the situation will improve in the State, the mining companies will not rush into further production, no matter how much noise people like the Premier wish to make about it.

The article concerned the views of Melbourne's Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, and portion of it reads—

" . . . the mining investment recovery is an important expansionary force, but one which is not powerful enough alone to ensure that overall economic recovery takes place," it said.

That is the situation, so those announcements about big investments mean nothing, because the companies will increase the production of iron ore merely to meet their present commitments. This has always been the situation.

We are aware of the fact that oil exploration is at a standstill because of the vast losses on oil tankers, and the involvement of the companies in the North Sea. The companies now have a little money to spend here, but not a great deal, and the size of the expenditure required in the North-West Shelf will continue to be a problem. No matter what Government is in power, that will be a factor; and it will not matter how generous

Sir Charles Court is with gifts from State resources, because that is only one of the aspects involved.

Those who were talking about uranium earlier—

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: You were not to comment.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: The Leader of the House and his friends are very good at laying down the law about what we should talk about.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I did not lay it down; your leader did. He said you would not speak on it.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: Why should we create a forum for the Liberal Party's political benefit? That is all it was. If it were a question of debating in this Parliament, it would have been done in the Legislative Assembly. I have stood here on many occasions and looked at the sleepy Press up there who have reported very little, not only of what I said but also of what other members said in this Chamber. Had we debated that motion and debated the Government's policy for a week, not a line emanating from this Chamber would have been printed. So where is the public debate going on in this matter? That discussion had already taken place and we were not going to be a party to any political chicanery, making the proceedings in this Chamber more of a farce than they are.

Members of the coalition always say they place such high value on this Chamber and want to preserve its dignity, but there are none who draw this House into disrepute more than they do by their actions. It is simply geared for their party political purposes. An attempt made to use it in a way in which real value can be gained from it is always denied.

We had Mr Lewis casting aspersions on members of my party for not getting up and debating that particular motion. Immediately after that, what happened? On that motion our leader got up and made a prepared statement. With the Bill introduced by Mr Hetherington, what happened? The Leader of the House got up and made a reply and we had no further debate on that important issue.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: That was precisely what Mr Hetherington had planned.

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON: People who live in glass houses should not throw stones.

I would like to mention a couple more matters relating to the economy and our opponents. This "highly reputable" publication, *IPA Review*,

which is a publication of the Institute of Public Affairs, makes a comment on the situation in Singapore and the Singapore Government's methods of stimulating productivity. It talks about the very high degree of co-operation between the unions, management, and the Government. That is the kind of process which I support.

Several years ago I spoke in this Chamber following a discussion on a debate in which Mr MacKinnon and I participated at the Selby Clinic. I referred to the way things are conducted in Austria and said that country has a process by which the parties come together and there is consensus on what should happen in the economy in the ensuing year. It works extremely well and Austria is the country which has the lowest rate of inflation and has suffered least in the economic recession in the past few years. Singapore is another good example.

It would be impossible, with the attitudes of business people in this country, to institute that kind of system here, but it is a system which I see as desirable for Australia so that we can make the best of what we have.

I was going to make some reference to the Federal elections but I think we can avoid that on this occasion.

A great number of things have accumulated in the period of this Government. If it has recognised that not all Government expenditure is bad and some is in fact necessary in times of economic recession, it is starting to gain some common sense. It is a pity, if that state of mind has been reached, the Government does not tell the community so that it can understand and support the programme.

We are still going through an unfortunate period in Australian politics when elements are seeking to divide, and the forces on the right are the most to blame. An important sector of them is contained within the Liberal Party and the people in that sector are in power in the party at this time. I cannot see the political situation in Australia improving until the rank and file members of the Liberal Party once again gain control of the organisation.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. G. E. Masters.

QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

THE HON. G. C. MacKINNON (South-West—Leader of the House) [5.40 p.m.]: I move—
That the House do now adjourn.

Members of Parliament: Electorate Allowances

THE HON. W. R. WITHERS (North) [5.41 p.m.]: I must apologise to the House for standing to speak on the adjournment motion but I think it is necessary. Last week the Hon. Lyla Elliott interjected during a debate and asked me whether I would be standing as an Independent at the next election. I said to her, "No, I will not. In fact, I will not stand for any political party at the next election."

