

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 10 April 1984

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

ROAD

Geographic Bay Road: Petition

MR BLAIKIE (Vasse) [2.19 p.m.]: I present the following petition—

TO:—

The Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the State of Western Australia in Parliament assembled.

We, the undersigned residents of Western Australia, wish the Honourable the Minister for Local Government to reverse the decision to permit barricades to be erected on a portion of Geographic Bay Road, East Busselton, which has denied through access by vehicular traffic and severely inhibited access by the general public as it is contrary to the public interest of the People of Busselton and Western Australia.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Honourable Minister reverses the decision as requested and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The petition bears 40 signatures, and I certify that it conforms to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

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

(See petition No. 80.)

PORNOGRAPHY AND VIOLENCE

Video Films: Petition

MR TRETOWAN (East Melville) [2.20 p.m.]: I present a petition in the following terms—

TO:

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

We, the undersigned plead that because it will cause serious harm to the community the Parliament will not legalise the sale, hire or supply of any video tape, video disc, slide or any other recording from a visual image which can be produced, which portrays

scenes of explicit sexual relations showing genitalia detail; acts of violence and sex; sexual perversion such as sodomy; mutilation; child pornography; coprophilia; bestiality or the use and effect of illicit drug taking.

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

The petition bears 164 signatures, and I certify that it conforms to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

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

(See petition No. 81.)

PORNOGRAPHY AND VIOLENCE

Video Films: Petition

MR COURT (Nedlands) [2.21 p.m.]: I present a petition as follows—

TO:

The Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled.

We, the Undersigned urge you as a discerning Member of Parliament to ban the entry of x-rated films/video tapes into Western Australia.

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

The petition bears 547 signatures, and I certify that it conforms to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

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

(See petition No. 82.)

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY: DEBATES

Interjections and Repetitive Speeches: Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mr Harman): Before I call the member for Karrinyup to continue his remarks on Order of the Day No. 1, I wish to say one or two words about interjections and repetitive speeches.

It has been a longstanding practice of this House and one specifically covered by Standing Orders that interjections are highly disorderly. On previous occasions, I have asked members to ob-

serve this practice and thus avoid the chitchat that frequently occurs during debates.

The ideal situation is where a member who has the call makes his points and these are subsequently responded to. I know this does not always happen, but it is a position to which we should always strive. It is only because of the zeal and the diligence of our *Hansard* service that interjections are recorded. In other Parliaments in Australia, interjections are not usually recorded unless responded to. I have on occasions been tempted to interfere with the policy of our *Hansard* service, but so far I have not succumbed to that temptation. Similarly, Standing Orders do not allow members to make repetitive and tedious speeches. Therefore, in the interests of good debate and efficiency, I request members to bear in mind these practices and Standing Orders.

STANDING ORDER No. 164

Amendment: Motion

Debate resumed from 5 April.

MR CLARKO (Karrinyup) [2.26 p.m.]: The opportunity for parliamentarians, the representatives of the people, to speak in Parliament should never be unreasonably fettered. The freedom of speech of parliamentarians to represent the electors is paramount; it is sacred; at the very least, it is their fundamental right. This motion would unreasonably restrict the rights of members of Parliament to speak.

All political scientists who study the various parliamentary systems on this globe would see as the kernel of the British parliamentary system—the Westminster system—the permanent and continuing opportunity for an Opposition to articulate the views of the minority.

Many countries today have moved to a one-party system, and that is generally and universally condemned by people who believe in the rights of peoples in countries to speak in support both of the majority and of the minority of those peoples. This motion cruelly seeks to crush that right, that flower of democracy, that right of all to speak—free speech.

Mr Bertram: Equal votes for all.

Mr CLARKO: The member should not speak any nonsense about equal votes or one-vote-one-value. That is palpable nonsense. The member knows that is not practised around the world, so why should he seek to push it here unless to further his own narrow, selfish, and partisan beliefs?

Excluding that response to the member for Mt. Hawthorn, what I have been talking about is the

broad philosophy of this motion—the aim of this Government—which is to grossly restrict the right of the Opposition to have its voice heard in order to put the alternative viewpoint.

As I said last Thursday, this motion seeks firstly to allow Ministers to continue to speak unlimitedly on virtually every occasion. So it will not restrict the Government's frontbenchers in any significant way; they will continue to be able to speak unlimitedly on almost every occasion. As I said before, that is allowing for the fact that most of what they say is prepared by a vast battery of advisers and bureaucrats. In the case of this Government, most of what Ministers say will be prepared by their advisers, who are a mixed bag of people with various qualifications. Some of those advisers should never be allowed within sight of Ministers, let alone be paid as much as \$20 000, \$30 000, or even \$40 000 a year from the taxpayers' purse.

Mr Blaikie: If you ask the bureaucracy what they thought of the Ministers, they would say they are a mixed bag.

Mr CLARKO: The bureaucrats would say that. The Civil Service of WA is in disarray. Civil servants are totally dissatisfied with this brutal method of government which is now being used. The pays of civil servants, particularly of those people who are near or right at the top, have been disgracefully cut by 10 per cent, and, of course, in complete contradiction to the Labor Party's platform on industrial relations which says that we shall not affect decisions that have been made by an industrial arbitrational body without proper reference to that body. Of course, the Government did not do that. The civil servants' pays were brutally cut by 10 per cent. Of course, being Ministers, this year and last year they did very nicely compared with the year before. They do not care. They have had a big, handsome increase. They will lose it shortly. That is the position of the Government frontbenchers.

The position of the Government backbenchers, the mutes—those people who have had their tongues cut out, in a manner of speaking—will not change either. They do not normally speak, although some of them interject at some length as a substitute, and I can hardly blame them. They do not speak now. It would be interesting if somebody who had the time worked out how many speeches have been made by members of the Government back bench. We should delete their maiden speeches, most of which were read verbatim and were often merely repetitions of the Government's policy that has been uttered in other places. Government backbenchers are not allowed to speak. They are under the heel of the

Premier; of "Mr Verbose" himself, who had another failure last Saturday when he voted the wrong way on the daylight saving issue. Unfortunately, he could not squash his lovely wife in the same way he is able to squash the members of the Government. She was able to come out and say that she favoured "No".

Mr Barnett interjected.

Mr CLARKO: In the ordinary sense, these people are not allowed to utter a word except by way of interjection.

Mr I. F. Taylor: Totally wrong! Absolutely wrong!

Mr CLARKO: The only difference is in regard to question time and Dorothy Dixers. Never do they utter one positive word of their own. They receive questions from the Whip or their vast battery of advisers. No doubt, this group of backbenchers do much more by way of Dorothy Dixers than has ever been done before in this Parliament, and for very good reason. Dozens of advisers to the Government have the time to prepare these questions and to allow "Mr Verbal Diarrhoea" to stand up and cast all of those faeces over all those people who are unfortunately committed to sit in front of him. For approximately two-thirds of our time, we listen to—

Mr I. F. Taylor: That is disgusting.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr BRYCE: The member for Karrinyup has just indulged himself in some of the vilest pieces of non-parliamentary language that I can recall having heard in this Chamber during my term in Parliament.

Mr Blaikie: You must be drunk.

Mr MacKinnon: Read some of your speeches.

Mr BRYCE: I would think it would be fairly reasonable to expect that the member for Karrinyup would be required to withdraw the rather nasty aspersions he has cast on the Premier.

The SPEAKER: Order! If the words had been used in another context I may have overlooked them, but in the context in which they were used and in the manner in which they were used, I agree with the Deputy Premier and I ask the member for Karrinyup to withdraw that remark.

Mr CLARKO: Whatever words I uttered that you, Mr Speaker, have found unsatisfactory, I unreservedly withdraw.

Mr Bryce: "Faeces", for a start.

Mr CLARKO: I unreservedly withdraw that remark.

Mr Bryce: "Faeces", for a start.

Debate (on motion) Resumed

Mr CLARKO: I am pleased that the Deputy Premier is here to bring this to the attention of the House because mostly he has a very pleasant time jaunting overseas, apart from those occasions when we must listen to his repetitious utterings about technology which he has been giving out to us here.

The SPEAKER: Return to the motion before the Chair.

Mr Bryce: Why don't you make yourself relevant?

Mr CLARKO: I certainly will. If members have anything sensible to utter, I ask them to do so.

Mr Gordon Hill: If you do not want interjections, you should not provoke them.

Mr Bryce: Don't think for a minute that if you use standard six words, people on this side of the House cannot understand your obscenities.

Mr CLARKO: I thank the member for that remark. I will not use standard six words; I will raise them to standard seven, and no Government member will be able to understand.

Mr Bryce: You might get the surprise of your life.

Mr CLARKO: You pompous little hypocrite! I have already said this motion is designed—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr I. F. Taylor: This does not do you any credit at all.

The SPEAKER: I made some remarks previously in respect of interjections and tedious repetition. I did not think it was necessary to remark on the manner of parliamentary speeches.

One avoids certain practices in the Parliament; for example, the use of such words as "pompous hypocrite", and certainly of the word "hypocrite". I ask the member to take this into account in his further remarks.

Mr CLARKO: Certainly, Sir. I will not call him pompous again in that connection. I have said that Ministers are not to be restricted or restrained in any way. They are to continue to have unlimited time to press their dubious cases. I have also said that members of the back bench will continue to be allowed to say nothing—less under this jack-boot motion than ever before. Members of the Opposition will be the only people who will suffer under the motion. They are the only ones who will be restrained in their right to speak. I find myself being restrained somewhat

by the Deputy Premier who is trying to deny me an opportunity to get on with my remarks, despite the fact that you, Mr Speaker, today indicated that you would not tolerate interjections. The interjections have come from the Deputy Premier *ad nauseam* and in a very insulting way, together with others who have also been interjecting. Mr Speaker, despite your statement that you did not want interjections, these people have defied you and have made such interjections.

The people who will have their rights crushed here are people like me who are easily put down. Just a short remark made here or there—we are so sensitive—will cause us to be put off. We will be cut down. We will find ourselves afraid to utter anything here. Of course, we will not have much time to speak even if we want to. A couple of our more assertive members—there are not many—will still stand up and defend their British rights. My British-born mother would turn in her grave at the thought that here in this House people like me—quiet, reticent, moderate sorts of people—have people around us like that. We will not be able to do much talking either. We will be pushed into the same camp as backbench members of the Government. All that will be said will be said by Ministers and the speaker who puts the motion. Complete, absolute, and total silence will prevail in this place if the Minister on his feet stops for one moment to take a glass of water. Complete silence will reign throughout the House—people will say, “I would like to say something, but I am afraid of saying anything”.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Karrinyup that the motion before the Chair is in relation to Standing Order No. 164, which deals with the reduction of speaking time from 45 minutes to 30 minutes in various cases. That is the subject matter of the debate.

Mr CLARKO: I thank you, Mr Speaker, for that warning because I would not want to get away from the motion before the Chair. That is the last thing I would want to do because this will be the last opportunity I will ever have to speak for a reasonable period. This is the end of my opportunity to speak for a reasonable period as this could well be my last opportunity to speak for a mere 45 minutes. I might never again be allowed to speak for a reasonable time in this House. This will be forced onto me. This will be forced or jack booted onto me by a man who abused the rights of this House by speaking for some five hours himself.

Mr Coyne: He called it a kangaroo court.

Mr CLARKO: That would be typical of his lack of respect for this House. It is really like

one's last dinner; one is really standing on the scaffold of the death of free speech in this House. In the future, members will say, “In the past, prior to a particular move of April 1984, we had the right to speak for 50 per cent more time than we do now”.

Mr Coyne: The last supper.