I am afraid it has caused some confusion among my colleagues. Some thought I was joking; others have asked me whether I have become disenchanted with Parliament; and others have asked me if I have become disillusioned with party politics. It is none of those things, and I feel I owe the House an explanation.

The reason is that under the present circumstances I cannot effectively represent my province as I have done in the past six years. As members know, I recently returned to live in my electorate and I have found it is a mistake, if I am to be efficient in this House. I wanted to return to my electorate and I thought I would be able to be very effective. However, because my electorate is so large and because I have now ceased to subsidise my parliamentary salary and allowances with an outside income, which has now considerably decreased, I keep an electorate account and have found I cannot travel in my electorate as I used to. This disturbs me because I cannot be as efficient as I used to be.

The Hon. F. E. McKenzie: It is a case for proportional representation, isn't it?

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I have told the parliamentary salaries tribunal in the past that I did not want an electorate allowance because people usually see the electorate allowance as a tax-free present to the member, and it is rather hard to describe the situation to a person in one's electorate who is probably being paid less than the total amount of allowances I receive. It is hard to explain to such a person that the allowance is insufficient to enable me to represent the area effectively.

I have told the parliamentary salaries tribunal that I wanted to be treated in a similar way to a public servant whereby I could go into my electorate and receive reasonable expenses for accommodation and transport and some allowance as a country member who has to live in the city during the sittings of Parliament. I would like to point out that my expenses for living in the city are no different from those of other country members. I have to supply accommodation and transport while I am down here

because my electorate is too far away for me to bring a car down here. In fact, if I tried to do that I would be driving continually. My travelling time is not so great. I have to travel only seven hours on a Monday and seven hours on a Saturday to get to and from my home, which is probably no longer than some other members travel.

However, when other considerations in relation to expenses are taken into account, perhaps other country members can bring their cars to Perth; I cannot. My electorate is so spread out that travelling time within the electorate is considerable. I occasionally travel by car to some of the surrounding districts—say, a distance of 250 miles or 300-odd kilometres—but that takes in only a small part of my province. So when I travel in my province I have to hire cars, which is a very expensive business.

Consequently, having kept a new account and having changed my method of representation, I find at the end of each month there is insufficient money left to allow me to travel in my electorate, and this disturbs me greatly.

If I were a really responsible member who wanted to serve his electorate in its best interests, I would return to live in the city and then revisit my electorate. For selfish reasons I have no intention of doing this; I intend to live in my home town. I left my home town once before because we had no parliamentary secretarial services and so I came to live in Perth. I did not like living in the city, however, and when we were given secretarial services I was enabled to go back to my electorate.

However, this is not working out for the people I represent. I find it is necessary, for my conscience anyway, to inform the Parliament that I do not intend to sit again, because I believe the best man or woman should be preparing now to take over the North Province seat.

I thought the statements I made to the House the other night required clarification and that this was a good time to announce the reasons I will be departing from the Parliament in five years' time.

Regional Administration

THE HON. J. C. TOZER (North) [5.46 p.m.]: Mr President, this morning I received a telephone call from the Pilbara and it seems to me that the substance of that call was such that this Chamber should hear about it before it adjourns this evening. It related to an item on the regional news broadcasts to the Pilbara and the Kimberley.

I arranged with the Australian Broadcasting Commission to let me have a copy of the bulletin, and it arrived this afternoon. If I may I would like to read it quickly to the House. It is headed, "News Service—Extract from Regional News Bulletin", and under the first heading of "Resignation" the bulletin states—

The State Government's regional administrator in the Pilbara, Mr. S. D. Rowe, has submitted his resignation and will return to private enterprise.

Speaking at Karratha where he's based, Mr Rowe said he expected to leave the area by the end of March.

The resignation was for personal reasons which he was unable to disclose publicly.

Mr. Rowe, 47, was appointed early last year following a career in the wool industry which included, immediately before his present appointment, a United Nations role in India.

Applications for the impending vacancy are expected to be called in December.

The next item is under the heading of "Labor Party", and it reads as follows—

Meanwhile, the Australian Labor Party's Pilbara Electoral Council has rejected a motion from its Port Hedland branch, which expressed unqualified support for the state-wide system of regional administration.

The branch had taken issue with an earlier statement by the Opposition Leader, Mr Jamieson, that when in Government, he would modify the present system.

The matter was raised at the electoral council's quarterly meeting at Karratha during the weekend.

The council's president, Mr. C. E. Butcher, said at Port Hedland that the party as a whole wanted to ensure that particular regional administrators weren't appointed for political reasons.

However, this was not necessarily a reference to Mr Rowe, nor any of the other six regional administrators now in office.

An ABC reporter says the A.L.P.'s long-standing concern with the question, began after the appointment by a State Liberal Government in 1969 of Mr. J. C. Tozer as Administrator for the North West.

Mr Tozer's appointment was terminated before its expiry date by the Tonkin Labor Government.

Clearly, I sincerely regret the resignation of Mr Syd Rowe. However, that is not the subject for a speech on an occasion like this on the

adjournment motion. It is a matter on which I will speak at various times, and I have done so before. I am referring now to the whole question of regional administration.

The first point I make is that quite frankly the regional administrator does not enjoy the status that he should, and we will not attract and hold top-quality men who are required for the position until he does. The second important point that is apparent in the news item is the revelation of Mr Jamieson's attitude towards regional administration, and the fact that the Pilbara Electoral Council of the Australian Labor Party has rejected a motion supporting the State-wide system of regional administration.

The third point is that there is a clear implication that Tozer's appointment was politically motivated. I emphatically say it was not.

In this respect, I will make only one or two points. Firstly, before I was appointed an administrator in 1969 I served for six years in the north as assistant administrator in both Derby and Port Hedland. The way this stupid thinking can be achieved in the minds of some people is best illustrated by the fact that the original administrator—that is, my immediate boss for the first six years—was appointed by the Brand Government. He was, in fact, a man who was closely aligned and affiliated with the Australian Labor Party. Not only that, but the North-West Liaison Officer, the right-hand man in the Perth office of the Minister for the North-West, was similarly closely associated with the ALP. However, there is no question that those men did not give 100 per cent loyal and efficient service.

That matter was never questioned by the then Minister for the North-West, then Mr Charles Court.

In the time of the Tonkin Government there were three Ministers for the North-West. The first was Don May, and I ask the Pilbara Electoral Council to ask Don May what he thought of John Tozer's loyalty and professional competence. The second Minister was Herb Graham; and I did not survive in the office long enough to serve under the third Minister, Arthur Bickerton.

It is clearly significant that of those three Ministers none has survived in Government; perhaps this is a hoodoo portfolio, because even the Minister who followed Arthur Bickerton is now temporarily not with us.

Going back to the second ALP Minister (Mr Graham), he has publicly acknowledged my competence, my loyalty and my dedication to

this job; and a testimonial to that effect was read to this Chamber on one occasion and incorporated in *Hansard*.

It is well known that Mr H. E. Graham had something of a "thing" about Mr Charles Court, as he was then, who was Minister for Industrial Development and Minister for the North-West in the Brand Government. Any structure built up by Charles Court as Minister for the North-West had to be pulled down by Mr Graham. What I am saying is that the structure was pulled down, and it happened that the incumbent of the post of administrator (John Tozer) was also a casualty when that structure fell down around his ears.

Even this could not have happened had it not been for the fact that the civil service hierarchy—top career officers of the Public Service—have always been terribly jealous of any senior officer who is introduced from outside the service; they have always been critical of men who have been given senior jobs from outside the service. It was Mr Graham's desire to destroy the structure, but it was the concurrence of those civil servants that made it possible.

Subsequently I served under another Labor Minister, Mr Don Taylor, who was then the Minister for Development and Decentralisation. Perhaps he could also be questioned on the matter of the loyalty and competence he received from me. When I was sacked in 1972 a great ground swell of resentment occurred in the north, and many members here will recall that. It was only the persistent request of representative groups in every single established town in the north that encouraged me to make the decision to offer myself for preselection for the 1974 election.

This, Sir, was the first time that I had revealed any political affiliations anywhere other than in the ballot box; and you, Mr Deputy President, and all members in this Chamber will by now have recognised that I am clearly the most politically naive person in the Parliamentary Liberal Party in this State.

Sir, I object strongly to the reflection cast on Sir David Brand in this news report. To imply that Sir David Brand as Premier had any political considerations when filling such a senior post is too ridiculous to contemplate. I also resent the implication that political affiliations in any way influenced my appointment as administrator particularly after having given six years of faithful service as assistant administrator.