Mr CLARKO: It is certainly the last supper of free speech and the right to articulate our views. This has been pushed on us by a man who abused this place by speaking for a record amount of time—five hours.

Mr Speaker, it is fortunate you were not the Speaker in this place at that time because you have reminded us already with a proper homily, that you do not wish debates to be repetitive. This man spoke for five hours. The matters he repeated were nonsense, but he went on *ad nauseum*.

This man will force on us 30 minutes' speaking time for ordinary speeches. That is following last Thursday's actions when he shoved us, and pushed us down with his jack boots, so that we will have only five-minute speeches. That is what he gave us last Thursday—five-minute speeches.

This Parliament, which began 90 or so years ago with people being permitted to speak for an unlimited amount of time, over the years has had speaking time reduced to 45 minutes for an ordinary speech. However, this motion will mean that ordinary speeches will now be reduced to 30 minutes, and last Thursday some speeches were reduced to five minutes.

Depending upon my audience, there are some things I must repeat several times, because some members do not understand. I have to keep putting out comments and repeating them. Here, we have a five-hour man who is now the architect of the five-minute speech. As a Minister, he will continue to have the right to speak for five, 10, or 20 hours, if he so wishes. Of course, that is if his voice can stand up to it, but I do not think it will these days.

How does this compare with the position before this motion came forward; that is, before last Thursday when we were crushed into two hours of debate after the first speaker? What has happened before in the 90-year history of this Parliament in regard to the amendment of Standing Orders? I put the question to you, Mr Speaker: Is it usual to amend Standing Orders in this way?

I understand a search of the records for the last 30 years in this House has revealed only one occasion when an amendment was made to Standing Orders, other than as a result of a Standing Orders Committee report. It is the first time in 30 years, other than one occasion, that something

like this has come to us without its being a recommendation of the Standing Orders Committee.

What was that one occasion? It was when Sir David Brand—a man I admired—was the Premier, in November 1970, when he moved an amendment to the Standing Orders in this way because the Opposition agreed to it. I am sure Mr Bickerton would not have been one who would wish debating time to be curtailed to 30 minutes. It would have been disappointing not to hear a man like him speak for 45 minutes.

I have indicated the only other occasion when this has occurred, and it of course indicates how jack bootish this proposition is. After all, the Government has the majority, and with your wisdom, Mr Speaker, and I am sure with that of a couple of members of the Government and of the Opposition, agreement could be reached, and there would not be any need for jack-boot motions.

I am sure, Mr Speaker, you are not the sort of person who would wish to limit someone's speaking time.

That piece of research I mentioned shows how nasty and Hitlerian this motion is. So if you, Mr Speaker, think I have been exaggerating slightly, all I am trying to do—

Mr Coyne: Playing it down, if anything.

Mr CLARKO: Very well said; I respect and welcome that remark.

Mr Tonkin: You will lose your Queen for that.

Mr CLARKO: That is despite Swan Districts' unfair performance last Saturday and the biased umpiring.

Mr Speaker, you know that what I have said is the quintessence of truth; only one group of people will lose out if this motion is passed—the people who are the minority for the time being and who are represented by the Opposition. Those people will suffer.

We should do what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said so ably last Thursday. He said, "Let us plan behind your famous and most valued Chair, Sir, and come to a reasonable arrangement". I would be very surprised if even the Leader of the Opposition would regard what has happened in the last 13 to 14 months behind that Chair as being in any way a poor system. It is a very good system.

I have spoken of the occasion when, against my better wishes, I agreed to curtail my remarks. That occurred at 2.00 a.m. on 1 December 1983 when the Minister for Education was not here to respond to my questions on the Budget. At the request of the Government, I was prepared to

curtail my questions and the Premier said to me that my queries would be answered later by the Minister. He said he would arrange for answers to be provided. Now it is April and I have still not received any answers.

Mr Pearce: They were tabled last week. I was embarrassed by the answers.

Mr CLARKO: The Premier said those answers would be given to me, but I have not been given the answers. I am not attacking the Minister. I am just explaining what has happened.

Mr Pearce: I was embarrassed by the answers that came back. They contained comments from a departmental officer saying that he could not understand how Mr Clarko could put such a construction on the figures when one considered the fact that he had been the previous Minister for Education.

Mr CLARKO: I am happy with that, and I will respond to it. I am happy to be proved wrong. Some of my queries were not statements of fact; I asked questions, and I should have received answers by the end of January or early February.

Mr Pearce: The material has been prepared in response to your questions. I understand it was tabled in my absence. If not, I will undertake to table it during questions without notice.

Mr CLARKO: I wanted to ask some questions of the Minister for Education last week, but he was not here. I wanted to ask questions of the Minister for Transport, but he was not here. It is all part of the good running of this place. It is a two-sided affair. The Minister for Education is here today, someone is here tomorrow, and maybe someone from our side is not here. We all have a certain responsibility as we hold these temporary and transient posts.

I will return to what is vital; that is, the question of the crushing of the right of the Opposition to speak in this House. The Government is destroying members of the Opposition by not allowing them to speak for a fair and reasonable length of time, and we will have the situation where previous members of Parliament were able to speak for 50 per cent more time than we will be allowed in the future.

It is regrettable, as I have heard the Leader of the House say so often in this place in the nine years he was in Opposition, that we are talking about the brutality of numbers. However, it will enable him to do what he wants to do in the future. It is very important for the Minister who leads this House to remember and take note of the fact that he will give members of the Opposition an unfair opportunity to speak in the future. He will cut the time for Opposition members to

speak, but he should remember that over the last 25 years this Government has been in office for only four years. During that 25 years, this Opposition has been in Government for 21 years, and it will be back in Government and be there for a long time; and when it is, I guarantee that members like the Leader of the House will stand and say that the Opposition of the day has not been given a fair and reasonable opportunity to speak. He will say that because the 45-minute speaking time will have been cut to 30 minutes on all sorts of issues, including important issues. However, it was agreed last Thursday that there is to be a two hour limit—with the exception of the two lead speakers—on all legislation including contentious items. It will not be used as fair-minded people say it should be used. If the Government had moved last Thursday to have a two-hour limit on minor matters, but that on major issues the two-hour limit would not apply, the Opposition and the people who believe in the freedom of speech would have thought it was fair enough. In fact, what was moved by the Government last Thursday—it comes in a package with the motion before the House—was that should we want to speak at some length, we would find that we were denied the opportunity to speak. Therefore, we will be muzzled on important issues, and in terms of setting up that muzzling, we will be given five-minute speeches.

I conclude on this note—I would not want to use the 45 minutes allotted to me just because I was allowed 45 minutes as it would be the last thing that would enter my head—I know that you, Mr Speaker, will remember what I say because you have a good memory. The Opposition will get back into Government, and when it does, I will be interested to see how the then Opposition—the present Government—will behave and how it will accept this curtailment of basic rights. On occasions, it is a requirement of this House that members from both sides agree on many issues. The Government often seeks the opportunity to bring matters before the House, and one dissentient voice can prevent matters being brought forward.

Mr Pearce: We can move a motion to bring it forward.

Mr CLARKO: The Opposition has other powers, and it can remind the Government from time to time that the House is not safely in the hands of the Government because it happens to have the majority.

Mr Rushton: They may want to change that, too.

Mr CLARKO: While this House affords us those opportunities, the Opposition will have to look more carefully at the procedures of the House, and when Ministers seek to make ministerial statements, perhaps the Opposition will have to take a view that is less helpful. It cannot be a one-sided thing.

We cannot have a situation where the Leader of the House can slap the Opposition's face and the Opposition cannot respond. That is not a reasonable pact or agreement in this House or in Westminster-style Parliaments, in general. They succeed because of understandings and agreements from both sides of the House behind the Chair.

The Leader of the House in my experience does not abide by proceedings, because last Thursday he called off certain agreements and then recalled them. It takes two to play this game—not only two to tango—and the Leader of the House cannot do any worse than he is doing now. He cannot give the Opposition rights and then take them away. Where will it stop? Is this the beginning of the Government's taking away the rights of the Opposition?

MR BLAIKIE (Vasse) [2.57 p.m.]: I believe that the comments you, Mr Speaker, made at the commencement of today's sitting were important and I hope all members of the House will acknowledge them—

Mr Bryce: Hear hear!

Mr BLAIKIE: —and more particularly I hope the Premier will remember them during question time. Maybe, the Deputy Premier would like to comment on that also—the Speaker has asked him to keep his interjections to himself.

Mr Bryce: He answers his questions superbly.

Mr BLAIKIE: The purpose of the motion is to reduce the amount of debating time allowed to members, and this has been instanced by other speakers from this side of the House. I agree with the statements that have been made and I am opposed to what the Government has set about doing; that is, to reduce the speaking time from 45 minutes to 30 minutes, which will mean a 33½ per cent reduction in the speaking time available to all members of this Parliament.

While it is of great concern to members of the Opposition, it should also be a matter of concern to members who sit on the Government's back benches. This motion will certainly apply to them and they will come to rue the day they supported the Government in its move, because they are effectively cutting down on the time they have to represent their constituents in the Parliament.

The Government has taken a drastic step and it would be interesting to see the performance of the Leader of the House if the tables were turned. He came up with many epithets over the previous years when sitting on this side of the House, when he referred to the then Government as wearing jack boots and being fascists, to democracy being overturned and to the Goebbels-like legislation, and the other sorts of similar comments we were used to from him. Now he has brought this motion forward, and calls it legislative representation of the Parliament. It is rubbish. The normal way this type of reform has been achieved in the past has been through the Standing Orders Committee of which you, Mr Speaker, are the chairman. Members of the committee work out the best system of approach for members of Parliament. I have sat on that committee and I believe it is working effectively. However, the Government and the Leader of the House elect to ignore the Standing Orders Committee completely and they are simply using the majority of numbers in the House. There has been no co-operation through the Standing Orders Committee, and there has been no request to the Standing Orders Committee.

Mr Tonkin: We have referred it to that committee.

Mr BLAIKIE: What has been its reply?

Mr Tonkin: The conservatives of the day would not co-operate.

Mr BLAIKIE: The reply came back that not all members were unanimous in their support of it. This happened in previous years—

Mr Tonkin: And your Government always waited for unanimity before doing anything.

Mr BLAIKIE: Changes to Standing Orders and the hours of sitting of the Parliament have always been matters for consensus and agreement. It has never been a question of the Government's using its numbers. Later in my remarks I will remind the Minister of this point.

Mr Tonkin: We were more co-operative. When you suggested we reduce speaking time on amendments to the Address-in-Reply to 20 minutes, we, in a spirit of goodwill, agreed. You would not agree to any reduction.

Mr BLAIKIE: So be it. On this occasion we disagree with the reduction of speaking time to 30 minutes.

Mr Tonkin: Do all your members think that?

Mr BLAIKIE: The Government ought to acknowledge our position.

Mr Tonkin: Quite a few think it is a good idea.

Mr BLAIKIE: I would like to know where they are.

Mr Tonkin: I bet you would.

Mr BLAIKIE: It is rather interesting to go back over some of the speeches made by a number of members who have spoken at length on certain subjects. Depending on one's point of view, the term "at length" could be replaced by "*ad nauseam*". I refer members to the speeches of the Leader of the House on electoral reform matters. He is one of the people who, as a member of the Opposition, wanted more than 30 minutes to get across his point of view. He always required more than that in the past when he spoke on that subject. So be it. I refer also to the speeches of the member for Mt. Hawthorn on the topic of cigarette smoking.

It is the right of such members to bring those matters forward as they see fit. Now the Leader of the House has a new role to play as the Government's numbers man. I should not refer to him as the numbers "man" in view of the sex discrimination legislation; he is the numbers supremo.

The member for Morley-Swan has been throwing stones since he entered Parliament, but now that he lives in the glasshouse, he is trying to change the rules and to change the size of the stones people are permitted to throw. That suits him because he has taken on a different role. Previously when his role was reversed, he demanded and insisted on the maximum amount of speaking time in debates.

The Address-in-Reply is a most important debate in the Parliament. Some members can get very bored and suggest that the topics debated are non-contentious or that members are making electorate speeches; but it gives members an opportunity to canvass wide areas, whether they be electorate matters, policy matters, or hardy annuals. It is an important facility which enables members to represent their constituencies. Let us look at some of the Members in this Chamber who have spoken in the Address-in-Reply debate.

The member for Avon, who is now Minister for Lands and Surveys, made a number of speeches about the railways and their importance in this State. He and other members spoke on a number of other matters as well, but they took the opportunity presented by the Address-in-Reply to refer to those items that were of deep concern and interest to them. They certainly wanted more than 30 minutes allotted to them when they became involved in matters of deep concern. I refer also to the member for Dale and his association with local government, and the member for Collie

and his interest in coalmining and energy sources. You, Mr Deputy Speaker, made a number of speeches in relation to Cockburn Sound. Such matters were important to the members concerned, and they are important electoral issues for members to raise in the Parliament. It is imperative they should have adequate time to do it.

Some members, depending on their nature, spoke for the full allotted time. The point I am making is that 45 minutes has been allowed for many years. This Government is seeking to reduce that time by 33 1/3 per cent. That is a drastic step. I refer also to speeches on high technology made in recent times by the Deputy Premier. Occasions will arise both this year and next year when a number of members will want to discuss matters that are key issues in their electorates. I can imagine the member for Mandurah wanting to explain the issues behind the proposed canal developments; that is a subject of grave concern to his electorate.

Mr MacKinnon: Is he in favour of them?

Mr BLAIE: I do not know. The member no doubt will be involved in the debate and will state the case as he sees it.

Mr MacKinnon: I do not think he has made up his mind.

Mr Read: It is a local government issue at this stage.

Mr MacKinnon: Sit on the fence until the wind blows you off.

Mr BLAIE: It is important that a member of Parliament should be able to represent issues of concern to his electorate. It does not matter whether one is able to find State Housing Commission homes in one's electorate; one's electors expect to be represented in the Parliament. I ask the Leader of the House by way of interjection: Does he agree that that is a fair summation of what constituents expect of a member of Parliament.

Mr Tonkin: I think you were in the House when the Speaker asked that there be far fewer interjections. Rhetorical questions such as that have only one answer.

Mr BLAIE: The Leader of the House and I agree on this point of view. It is a matter dear to my heart; and the Government's proposals cause me a great deal of concern.

I have referred to the question of canals at Mandurah. Another example was put to the House at the end of last year by the member for Moore who related the plight of farmers in agricultural areas and the grave difficulties they were experiencing in obtaining carry-on finance. There

is no way the member could have explained fully all the circumstances of that matter within 30 minutes. It was a matter of grave concern to him and to his electorate, and the member brought it to the House and explained it. Some members may have thought, "Oh, my goodness, not this about rural areas again." However, it was important to the rural areas and it was important that they had a voice. The member for Moore was able to explain the reasons a committee of inquiry should be set up, and the committee was subsequently set up.

I have given two examples to illustrate the point I am making. No doubt the member for Canning will be involved, as will all members, in the debate on whether Burswood Island ought to be used for commercial development or whether it ought to be retained for public purposes. These issues will be of wide concern within the electorates. Constituents will want to know where their members stand and what actions they are taking. It does not make much difference what the member says in the backblocks at meetings, because time and time again the constituents will make the statement: "I do not really care how a member performs over a cup of tea; it is what he says in the Parliament that counts". That is the end of the line and it is where performance is measured, is recorded, and is available for all to see.

The public expect to know how members stand in relation to canal development at Mandurah and the casino development on Burswood Island. These are matters of concern and constituents will want to know how their members stand on these issues.

In the debate last week on the sessional orders, the Government indicated that it will determine which Bills are urgent. This will be done by co-operation, consultation, and discussion between the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition, behind the Chair. That may be the case. However, I am sure that whatever the Government decides is urgent, will be declared urgent, because it has the numbers in the House and it will win the day. That is the kind of co-operation the Leader of the House has afforded the Opposition. He talks of co-operation, but he means it is available provided the Opposition does exactly what he wants. That is the only co-operation the Opposition will get and it is not good enough. The Government could have used the gag motion, but it chose not to do so.

Not only do we now have a sessional order, but also the time available for backbench members to speak is proposed to be reduced by 33 1/3 per cent. This is only one aspect relating to the

Government's handling of the House and its contempt of Parliament.

I refer now to the opening of Parliament last year and the farce it turned out to be. Parliament was called together for the opening and sat for one day to introduce legislation on what I now call "the price-fixing farce". This has become a farcical situation because none of the legislation now exists. Twelve months later, the Government has still not arranged a ceremonial opening of Parliament. I firmly believe in the important role played by traditions and ceremonies and they should be followed. This Government has elected not to hold a ceremonial opening and we are presented with the present farce relating to the handling of the business of the House. I deplore the actions of the Government.

I refer now to the manner in which legislation was introduced to the Parliament in the final days of the previous part of the session, the nature of the legislation introduced, and the way the Government expected the Opposition to respond to it in the dying stages of the session. I refer specifically to the Western Australian Development Corporation Bill, the Financial Institutions Duty Bill, and the proposal to extend the franchise of the State Government Insurance Office. Those Bills were of major importance, yet the Opposition was not given sufficient time in which to study or to debate them in a proper way in the Parliament. When the Bills were introduced, the Government decided to bulldoze their passage through the Parliament and on each occasion, would not adjourn the House until the Bill had passed through all stages in one sitting of the House. That is the nature of co-operation from this Government.

With reference to the financial institutions duty, it is interesting to note that, notwithstanding the number of amendments proposed on this side of the House when the Bill was introduced, the Government is now proposing piecemeal amendments to the Act. The dogs are barking that the tax will eventually be dropped. This is one of those occasions on which we could say to the Government, "We told you so". It will be interesting to note what happens in this regard over the next six to 12 months. However, irrespective of whether the Government drops the FID tax, when the Opposition is in Government in 1986, it will do so.

Mr I. F. Taylor: Where will you cut your expenditure?

Mr BLAIKIE: There are two ways in which expenditure can be cut, and one of them is to reduce the present number of advisers, some of whom

should be looking over their shoulders now and searching for new jobs, because they will not be around in 1986. The new broom will sweep clean and unemployment levels in that area will rise dramatically. I suggest they go back to Trades Hall and try to find new avenues of employment in that field. Their future in their present positions will be short-lived; certainly I would not guarantee more than one or two more days for them when there is a change of Government.

I now refer to the facts that the Opposition needs time to consider legislation and that a degree of co-operation is necessary in order that the Parliament might work effectively. The member for Karrinyup indicated that the Opposition when in Government may well go the same way. However, there are certain ways and means, limited though they may be, by which Oppositions have some mechanisms for extending time so that their voices can be heard. However these are resorted to only under extreme circumstances and the Opposition does not want to adopt those methods. The Leader of the House must recognise that the Opposition has a role to play, which role must be given consideration.

It is a tragedy that the Premier is not here at the moment. How often he has said when caught out, such as with the FID legislation, that the Government alone does not have a mortgage on good ideas. From time to time, some come from the Opposition members. This is another example of that and the Government should consider the proposals we are putting forward. The Opposition needs time to consider legislation. It needs adequate time to be able to explain legislation to constituents, and for them to evaluate it. It does not wish to follow the methods expected of it by the Leader of the House which follow a "slam, bang, and too bad Sam" attitude. That sort of approach will not get us anywhere and it will disadvantage the people we are expected to represent.

I reject the reforms proposed by the Government. It is possible to improve the traditional methods by way of consensus between all members. However, this Government is ignoring that approach. It is further attacking the institution of Parliament and in doing so it is attacking the rights of the members and the constituents they represent. My concern will be shared by all members.

When the tables are turned in 1986 and members of the Government are in Opposition, it will be interesting to hear how loudly they will bay to ensure that their opinions are heard and that they have an opportunity to present them.

We have heard it all before. The person who cried loudest of all was Leader of the House. He was the most virulent of all, and he took up the full time available to him.

It was fortunate that the member for Stirling made the comment that he did, because it is my very strong view that this move will disadvantage all backbench members of Parliament. It will be a total disadvantage to minor parties.

Mr Cowan: As much as the gag.

Mr BLAIKIE: It will be a total destruction of Independent members, because this will reinstate the two-party system. Anyone after the lead speaker will have 30 minutes to speak. No provision is made for backbench members or members of minor parties. Parliament was not established for the benefit of political parties, but for the benefit of the people. The Government is now destroying a right.

All members of independent, minor parties, have an equal right to be heard, but under this motion which we are discussing, this right will be further eroded by 33 1/3 per cent. This Minister is endeavouring to ensure that Parliament is subservient to the will of the Executive. The public should realise that Parliament is the only place where the Government is accountable for its actions.

One thing the public should understand is that the destiny of the Parliament is not decided on the Bob Maumill or the Howard Sattler shows; the destiny of the Government is decided in the Parliament. This increases the responsibility of the media to report accurately propositions put forward by the Government so that members of the public at least have an understanding on which to base their decisions to support or not to support the Government's proposals. It is actions like these with which the Government is changing the pattern of Parliament, and which will lead to the demise of minor and independent parties.

In conclusion, I make three final points. Firstly, I completely reject the proposal for a reduction in the time available to speakers other than lead speakers. Secondly, the Minister in charge of the Bill, when he was in Opposition, was one of the most virulent mud-chuckers in our Parliament. Now that he is in his glasshouse, he is altering the rules to suit the particular game he is playing. Finally, the Parliament is for the people; it is not an extension of the Labor Party's Caucus.

With those comments, I oppose the motion.

MR STEPHENS (Stirling) [3.24 p.m.]: Last week, we violently opposed a move by the Government to alter the sessional orders to bring in a

modified form of the guillotine. That issue will certainly deny members of Parliament the opportunity to speak. Once the time available in the second reading, Committee stage, and third reading is limited, obviously the number of speakers who can be heard is seriously reduced. Therefore, members will be denied the opportunity to question and to put forward their points of view.

However, the motion before the House does not prevent a member from speaking. It is designed only to limit or to reduce the available speaking time from 45 minutes to 30 minutes. In that light, the National Party is quite prepared to support the motion. We believe it is reasonable that members of this House, if they apply themselves to the task, can quite adequately develop and debate their points of view in 30 minutes, bearing in mind that the lead speaker still has unlimited time, and also bearing in mind that there is no intention to alter the time available for the appropriation Bills.

When one looks at the situation, one realises that, in the Address-in-Reply, we have 30 minutes. In addition, we have 20 minutes on any amendment to it. I did not do any research, but from memory I think there were something like 13 amendments to the Address-in-Reply last year, which gave members ample opportunity to express their points of view.

After the second reading of Bills, members still have the Committee stage during which, if they feel they have been unable to express their points of view in the 30 minutes on the second reading, they can rise, and perhaps more frequently in the Committee stage, develop their points.

I do not think that members will be in any way inhibited from expressing their points of view or from representing their electorates as a result of the motion before the House.