I reject the clear implication that my service was terminated as a result of a nonexistent political affiliation. This in turn is a grave re-

flection on John Tonkin as Premier and on Mr H. E. Graham as the then Minister for the North-West. I do not believe political affiliation had anything to do with the termination of my service.

I hope the Australian Broadcasting Commission will be able to put the record straight tonight in regional news to the Pilbara and Kimberley. Finally, I suggest that the northern electors will be terribly interested in the opinion of Mr Jamieson and the Pilbara Electoral Council of the Australian Labor Party in respect of regional administration in our State.

Adjournment Debate: Misuse

THE HON. D. K. DANS (South Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) [5.58 p.m.]: It seems to be becoming a rather popular pastime for a member to get up and defend himself in the adjournment debate in respect of things that have happened outside this Parliament. I suggest that if this practice continues the Standing Orders Committee should consider what can be done about it, because I feel we will be in grave danger of losing this privilege.

I suggest ample opportunity is provided under Standing Orders for members to move urgency motions to enable them to put their case; and there is also ample opportunity to make personal explanations, as the Attorney-General did today.

I make these comments only because I get around and talk to most people in this Chamber and it seems this is a practice which commenced after I first entered this place. I agree our Standing Orders are not all that clear, but if this privilege is misused we may have to alter our Standing Orders.

There is provision to make a personal explanation or to move an urgency motion so that a matter may be debated.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.59 p.m.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

TRANSPORT

Frozen Foods for Railways

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

Further to the answer to question No. 237 on the 8th November, 1977, would the Minister advise the current freight

charge for 50 kilograms of frozen goods for 200 km conveyed by—

- (a) road transport operators; and
- (b) Westrail;

utilising the rates charged at the 31st October, 1977?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

- (a) There is a slight variation in freight rates between contractors. However, in the case of a major road operator involved in this transport following Westrail's withdrawal, if freight is pre-paid no basic charge is made. In that case, 50 kilograms of freezer goods transported 200 kilometres by road would cost \$2.48 for delivery into store.

- (b) For the same journey, Westrail's charge for 50 kilograms would be \$1.65. However, it should be borne in mind that rail transport would frequently incur terminal charges which are generally at a rate per carton.

It would not be unreasonable that a 50 kilogram consignment could comprise at least three cartons and terminal charges would be in the vicinity of 60 cents per carton or more.

FUEL

Hydrogen Extraction

250. The Hon. G. W. BERRY, to the Attorney-General, representing the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

- (1) Is the Minister aware that in a recent TV programme "Weekend Magazine", a segment was presented relating to the extraction of hydrogen as a fuel from water?
- (2) Is the Government aware of the process?
- (3) If so, is it considered to have any application as an alternative fuel resource?

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Processes for the production of hydrogen from water are well known.
- (3) The use of hydrogen as an alternative fuel resource is not economically attractive today, but many scientists be-

lieve it may become an economic alternative in the long term future. The SEC is closely monitoring the work of research institutions in this field. At this point of time it is not practicable for the Commission to plan any independent research because of the enormous cost.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

SCHOOLS

State Flags

- 1. The Hon. LYLA ELLIOTT, to the Minister for Transport, representing the Minister for Education:

Further to my question of yesterday, No. 247, will the Minister reply to part (3) of the question which asked—

In view of the fact that the Commonwealth Government provides Australian flags to schools at no cost, will the State Government make the Western Australian flag available to any school desiring it free of charge?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

I had a quick glance through the letter I tabled yesterday and I understand that the State Government was not making such flags available but was arranging a bulk purchase for parents and citizens' associations and other associations which would like to donate flags to the schools.

SCHOOLS

State Flags

- 2. The Hon. LYLA ELLIOTT, to the Minister for Transport, representing the Minister for Education:

The Minister's answer is not satisfactory. I am asking: Will the Government reconsider and make these flags available free of charge?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

That is a different question altogether. I am not in a position to give that guarantee, but I will see that the matter is reconsidered.

VERMIN CONTROL

Steel-jawed Traps

3. The Hon. LYLA ELLIOTT, to the Minister for Transport, representing the Minister for Agriculture:

Further to my letter of the 15th September requesting the Minister to clarify the position regarding the 1975 amendment to the Vermin Act regulations

covering the setting of steel-jawed traps in the metropolitan area, will the Minister advise what action he has taken?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

As I am only representing the Minister for Agriculture I cannot answer the honourable member except to say that I will have the Minister write to her and give her the information.