The sessional order passed in this House last week, as I said at the beginning of my few remarks, could prevent a member from even speaking. I would like to remind members of the Liberal Party, particularly the member for Vasse who has just resumed his seat, that I do not accept his point of view regarding the disabilities of minor parties under this motion if it is carried. I would remind him that during the Liberal Party's occupancy of the Treasury benches, there were occasions when, in order to deny National Party members the opportunity to speak, it actually applied the gag. The member should watch his words. I do not wish to reflect on the Chair in any way, but on one occasion in particular the National Party was denied the call. It appeared that that was by arrangement, although it could not be

proved. If this Standing Order were carried and we kept to it, it would not in any way inhibit members' opportunities or abilities to do the job for which they are elected.

Mr Blaikie: When were you denied the right of the call?

Mr STEPHENS: In the last period of the Liberal Government.

Mr Blaikie: Why was that?

Mr STEPHENS: I do not know. I do not wish to reflect on the Chair, but I actually rose on a point of order. As the member knows, the Speaker has the right to make his decision and one cannot challenge that. A decision was made when two people rose at the same time. One person had the call, and the other did not have it. It was rather suspicious on the occasion to which I am referring. There were other occasions when the gag was moved before the National Party had an opportunity to express its point of view.

I am not saying that is right; I am just pointing out that there is no need for the Liberal Party, or for the member for Vasse, to make the accusation that minor parties would be disadvantaged by this motion if it were carried.

Mr Blaikie: I question that you have lost out on a gag motion. I do not believe you have examined it at all.

Mr STEPHENS: If the member does some research, he will find there were times when we walked out of the Chamber purely and simply because of the manner in which we were treated. If the member wants to do the research, he will find his assumption is completely and utterly wrong. I will not debate it because he is only making statements and he knows nothing about the occasion.

Mr Blaikie: You are skating on very thin ice.

Mr STEPHENS: The people who are the recipients of that treatment will remember those occasions better than will the member, and he will understand why. It is a point he would not want to remember, of course.

I emphasise that the motion is acceptable to the National Party, because it will not deny its members the opportunity to adequately represent their electorates. However, our attitude to this motion is in direct contrast to the attitude we took to the sessional order which was passed last week. We opposed that sessional order then and we shall continue to oppose it on any occasion on which it is applied. I hope the Government does not use that device to prevent members of the House from expressing their points of view. Certainly, if that sessional order which was carried last week were applied, it would be a retrograde step.

This motion could add to the efficient management of the business of the House. Members are aware that repetition occurs frequently, but, on many occasions, members do not use the full 45 minutes allocated to them to speak. I do not see any disadvantage in this motion and it is possible it will afford some advantage in respect of the efficient management of Parliament.

The National Party supports the motion.

MR RUSHTON (Dale) [3.31 p.m.]: I am sorry the Leader of the House is not present, because I want him to change his stance on this issue, and I had hoped he would take on board the comments I shall make. The business of the Legislative Assembly must be managed efficiently. The constitutional and historical background of the Parliament is that members have equal rights within it. In the past, voluntary arrangements have been made in respect of matters covered by the motion and we would get a lot further on this issue if we continued to adopt that policy.

As suggested by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, we should give this matter a trial for four or five weeks to ascertain whether it is possible for arrangements to be made behind the Chair, and for those arrangements to be adhered to. If we did that, we would make more progress than we are making.

If the Government's intentions are good, it would certainly agree to such voluntary arrangements being made. Some members have indicated that, when the Liberal Party returns to Government, it will retain the period of 30 minutes during which members may speak, as set out in the motion. I draw the analogy between this situation and that which exists in respect of shire clerks. People say now that, if one is a shire clerk, it is best for one to belong to the Labor Party, because, when the Liberals are in power, they do not interfere with local government, but, when Labor is in Government, it gives bonuses to those who are members of the Labor Party; therefore, shire clerks should belong to the Labor Party. I draw the crucial and cruel analogy between that situation and the position where, when Labor is in Government in the Legislative Assembly, Rafferty's rules are introduced, but, when the Liberals return to power, the Assembly returns to a position of fair play and just decisions. That is the basis on which this Government is working.

I and many other people believe that, when the Liberal Party is on the Government benches again, Labor members will be dealt with fairly. Therefore, the Government believes now that it can resort to these rough tactics and get away with them. This is most unsatisfactory.

The Government is devising all sorts of means to limit the time available to the Opposition in Parliament. Some would say such a position represents good management and it is a good arrangement; however, that sort of arrangement should not prevail and the Government will be found out for what it is doing.

During question time, Ministers are frequently absent from the House. That is totally unsatisfactory and it is clearly in contempt of Parliament. When Sir Charles Court was Premier of the State, he required all Ministers to be in the Parliament during question time. Under that administration, Ministers had to have a very good reason if they were not in the House during question time.

The Parliament is being manipulated to avoid the Government's having to perform. The Government should be exposed for what it is doing and the media has a responsibility to look at that aspect. The Parliament is not the tool of the Government. The Legislative Assembly is the people's House which has Standing Orders to ensure fair play exists. Surely this is a time for consultation and agreement; for flexible, voluntary management; and for timetables to be arranged between the parties.

In conclusion, I indicate this is not the way to arrive at a sensible arrangement. It is not too late for the Government to reconsider the steps it has proposed and to take on board the reaction of the Opposition. The Government should acknowledge that voluntary arrangements, rather than the sorts of arrangements set out in the motion, have always worked best in this House.

I am pleased the Leader of the House has returned to his seat. I shall direct a couple of points to him. I do not expect him to react to them immediately, but he might consider them.

I indicated earlier that it would be advantageous for the Government to consider setting timetables for the conduct of the business of the House on a voluntary basis over a period of four or five weeks. I made the point that Parliament is not the tool of the Government and that, in the past, arrangements of this nature imposed on the House have never worked. I ask the Leader of the House to consider those points which I have presented sincerely.

The House needs to be managed efficiently, but the Leader of the House has put forward his motion in a formal way. In the past, informal arrangements worked out by both sides of the House have always been more satisfactory. Difficulties occur when legislation which one suspects is not correct is introduced formally in the House

and members are asked to pass it. I remember this occurred once in respect of a Minister of my own party and I rue the day that happened. As a result, one finds oneself six months down the track with legislation which does not work and, when one is in Opposition, one has no way to retrieve the position.

I oppose the formal arrangements which are proposed for the management of the House. I fully support a voluntary arrangement and I hope the Leader of the House is able, at this late stage, to consider the points I have made. We should try this informal arrangement for four or five weeks so that we can see how it works. If that position is not totally satisfactory, the Leader of the House would still have the opportunity to make further arrangements or to impose his will on the House by formal means as he is seeking to do now. However, it would be worthwhile to give the informal arrangements a trial on a voluntary basis first.

MR CRANE (Moore) [3.38 p.m.]: I oppose the motion. I do so on grounds similar to those put forward by some of my colleagues. I refer the Leader of the House to the publication titled *The Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia*—it is not titled "of the Government of Western Australia". It is for that reason that I oppose the motion.

The opportunities available to a backbench member to speak are very few and far between. I have been a member of this place for 10 years and I could almost be called a "professional backbencher". On only two occasions during the year can a backbench member speak on various matters relating to his electorate and his responsibilities to the people who elect him. They are during the Address-in-Reply and the Budget debates. From time to time, all of us have used those opportunities to speak on matters which are of concern to our electorates.

Had this motion read in such a way that it did not interfere with the Address-in-Reply or the Budget debates, I could perhaps have given it further consideration, because I would be the first to concede that there are times aplenty when people talk for 45 minutes for the sake of talking, when what they need to say could quite adequately be expressed in half that time.

Some people speak when they have something to say; others speak when they want to say something. If members care to analyse those two statements, they will realise they are quite different.

At times, 30 minutes is quite adequate for replies to be made, but in the two instances I mentioned a moment ago, it is necessary to have

45 minutes. That time should be allowed to members.

This House does have a Standing Orders Committee. I understand it has met and been unable to reach an agreement on this amendment, and the Government has seen fit to override the committee by deciding to force its will on the Legislative Assembly. This is a most unfortunate occurrence in what we like to refer to as a democratic Parliament. I hope the Leader of the House will take on board my comments, which are not meant to be critical, but which merely state a fact which has been established over many years and which needs to be defended.

The member for Merredin has indicated that this amendment will not affect the Budget debate; nevertheless, it will affect the Address-in-Reply debate.

As a professional backbencher, let me tell members that the greatest amount of time I have witnessed being wasted in this place in the 10 years I have been here has occurred with the introduction of Bills or in the replies by lead speakers, where on both occasions unlimited time is allowed. I have heard the Leader of the House speak for many hours on different occasions in this place and repeat himself many times during those hours. He could have summed up his address in 90 minutes and probably made his points more effectively and more interestingly.

If we want to save time, we could do so by cutting down the unlimited time presently available and making it 90 minutes. I do not believe any member here would lack the ability to make his or her points in 90 minutes. So this is one area where we could save a great deal of time.

We should not reduce the speaking time for ordinary members of Parliament, who do not get a great opportunity to make speeches in this place. It so happens that with some Governments the Ministers do all the speaking and the Government backbenchers do absolutely nothing except at a certain time each afternoon read Dorothy Dixers. That is their only contribution. I am sure other Government members would like to make a contribution to debates, and they should not be denied the opportunity to do so.

I am very strongly opposed to this motion and so I ask the Government to take on board my suggestions and to take a further look at this problem in order that a sensible consensus among the members of the Standing Orders Committee might result. This is not an unreasonable request. Further, a great deal of credibility would go to the Government if it were to do this. It would show that it acknowledged that it was not always

right; indeed, it has been given credit for admitting that it has not always been right. The Government does not have a mortgage on good ideas, as I am sure it will admit. We would be the first to admit that we do not have such a mortgage.

My plea is that the Government should not be too hasty, but be prepared to take a further look at this matter. We would make a serious error if we were to accept this amendment to the Standing Orders. The amendment would degrade the institution of Parliament and deny backbench members any opportunity to do the things they were elected to do in this place; that is, they would be denied the right to represent the people in a fair and adequate manner.

I have used up the full time allotted to me on fewer than half a dozen occasions, so it is reasonable that I make this point. A check through *Hansard* would prove that this is so. Even on 7 December last year, when I had a most important motion to put to the House, I found myself continually under pressure to limit my remarks even though I had unlimited time. I was told that others wished to speak and so I did shorten my address considerably, although it meant I had to leave out many important points I wanted to make about the state of the rural industry in Western Australia. While the situation in the rural industries may not be serious, it is critical! Nevertheless, I cut short my contribution in order to co-operate with the House.

I ask the Leader of the House to give my request some further thought. He will not lose face if he does so; in fact, he will gain a great deal of prestige by recognising the needs of other members. I hope he takes on board what I said about the unlimited time allotted to lead speakers, an unlimited time which I believe is not necessary. The Leader of the House would be the first to admit that is so, because he is an honest man. I am sure he will admit that he need not have spoken for five hours on one particular occasion not so long ago. He could have made that same speech in 90 minutes, and probably made it more effectively.

We should make this Parliament one of which we are all proud and one in which everyone elected to it has the opportunity to put his point of view in a succinct manner without wasting an exorbitant amount of time. I oppose the motion.

MR TONKIN (Morley-Swan—Leader of the House) [3.47 p.m.]: Very briefly. I will comment on my famous six-hour speech to which reference was made by almost every speaker last week and today. Some have said that it was full of nonsense

and that I could have made it in a much shorter time. I am sure that most members who said this have not even read the speech and so would not know whether it included a lot of repetition and what it was all about.

Mr MacKinnon: We had to listen to it.

Mr TONKIN: That speech was made about the infamous Electoral Districts Act, which was amended to try to retain the seat of the member for Kimberley at that time who was a Minister in the Court Government. I did not set out to speak for that length of time, but the reason for the length of the speech was the extensive quotations I read from Mr Justice Smith of the Court of Disputed Returns. So the comments about the speech being mostly a load of rubbish mean that members opposite are saying that about the considered opinions of a Supreme Court judge. The reason I made sure those quotations were made is that I thought the Act represented an infamous page in the history of this State and that it should be recorded in *Hansard* as a source of material for the students of the future who will need to know the kinds of things conservative Governments have done to ensure they stayed in power. When we consider what the Government is doing here—that is, reducing the speaking time by 15 minutes—we realise that the hysterical comments made by members opposite when referring to jack boots and so on pale into insignificance.

Members opposite as a Government were very happy to have very long speeches made because they knew that because of the electoral laws they would keep power, anyway. Members opposite still have the power to veto any legislation that emanates from this place. This is so because of their disgraceful and dishonest fiddling with the system which has given them a permanent majority in the Legislative Council for 90 years.

So while we ask members to reduce their speeches from 45 to 30 minutes, I ask them to remember that we have not proposed that they be not given the right to get a majority in a House of Parliament, which they have done themselves. That puts the whole thing into perspective.

Mr Blaikie: What about Independent members of Parliament? You are disadvantaging Independent members of Parliament.

Mr TONKIN: Does the member mean because they are not being spoken for by the lead speaker?

Mr Blaikie: Yes.

Mr TONKIN: Yes, I can see that, but they are already disadvantaged. The only way that could be fixed up is by saying that everyone will have unlimited time, because even if there were an Independent member in this House, he would be

able to get up and speak about his unique point of view. Perhaps he could not do that in 45 minutes whereas he could if he had unlimited time so whether members like it or not, Parliament is to a very large extent in the modern day a place for political parties.

Mr Blaikie: You are only further cementing the party system. You are completely eroding any future that Independents might have had.

Mr TONKIN: I do not agree with that. In fact, the proposal we put to this Parliament last year would have enabled Independents to be elected to the upper House. If the legislation I put forward had been accepted, the Independents, by getting a quite small percentage—namely, from eight per cent of the total vote—could have been elected to Parliament. That was a boon for small parties. It is a pity that the leader of the National Country Party and others did not have the wit to see that and to understand the system.

Mr Old: I know that you are trying very hard to keep us alive, and we do appreciate that. Of course, we would prefer our own system.

Mr TONKIN: Yes, because it is dishonest; 8½ per cent—

Mr Old: The only dishonest person in this House is you.

Mr TONKIN: No party at the present time can gain a member in the upper House by getting only 8½ per cent of the vote on a State-wide basis.

Mr Stephens: Are you speaking on the electoral reform Bill?

Mr TONKIN: I just mentioned that, although it is not before the Chair, merely to emphasise that for any member to say that we are against Independents or small parties is nonsense, as will be seen by our electoral reform proposals.

This motion will be a desirable step. I want to emphasise further that although it is a formal step, co-operation between the Government and the Opposition will continue, and we will endeavour to work out our problems as best we can. I have every confidence that that co-operation will continue and will be very successful.

Question put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes 29

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Mr Barnett | Mr Tom Jones |
| Mr Bateman | Mr McIver |
| Mrs Beggs | Mr Parker |
| Mr Bertram | Mr Pearce |
| Mr Bridge | Mr Read |
| Mr Bryce | Mr D. L. Smith |
| Mrs Buchanan | Mr P. J. Smith |
| Mr Burkett | Mr Stephens |
| Mr Carr | Mr A. D. Taylor |
| Mr Cowan | Mr I. F. Taylor |
| Dr Dadour | Mr Tonkin |
| Mr Davies | Mr Troy |
| Mr Grill | Mrs Watkins |
| Mrs Henderson | Mr Gordon Hill |
| Mr Jamieson | |

(Teller)

Noes 17

| | |
|----------------|--------------|
| Mr Blaikie | Mr McNee |
| Mr Clarko | Mr Mensaros |
| Mr Court | Mr Old |
| Mr Coyne | Mr Rushon |
| Mr Crane | Mr Trethowan |
| Mr Hassell | Mr Tubby |
| Mr Peter Jones | Mr Watt |
| Mr Laurance | Mr Williams |
| Mr MacKinnon | |

(Teller)

Ayes

Mr Evans
Mr Wilson
Mr Brian Burke
Mr Terry Burke
Mr Hodge

Pairs

Mr O'Connor
Mr Bradshaw
Mr Grayden
Mr Thompson
Mr Spriggs

Noes

Question thus passed.

RESERVES BILL AND RESERVES AMENDMENT BILL

In Committee

Resumed from 4 April. The Chairman of Committees (Mr Barnett) in the Chair; Mr McIver (Minister for Lands and Surveys) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 48: Reserve No. 13375 and 17827 at East Perth—

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported after clause 48 had been partly considered.

Mr BLAIE: I had just begun commenting on clause 48 when it was resolved that we discuss this matter on another day. At that stage the Committee was discussing with the Minister the use of Class "A" Reserve No. 1335. In order to bring my comments up to date, I indicate that the Government is proposing that three parcels of land be amalgamated to form a reserve. The vesting orders will be taken to include park, public recreation, and vehicle parking. At the time of the adjournment of this matter last week, I was about to ask the Minister whether, in his second reading speech, he indicated that the Perth Water and Burswood Island foreshores advisory committee supported the proposal.

I ask the Minister now: In the period since we last discussed this matter has he found that the proposal for the casino is in any way connected with this Bill? A lot of conjecture has appeared in the newspapers about the casino proposal for the Burswood Island area. Is the casino associated with the proposals before us?

It is important that this proposal comes before the Parliament because it is a departmental measure, not a Government measure. It is one of the few Bills which can be considered without political bias. We must bear in mind whether the advisory committee has supported the proposal which requires parliamentary approval.

The CHAIRMAN: Before I give the call to the Minister, I point out to members that Standing Order No. 113 allows a person the right of reply while remaining seated. Due to the infirm nature of the Minister's leg, I have agreed to allow him to remain seated while he replies to this debate.

Mr McIVER: For the information of members, I wish to recap from where we left off when we were debating this Bill. Unfortunately, while we were debating clause 48 last Thursday, the *Daily News* was distributed and the headline bore news of a casino. That raised questions from the Opposition and I wish to make it clear that the casino and its siting have nothing whatsoever to do with this clause.

If the Opposition had been sincere in its attempts to find out exactly what is referred to in this clause, it would have realised that it relates to the other side of the river, and it is nowhere near the proposed site for a casino.

The reason for this clause is that in 1982, when considering a proposal to establish a heliport on the Swan River foreshore, south-west of the Causeway, the City of Perth noted some anomalies in the reserve boundaries in the area of Reserve No. 7728 which was set apart from the public works improvement of the Swan River and vested in the Minister for Works. It was shown on the survey plans as part of Heirisson Island. As a result of dredging during construction of the causeway, the channel separating the reserve from the mainland was reclaimed and a new channel was dredged through the boundary part of the reserve.

That was not shown on the current public plan and the reserve was found to be still in existence. At the request of the Perth City Council, and with the approval of the Public Works Department, the reserve was cancelled in 1983 and the area was reclaimed by dredging operations. It remained vacant Crown land.

In an effort to rationalise the situation, the City of Perth has requested that former Reserve No. 7728, together with the Crown land comprising the former channel and remaining part of the unvested Class "A" Reserve No. 17827 for "park and gardens", be amalgamated into Class "A" Reserve No. 13375. In addition, the council requested the purpose of Reserve No. 13375 be changed to "public recreation and vehicle parking" to allow for car parks.

In reply to the second question raised by the member for Vasse, I indicate that the Perth Water and Burswood Island foreshores committee fully supports the proposal I have outlined. The situation is that two Class "A" reserves are involved and so that the matter can be finalised, the approval of Parliament is necessary to effect the proposed changes.

I repeat that this has nothing at all to do with the casino. As those plans are advanced, submissions will be made to the Department of Lands and Surveys to construct the casino and have it vested accordingly. At that time, the Opposition will have ample opportunity to raise any objections to that vesting order.

I trust that during the discussion on the remaining clauses we will have no further humbug as we had when we discussed the clauses last week. The sole purpose of this Bill is to seek the approval of Parliament so that "A"-class reserves and other portions of land can be vested in the appropriate authorities. It is nothing more, nothing less.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 49 to 51 put and passed.

Clause 52: Section 12 of Act No. 33 of 1939 amended—

Mr BLAIKIE: This clause deals with a proviso to section 12 of the Act of 1939 which proviso is to be repealed. In his second reading speech, the Minister indicated that the Independent Order of Oddfellows has a widow and orphans fund which was established in 1939 to provide assistance to aged persons and orphaned children.

The Minister indicated also that the purpose of the change was to allow the funds which have accrued to be transferred so that they might be used for home projects for the aged. I ask the Minister to indicate whether this is still the request, whether he has any information about the amount of funds involved, and whether parliamentary approval has been sought for this purpose previously.

Mr McIVER: As the member has indicated, the Independent Order of Oddfellows has a widow

and orphans fund which was established in 1939. The society, however, has few orphan children and as a consequence the majority of the funds cannot be utilised by the society. In order to overcome this problem, the trustees of the society have requested a legislative change to allow 25 per cent of the funds to be used to assist aged members and the remaining 75 per cent of the funds to be used for social welfare and community projects.

To enable this legislative change it is necessary to obtain parliamentary approval, which this clause seeks to do. The member for Vasse did raise with me the amount of money that is involved. I do not know that figure offhand, but I will obtain the information and inform him in writing.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 53: Swan Location 7561—

Mr BLAIKIE: Swan Location 7561 involves land which is held for an estate in fee simple in trust for institutional purposes for the Slow Learning Children's Group of WA (Inc). It is an interesting requirement for what is being proposed is that that area of land which is contained in Swan Location 7561, which includes the Hawkevale village for handicapped persons, will be removed from the trust, and the Slow Learning Children's Group will have the opportunity to sell the land and direct the profits to institutional purposes. I find this to be a very interesting proposal and it is one with which I agree. I believe it is an important function for which Government land should be used; that is, to help people with institutional needs—people who do not have the capacity to assist themselves.

I would appreciate further information on how this agreement will be achieved, and I look forward to the Minister's comments.

Mr McIVER: Reserve No. 2704 in Maida Vale is set aside for institutional purposes, is vested in the Slow Learning Children's Group of WA (Inc), and is held in freehold by that organisation in trust for that purpose. Part of that reserve includes Swan Location 7561 which contains the Hawkevale village for intellectually handicapped persons.

In order to finance a development of residential housing within the village, the group has requested permission to subdivide and sell portion of Swan Location 7561. This will entail removal of the trust over that portion of reserve.

As a member of the board of the Slow Learning Children's Group, I had much pleasure in participating in the discussions to bring about this change. The Under Secretary for Lands and the

Under Treasurer have agreed to the removal of the trust from Swan Location 7561, subject to certain provisions. For the information of the member for Vasse, I will provide him and other members of the Committee with those provisions, as follows—

- (a) All proceeds from land sales are directed towards institutional activities and not general endowment;
- (b) no further land will be granted to the group for expansion of Hawkevale village;
- (c) the group agrees to surrender, without compensation, part of the reserve for roadworks and pipeline reserve; and
- (d) the trust is retained over the balance of the reserve containing Swan Location 7562.

In order to remove the trust, the approval of Parliament is required, and this clause specifically requests that approval.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 54 put and passed.

Schedule put and passed.

Title put and passed.

Report

Bill reported, without amendment, and the report adopted.

Third Reading

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to the third reading.

MR McIVER (Avon—Minister for Lands and Surveys) [4.18 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

MR LAURANCE (Gascoyne) [4.19 p.m.]: I wish to make a few comments on this Bill at its third reading stage, because it is the first time that a Reserves Bill has come through this Parliament in this form since amendments were made to the Reserves Act in 1982. The 1982 Bill represented a substantial change, and I was the Minister in charge of the Bill at that time. As a result of the method of handling the legislation, there has been a substantial change in amendments to "A"-class reserves, which have come before this Parliament since its inception.

It has been the practice for some 50 years that only excisions from "A"-class reserves come before the Parliament. That is significant because "A"-class reserves have always been treated as sacrosanct. If an "A"-class reserve was created it could be altered, and in particular could be

reduced in size, only if it had the approval of both Houses of the Parliament. That underlines and emphasises the importance that this State has always placed on its "A"-class reserves. There have been occasions, of course, in our history when that has been an impediment to development, particularly by local authorities, and you Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Burkett) would be well aware of that from your previous experience.

Nevertheless it did ensure that the scrutiny of the people's representatives in this Parliament would be given to any change to an "A"-class reserve. I underline the importance that the State has placed on this type of reserve throughout its history. It was discovered some years ago that the law required that any change—and I emphasise "any"—to an "A"-class reserve, whether an addition or an excision, should come to the Parliament. It had been a practice for some 50 years to bring only excisions from such reserves before the Parliament. It is interesting that that practice had grown up because "A"-class reserves were so desirable and considered sacrosanct by the public of this State that if the intention of the Government of the day was to increase the size of an "A"-class reserve it could be done by Government decree, or more particularly by the Governor-in-Executive-Council.

Mr Blaikie: You are saying by the stroke of a pen.

Mr LAURANCE: The practice over many years in this State has been to add to "A"-class reserves by an act of the Governor-in-Executive-Council. Any excision from an "A"-class reserve came before the Parliament. That was a practical way of dealing with these changes and alterations, but it was not lawful. To the best of my knowledge, this proposal was first raised by my colleague, the Hon. David Wordsworth, when he was Minister for Lands because he believed that if we were to bring before the Parliament any move to excise an area from an "A"-class reserve, in the same way we should bring before the Parliament and get approval for any addition to an "A"-class reserve. The practice was changed because the legal advice available to the Government of the day was that we had been proceeding unlawfully and those additions to "A"-class reserves over many years should have had the approval of Parliament.

The 1982 amendments to the Reserves Act, or it may have been the Land Act—

Mr McIver: To the Reserves Act.

Mr LAURANCE: —clarified the position as to what should happen and what should have been happening. They ensured that in future all ad-

ditions to as well as excisions from "A"-class reserves would come before the Parliament. It was a significant change and it is reflected for the first time in the Bill before the House today.

I found myself in a rather invidious position as Minister handling the 1982 amending Bill, although the Opposition at the time did not give me too much difficulty. The amendments to the Act in 1982 made the previous actions legal retrospectively. I was never responsible, to the best of my knowledge, for introducing any other retrospective legislation, and I looked upon that Bill with some horror, in as much as I had to come to the Parliament with legislation that was retrospective in nature. I did that to make legal retrospectively all those previous acts which added to "A"-class reserves without parliamentary approval but which had the Governor's approval. Parliament at the time agreed to the amendments, although one or two members of the Opposition reminded me that it was a retrospective Bill and retrospectivity was even more of an issue then than it is today. Nevertheless, the Parliament approved all those past actions.

I refer to that today because it is important and not only does it highlight the need to act according to the Statutes of the Parliament, but also it emphasises that in recent times an enormous number of additions have been made to "A"-class reserves. We have set aside an enormous area in this State for national parks, wildlife reserves, nature reserves and other forms of reserves, particularly "A"-class reserves. Some six per cent of the land area of Western Australia is set aside in reserves of those types. More land is set aside in Western Australia for those purposes than in any other mainland State. That is a matter of some pride, particularly to the previous Government which over a period of nine years added a tremendous amount of the land area of this State to the reserves system to be set aside for the use and enjoyment not only of the citizens of Western Australia today, but also for all time. It is a record of which we as a Government were very proud and it is one that compares more than favourably with what has happened in other States.

Everything has a limit and too much land can be locked up in this way. The principal task facing Western Australia—and I do not mean only the present Government, but all of us—is to find the resources to better manage the reserves we have set aside, and not put aside further land. Before we go further in the business of setting aside reserve land we should concentrate on being able to provide the resources to manage those reserves, whether they are "A"-class reserves,

wildlife reserves, or national parks. More resources must be put into that area.

The reason so much land was set aside in the last decade or so was that the Conservation Through Reserves Committee did a tremendous amount of detailed work throughout the State. As a result, many reserves were established from one end of Western Australia to the other. That exercise has been completed; it was a major exercise. History will show that in the 1970s a great deal of work was done to put into effect the recommendations of that committee. The task now is to set aside the resources to manage the land rather than to put aside further reserves. Of course, other reserves will be identified in the future, but the relative importance of that task has declined as a result of the actions of the previous Government.

It is possible to set aside too much land for reserves. Where a conflict exists and an enormous tract of land is set aside and is stifling commercial development, measures should be brought before this Parliament to amend the boundaries of the reserves to enable commercial development to take place. I do not believe land should be reserved to the extent of stifling commercial development. I make the point to the Government and to the Minister, that if a mistake has been made by setting aside too much reserve land, the most important section is in respect of offshore islands. Offshore islands have already been locked up in reserves. Because of our small population, there has not been as much demand for commercial development of offshore islands as there has been in other parts of Australia, significantly in Queensland. That does not mean to say that in future we will not have a greater demand for the development of offshore islands. That type of development can be highly desirable and it should not be stifled because in the past these islands have been set aside as reserves.

Mr McIver: What about the islands off Carnarvon?

Mr LAURANCE: If it can be done in an environmentally acceptable way, there should be some commercial development. There must be a balance, in the same way as I believe there should be for the islands off Dampier. There was some discussion of that during the Committee stage of this Bill. There are many islands in the Dampier Archipelago, and it is appropriate to have some of those set aside as reserves. Equally, some should be left available for use by the public in a more unregulated way. In fact, they should be set aside particularly for future commercial developments.

It is significant that because of these amendments to the Act, we now have a Reserves Bill coming in a form which brings in clauses with excisions from and additions to "A"-class reserves. We have been dealing with a Reserves Bill which has more than 50 clauses. It is a considerable task for members of this House and for members of the other Chamber. This has led in some way to the Bill being held over from last year until this autumn part of the session. That was regrettable, because many local authorities and other people were waiting on the passage of the Bill last year. They may have been waiting because last year was an election year and there was only one part of the session of Parliament. Some people may have missed the Reserves Bill of 1982; they had only one chance in 1983; and then the Government, in its wisdom, decided to hold the 1983 Bill over to the first part of 1984. That is why we are dealing with it now. That is a very long time to wait for a Reserves Bill to be dealt with by the Parliament.

Many desirable developments may have been waiting for parliamentary approval under this Bill. I think the Government has let a great number of people down by holding this Bill over. It was only because the Government, in its poor management of the business before the House, brought in major Bills at the last moment and debated them night after night, often until dawn. This Bill should have been dealt with last year, particularly because it was an election year and it was the only opportunity in 1983 that people had to bring to the Parliament amendments to reserves. So there has been an unacceptable delay on this Bill.

One of the reasons would have been the size of the Bill as a result of those previous amendments to the Reserves Act. I want to make a suggestion to the Minister that, because of the new nature of the Bill and the additional clauses to be contained in it in the future, there is now a need for a schedule to be attached to the Bill, or at least made available to all members of Parliament.

I am aware that the Minister has a series of maps which accompany the notes for each amendment. He has those available for members, and he makes them available particularly to the Opposition spokesman. That has been the traditional practice, of course; but when he introduced this Bill last year, I was not the Oppositions spokesman. He was in another Chamber, and I looked after the matter in this House. Since the changes to the Opposition, the spokesman on land matters is now in this Chamber. I do not happen to be that person, but he has that information available to him.

I found great difficulty going through the 53 clauses last year and identifying each of the electorates involved. Members often did not have time themselves to go through and identify all the clauses in the reserves legislation.

Mr McIver: The Leader of the Opposition was presented with this information.

Mr LAURANCE: Does the Minister mean at that time?

Mr McIver: Yes.

Mr LAURANCE: There is a series of maps and explanatory notes.

Mr McIver: You would have been able to identify the areas.

Mr LAURANCE: The notes and maps do not mention the electorates; they mention in most cases the local authorities. Sometimes it is a little confusing. There may be mention of a Roe location which does not happen to come in the electorate, for instance, of Katanning-Roe. The location is given, but it does not necessarily quickly identify the area of the State being talked about. More particularly, it does not identify the electorate which is being discussed. When there were 12 or 15 clauses to the reserves legislation, it was relatively easy for an Opposition spokesman to identify which members might be interested. Often members on both sides of the House take an interest in the reserves legislation to see whether their electorates are involved in any way, but generally it is up to the Opposition spokesman to examine the explanatory notes and maps, identify the electorates, and advise the members affected. The Minister himself will have done this on many occasions. The member usually rings the shires, even though the explanatory notes might say that the shire of whatever it is in agreement with an excision or addition—an amendment. The member usually makes his own inquiries to satisfy himself that those explanatory notes are accurate when they indicate that a particular local authority is in favour of an amendment.

When this Reserves Bill came before the Parliament last year, it contained something like 53 or 54 clauses.

Mr McIver: Fifty-four.

Mr LAURANCE: It was a considerable task to go through the explanatory notes, identify what was intended by each clause, and ascertain to which electorate each clause referred. I request the Minister, or someone from his office, to have a look at those explanatory notes and see whether it would not be possible in future to identify electorates. I ask the Minister to discuss with his departmental officers the possibility of providing in-

formation in a collated form so that members may check the position in their areas. A schedule could contain the numbered clauses indicating the reserve, location, and perhaps the lower and upper House electorates involved. Members would then be able to quickly examine the schedule and, if necessary, ask for the explanatory notes to be provided.

It is not necessary or, indeed, desirable for explanatory notes to be made available to each member. However, if a schedule could be provided through which members could look quickly they could determine whether they had an electorate interest in a clause of the Reserves Bill. That would be of great benefit to members and would facilitate the handling of the Bill in future years. I leave that suggestion with the Minister, and support the third reading.

MR BLAIKIE (Vasse) [4.41 p.m.]: The Reserves Bill and Reserves Amendment Bill seeks the approval of Parliament to change vesting orders, to add additional land to Class "A" reserves, to reduce the size of "A"-class reserves, and for the management of Class "A" reserves by the organisations involved. It is an important Bill and relates to Crown land which is held in trust for the State. Parliament has a responsibility to determine on behalf of the people of the State whether certain orders should be changed.

During the Committee stage we discussed a number of clauses and the member for Gascoyne explained the reasons for the changes he implemented during the time he was a Minister. At a later stage an issue will come before the Parliament which will deal with the purpose for which Burswood Island will be used in the future, and whether it should be developed commercially or used for another purpose in the public interest. I do not intend to debate that issue now. However, I point out the reason for the introduction of a Reserves Bill is that the public may have an input as to how Government land should be used.

In respect of the use of Burswood Island for the establishment of a casino, the Government could have said, "The casino is to be sited at Kings Park". It could have decided that it should be sited at Bold Park, Rottnest Island, or on the Darling escarpment. That is all public land in which the public has an interest and on which, through members of Parliament on the floor of the House, the public have a say.

This Bill is very important. It is one of the few Bills on which the public at large have an input. The changes effected to legislation of this nature two years ago by my colleague were most important. I was involved in ensuring changes were

made, so that Parliament could have a say in excisions from or additions to Class "A" reserves.

If the Government accepts the recommendations of the task force on land resource management in Western Australia, the format of Reserves Bills could change dramatically later this year. That task force has made a series of recommendations which cover all land in the State. While the task force looked at land management in the south-west, with the approval of the Premier, it made proposals and recommendations in respect of all land in Western Australia. The Government has indicated it will accept some of those recommendations and it is examining the stance it will take on the remainder of them.

The changes envisaged by the task force's report are the most dramatic since the alienation and development of land began in this State. I want this recorded in *Hansard*, because future debate on Reserves Bills may not take the same form as it does today.

The total area of land in Western Australia available for agriculture is 19 million hectares; the figure in respect of pastoral leases is 95 million hectares; vacant crown land, 108.5 million; State Forests, 2 million; national parks, 4.6 million; and nature reserves vested in the Wildlife Authority of Western Australia, 9.7 million hectares.

If the department of natural land management is to involve itself in the management of land in Western Australia it will have a mammoth job to do. The Opposition will be making recommendations as to how it believes land management ought to be carried out. However, we question whether the most efficient way to manage land is for that whole function to be carried out by one body controlling all the land in the State. The member for Gascoyne indicated the importance of land held in reserve by the Government being managed more efficiently than it is now. The Opposition supports that view. We strongly question whether all land should be managed by one body, and our policy on land management will be set out in the future.

This is an important Bill, because it provides the opportunity for the Parliament to make a determination on the use of land held in the public land bank. It is one of the rare occasions on which members have an opportunity to have an electorate rather than a political input in debate.

MR McIVER (Avon—Minister for Lands and Surveys) [4.49 p.m.]: I indicate to the member for Gascoyne, a former Minister for Lands, that the Government is conscious of the creating and

handling of "A"-class reserves. The member for Vasse's comments substantiated the Government's view as to the serious attitude which must be taken to the management of Crown land, reserves, and the like. The Government has a functional review committee which is looking at matters which relate to land.

As members will know, the Government also has a moratorium on the release of agricultural land. I feel this certainly indicates the sincerity of the Government in dealing with all land matters. I am conscious of the fact that the reserves legislation did not go through the Parliament in the earlier part of the session, and I felt that the member for Gascoyne made a very valid point in stating that it should have gone through. Unfortunately, due to other important legislation at the time, it was deferred. I inform the member that from my point of view as Minister for Lands and Surveys, I have received no objections from any shire or organisation that has been affected by that deferment. I also noted his remarks in regard to the 1984 Bill coming before the House and agree that we cannot present it in the form I have indicated. I will discuss with the appropriate officers the suggestion of a schedule to clarify and clearly show the electorates affected. That is a very fair request and I will endeavour to accede to it.

The member also indicated that perhaps we are making too many reserves and that the islands, particularly in that lovely northern part of the State—the Dampier Archipelago—should be made available for private development. Although I agree with him in many respects, as he would know, as a former Minister, everything revolves around finance, and naturally this is the linchpin of all these accomplishments. If we had the money, we could accomplish these things. In the years ahead, we will endeavour to make land available for tourist development, because tourism is definitely playing a very vital role in Western Australia. In regard to that part of our coast, I fully agree with the member's comments; it is attractive and we should share it with our Eastern States neighbours and attract people to the area from other parts of the world.

Mr Laurance: The point I was making was that it would be better to hold some of those islands as vacant Crown land under the Minister for Lands and Surveys, rather than to put them aside as reserves. I am not talking about islands off only the Pilbara coast. Many islands are located off the Kimberley coast. There have been recommendations that nearly all those islands should be set aside as some sort of reserve which makes it more difficult for commercial development later. It

would be better if the Minister for Lands and Surveys held them as vacant Crown land.

Mr McIVER: The point is well taken. I have had discussions on this issue with various shires in the regions the member has mentioned, and I will continue discussions because I do share the member's point of view. I certainly will take up with the officers the format that the 1984 Reserves Bill will take.

In reply to the member for Vasse who asked why the Bill was introduced into the House, I say that I thought I had covered that subject pretty well in the Committee and second reading stages. The land management situation is under way and I feel only good can come of it. We will know more about it when the recommendations from the committee have been finally determined, and are well known.

Mr Blaikie: When did you accept that?

Mr McIVER: I could not say at this stage.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN WATER RESOURCES COUNCIL AMENDMENT BILL 1984

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 22 March.

MR MENSAROS (Floreat) [4.55 p.m.]: The history of the Western Australian Water Resources Council, or its Statute or constitution which this Bill seeks to amend, is comparatively short; nevertheless, it is fairly important and interesting. Approximately seven years ago, the then Minister for Water Supplies (the Hon. Graham MacKinnon) introduced the Water Resources Council as a trial, in his own words. He desired to have a fairly large body of varying interests to advise the Minister on matters on which he could have been well advised by his department or by the then existing Metropolitan Water Board, but on which he wanted advice from a more neutral source which was not biased from the point of view of either the public utility or Government department.

When dealing with the public, it is not the departmental officers, but only the Minister of the Crown who does represent the public; the Public Service is paid to do the job to advise the Minister and as a result of that advice, various rules, regulations, and sometimes Statutes are suggested and ultimately introduced and carried by Parliament. Nevertheless, if the interests of the consumer or the public are in question, the Minister is respon-

sible. The Minister did not have advice in this respect and I think that was the reason the Hon. Graham MacKinnon originally formed the Water Resources Council. It has worked reasonably well, albeit, after a time; perhaps not enough matters were put before the Council.

I remember when I took over the portfolio it was even suggested that we do away with the council altogether because it appeared that it did not have enough agenda points to discuss. That would have been the wrong thing to do, and with the assistance of the departmental officers, we gave the council enough work to do and the employees continued with a fair amount of enthusiasm. They did their work more than well; indeed, they advised us very usefully, and that resulted in a decision at the end of 1982 that the council be converted to a statutory body. That decision is the reason this Bill is presently being considered by the Parliament.

The Statute did provide, of course, for the constitution, functions, duties, and rights of the council, but it has not and did not want to change anything from the situation where the council was a non-statutory and hard-working body. It has to be remembered that the Water Resources Council decides on only some of the matters with which it deals and about which it advises the Minister. A two-way traffic is involved, and the Minister can ask—indeed under the Statute he can direct—the council to take certain matters into consideration and to give him advice on them.

I suggest that the Minister should make use of the provision in section 15 of the Act. I am glad that by virtue of this amendment we can see that the Minister is taking an interest in the Council which only had some luke-warm support by the then Opposition when the original legislation was introduced towards the end of 1982.

With the proposed amalgamation of the two main water authorities—the department and the metropolitan utility—the role of the Water Resources Council will be even more important. Originally, one of the aims was that the council, as a more removed body, should resolve the differences which might have existed between the Metropolitan Water Authority and the Public Works Department engineering division, such as when agreements on how to sell water from one to the other for their respective supply were made.

If any difficult agreement were in sight, the council would be the best body to make a compromise and advise the Minister accordingly. After the amalgamation, there will be more scope for such a role. There is no doubt that when we have one water authority willingly or unwillingly the

country people will be somewhat of a minority. The larger customer circle—the people who provide the turnover of the much larger capital outlays of the Metropolitan Water Authority—will somehow overshadow the country interests. Once this council is taken seriously, one of its roles should be to represent the interests of the country. I believe this could be incorporated within the Statute. I know that an amendment of this kind is not before the House and I am not proposing one, but I would like to remind the Minister that he should give some consideration to this matter because, as I will point out when dealing with the next Order of the Day, there is no doubt that after the proposed amalgamation there will be a definite need to strengthen the composition of the Water Resources Council in the best interests of country consumers. There are enough representatives of rural or semi-rural interests on the council and they could easily be engaged in an effort to not let the country interest become subdued by the metropolitan interest.

The present legislation is really superfluous and unnecessary, at least for the purpose for which the Minister has introduced this Bill, and I will expand on this statement. Once the Act is amended, however, there should be more importance placed on the council and, apart from the procedural amendments in this Bill, I emphasise that the Minister might consider my proposal concerning section 14 of the Act which deals with the functions of the council. I suggest the addition of another subclause that would improve the representation of country interests on the new water authority of Western Australia. It would be a welcome provision from the point of view of the country people and it would be very useful. I will not move an amendment of this nature, but I would be happy if the Minister would investigate the matter.

I refer to the proposed amendments in the Bill. The amendment to section 6 of the Act does not allow for the appointment of deputies for the six *ex-officio* members. If these *ex-officio* members were unable to attend a meeting, under section 4 another member would need to be appointed and that is a very time-consuming exercise. As a result of administrative procedures, an Executive Council minute is necessary. If one takes into consideration the necessary preparation for that procedure and the times on which the Executive Council meets, one realises that it would take a month to have such an appointment passed. This means that the *ex-officio* representative on the council would not participate in the next meeting or the following one.

The legislation provides that the *ex-officio* members will be appointed by the Governor, but no special provision has been made for the appointment of their deputies. Under the Bill they will not need to be appointed by the Government, which is fair enough because they will be appointed as heads of their respective departments who in turn can appoint their deputies in writing to be represented at a particular meeting of the council. This appointment could apply to one or two meetings. The authority to attend the meeting could be withdrawn at any time.

There has been no change regarding the nine nominated members where the present members and their deputies are appointed by the Governor. My understanding is—and I stand corrected if it is wrong because it was my impression when the legislation was introduced—that their deputies can be appointed at any time. If at any time the appointed member cannot attend a meeting, the deputy or a proxy can attend in his place.

While I have said this legislation would be superfluous from the point of view of the aim the Minister wanted to achieve, I subscribe to its aim.

I refer to section 10 of the Act as it reads without the amendment which has been proposed to tie it in with the previous amendment. Section 10 of the Act reads as follows—

10. Where—

- (a) both a member of the Council and the deputy of that member are absent or temporarily incapable of fulfilling the duties of a member; or
- (b) the office of a member is vacant and is not taken by a deputy or filled in accordance with this Act,

the Minister may appoint a person to act in the place of that member during that absence or incapacity, or until the vacancy is filled, as the case requires, and any person so appointed has, while taking the place of a member of the Council, all the duties, powers and entitlements of, and the protection given to, a member under this Act.

The Minister is in a position to use section 10 of this Act without really appointing a deputy and just because either the appointed member or the *ex-officio* member is not able to attend the next meeting, by virtue of section 10 the Minister can appoint a proxy or another member who will have the same rights as the original member. The amendments do make the Act tidier but they are not essential in order to achieve the Minister's aim.

How can a Government of the day overcome the recurring difficulties in regard to the Crown Law office. In the Minister's second reading speech he says—and rightly so—that the Crown Law Department reminded him that certain drafting is not correct. I can clearly remember that my instructions, when I was Minister, were that there should be no difficulty in appointing the deputies of the *ex-officio* members. The Crown Law Department has clear instructions to draft essential and short Bills, yet the same department says, only 18 months after the original draft, that the drafting is no good and that we must improve it.

I do not fault the Minister or anyone else for this situation. Perhaps I should take some responsibility for the original legislation and I could be asked why I did not check each word. However, if I had done so, it probably would have been easier to draft the legislation myself. I do not know the solution. I had a bad experience myself partly because of the slow progress of drafting and partly because of the drafting itself which needed amending time after time in order to achieve the original aim. I am not scolding an amendment which tries to achieve a different aim because the Government has changed, policy is different, or something has cropped up which was not foreseeable when the legislation was provided.

However, this is a clear case and the PWD engineer would advise that he did not intend to give instructions to Crown Law that the legislation should be framed in the way it was. There should be more discipline in Crown Law so that drafting is a little tighter and stands up to the test of time better than it now does. Although I do not wish to become a cynic, it has occurred to me that perhaps the draftsmen want to justify their existence and they are deliberately drafting legislation in such a way that amendments will be necessary at a later stage. This situation has nothing to do with the present Government; it happens all the time with every Government.

As human nature is such that people seem to do better when they have a little competition, I wonder whether some drafting should be done through private solicitors. There is very little expertise in this field possibly because there is no demand for the service; apart from local governments which wish to draw up by-laws there is only one customer requiring the drafting of legislation. That situation does not facilitate the growth of any expertise. If Governments used private solicitors and lawyers for this purpose, perhaps we would achieve a better result.

In summary, I indicate that the aims of the Western Australian Water Resources Council

cannot be overemphasised. Its task should be to preserve the balance between country and metropolitan interests after the amalgamation and, perhaps, represent the minority position which country interests will undoubtedly take when we have only one water authority.

As the amendments were not absolutely necessary because section 10 could have been used to achieve the same purpose, the Minister might consider writing into the legislation that one of the functions of the council is to represent the country areas after the amalgamation. I realise that it is proposed that the chairman of the council will be a member of the board of the new authority, but it is not stated that, as a member of the board, he should represent this interest and, perhaps, neither should he. However, the council should advise the Minister that there will be no shortcoming towards the country interests after the amalgamation.

MR LAURANCE (Gascoyne) [5.14 p.m.]: The Western Australian Water Resources Council has many important functions, one of which is to advise the State Government of matters that should be brought to the attention of the Federal Government, particularly in relation to providing funds for water projects in this State. The State Government often makes application to the Federal Government for funds for water projects and these are usually researched and discussed by the Water Resources Council before the propositions are forwarded from the State. The council plays a very important role.

I support the point raised by the member for Floreat when he said that country interests must be protected, particularly bearing in mind the amalgamation contained within another Bill before the House. The Bill will affect the operations of the Water Resources Council which has representatives drawn from a fairly wide spectrum, and some of whom represent country interests. I presume they will continue to be represented when these amendments are approved by the Parliament. I would like to think that country interests not only are protected, but also will be promoted by the Water Resources Council.

I raise a matter in respect of my electorate at Carnarvon. As the Minister would know, there has been a very serious drought in the Gascoyne River area over the last 18 months which has affected Carnarvon and the plantation industry. Fortunately, that drought has been broken by beneficial rains in the last few weeks. The Gascoyne River is now flowing and has brought some relief to the area. However, during the period of the Court-O'Connor Governments, from 1974 to early 1983, some \$10 million was spent

on the Gascoyne ground water supply scheme. That scheme has been very beneficial to the area. It has been of significance to the plantation industry, and this has been best reflected by the increase in plantation values in Carnarvon. It has not only increased the overall value of the plantations, but also levelled off the valuations. All plantations which have a water allocation from that scheme are now pretty well equal in value. Prior to the implementation of the scheme, a property's access to good water within its own boundaries had a major impact on the value of the plantation.

The water scheme completed by the previous Government has given great benefit to the industry and it has drought-proofed the area for periods of up to 18 months. The latest drought went beyond that period and that is the reason for the problems which occurred. Severe restrictions were imposed on the growers, and if the drought had not broken, we would have been looking towards a winter period during which rain could not be expected until perhaps June or July. In that case, the growers would have suffered further very severe restrictions.

In recent weeks, I have approached the Minister requesting him to give a commitment on the part of the Government to extend the existing scheme or to continue the search for other supplies of water in the area. The Minister has replied that it would cost in the order of \$10 million to increase the existing ground water supply scheme to produce a further one million cubic metres of water. He said it was out of the question to extend the scheme because of the high cost. The Minister also said that the previous Government had received and accepted advice, and that it had gone as far as it could with the Gascoyne ground water supply scheme in terms of financial viability from the point of view of the Government and ongoing costs the growers would be charged for the water.

I am aware that this problem has had the attention of Governments over many years, but continued searching is necessary for an answer to the problem. I am proud to be associated with a Government which spent \$10 million on providing the answer we have had to this stage.

Mr Tonkin: How much water did the \$10 million provide?

Mr LAURANCE: I am not sure that an accurate figure can be given. Perhaps the Minister can give me the answer.

Mr Tonkin: I just wanted to have that one million cubic metres put into perspective.

Mr LAURANCE: I am not sure what percentage that entails.

The reason for my raising the subject is that, with the additional water, the people may be able to withstand a drought for 20, 21, or 22 months rather than the 18 months that seems to be the case at the moment. In other words, it would further drought proof the area. That would not be the complete answer, of course, because we have had droughts for much longer than that. Prior to the time that the area was a substantial producer of vegetables, there was a drought of 31 months. I believe that is the longest in recorded history, and that occurred in the early 1930s or late 1920s. Since the plantations have been in production, the longest drought lasted for 27 months; so we are considering a period substantially longer than 18 months.

The Government has not made a commitment to that river, and it should. Alternatives may be available. I advise the Minister that his Federal colleague, the member for Kalgoorlie (Graeme Campbell) was heavily involved with this issue recently.

Mr Tonkin: Yandoo Creek?

Mr LAURANCE: Yes, with the support of the local members, particularly Philip Lockyer and me. We have been watching what can be achieved here, and the Water Resources Council should be alerted to this problem. Outside experts have been requested to look at the possibilities of off-stream storage as one of the many options. One option was to have a dam, but the previous Government said that would be too costly, and the water from it would be too expensive. The present Government has made exactly the same statement.

Mr Tonkin: Topography and geology are against it.

Mr LAURANCE: I know it is very difficult. It is not impossible, but it makes it more difficult, and therefore more expensive.

Off-stream storage has been considered in a number of ways, and so has the scheme promoted by the previous Premier (Sir Charles Court) which was called "Operation Ploughshare"—a type of nuclear answer to the problem. That would be achieved by blasting a crater in the bed of the river. Sir Charles Court came in for some criticism on that proposal, but we have evidence in documents and by way of film of an experiment conducted in the Soviet Union in which a similar river in an arid area was able to provide a substantial amount of water from a nuclear crater. Perhaps that is not a feasible proposition in this country, although I believe it could be done if it

were not for the various pressures in relation to the nuclear question.

A proposition is being put forward by people in the community, and particularly Mr Neville Brandstater, who would be known to many members in this Chamber because of his involvement in a number of different Government agencies and departments over a period. Mr Brandstater is something of a Philadelphia lawyer. He is often under-estimated in his capacity for dealing with projects like this one. Mr Brandstater has done a considerable amount of work. I have been over the scheme on the ground with him, and he has documented it for the Public Works Department and others. He has taken levels and done surveys in the area to prove that it was worthwhile asking an engineer to consider the matter. An engineer from Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd has been given the task of dealing with the matter, and his initial report is favourable. The engineer was involved in the Ophthalmia Dam at Newman for the Mt. Newman Mining Co. That was a unique problem, and the engineer and his colleagues came up with a unique solution that was successful at Newman.

In the same way, we hope that the water supply in the Gascoyne River can be improved, and some water can be spread into an area in which it can be held and then brought back to recharge the river. That would be one way of providing additional water. Of course, there would be problems. It would probably be a fairly shallow storage, and it would be accompanied by problems of evaporation and salinity. However, it may be possible to store the water for a short period in the Yandoo Creek area, and as soon as the river stopped running, the stored water could be used as a recharge. In that way, it would not be stored for long periods, and the problems of evaporation and salinity would not be as great.

They are areas which should be given consideration by the Water Resources Council which has a responsibility for water storage on behalf of the Government.

In a tremendous act of confidence in the area, and in order to have the initial work done, the community raised more than \$10 000 in an appeal organised by the local radio station. The appeal included my colleague, the Hon. Philip Lockyer, and also Graeme Campbell, the Federal member. That appeal received a tremendous response from the public, not only of Carnarvon, but also the surrounding regions.

The initial study has been done by the engineer from BHP, and his report is available. The scheme now needs a proper feasibility study; the Water Resources Council should be made aware

of that, and the Government should commit itself to the feasibility study. If the proposal is found to be feasible at a reasonable cost, the State Government should commit itself to funding the proposal and seeking more funds from the Commonwealth Government to enable the scheme to proceed further.

I commend the people who have brought the proposal to its present stage. I urge the Government to get behind that proposal and investigate it thoroughly. If it proves to be unworkable, alternatives should be investigated. The Water Resources Council should be involved, the Government should be involved, and a request should be made to the Federal Government, if the proposal is found to be appropriate, so that water storage in the area can be increased.

This matter is appropriate to the legislation, and particularly to the work of the Water Resources Council.

Debate adjourned until a later stage of the sitting, on motion by Mr Tonkin (Minister for Water Resources).

QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.15 p.m.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN WATER RESOURCES COUNCIL AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR TONKIN (Morley-Swan—Minister for Water Resources) [7.15 p.m.]: I thank members for their support of the Bill. I listened with some interest to the member for Floreat, but I must say it is not my experience that Parliamentary Counsel when drafting Bills put in a few flaws in order to keep their jobs so that they will have something to do next year. My experience of Parliamentary Counsel has been that they are doing a very professional job. It is an extremely complex job. I am sure any member who has tried to draft a Bill or an amendment to a Bill will be aware of the very specialised area it is. It is impossible to foresee all the possible implications of drafting.

In addition, the instructions sent to the Parliamentary Counsel are not always explicit enough. It really is the responsibility of us all as legislators to do our best to ensure that the legislation which emanates from this place is in as good a condition as is possible.

I might say that some years ago, for that reason I did suggest, on behalf of the Opposition at that time, that a committee system be developed which was a genuine committee system and not a committee of the whole House. The conservative parties refused to act upon that for the nine years in which they were in Government. Now in the Legislative Council we suddenly find large numbers of members jumping to their feet and discovering the benefits of a committee system, and some appear to be in favour of it, but only because they are in Opposition. I just cannot take seriously, or treat with respect, people with that kind of attitude.

In reply to the member for Floreat, I would say that certainly it is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that legislation is in good condition. It has not been my experience that Parliamentary Counsel are in any way in dereliction of their duty, or that they do things in order to keep themselves in employment. They have far too much work to do. In fact I think they would say that they could do with more employees in their section.

I accept the bona fides of the member for Floreat with respect to the Western Australian Water Resources Council. He was the Minister who formalised this body into a statutory body, and it has a very important function to perform. It is important that when Government agencies such as the water authority of Western Australia, as it will become, are managing the water resources of the State, providing clean water, taking away waste water, preventing the pollution of water bodies, and so on, there is another body which is not responsible for management and which therefore can give advice to the Government with respect to the management of water resources in this State and not be a vested interest.

While speaking on this, I would like to pay a tribute to the Chairman of the Western Australian Water Resources Council (Mr Bob Hillman), who is also the Director of Engineering, Public Works Department, and whom I appointed last year as head of the project group overseeing the merger arrangements. I have found Mr Hillman to be an engineer and officer generally of unsurpassed dedication, sensitivity, and skill.

Mr Thompson: A top man.

Mr TONKIN: I would like to pay that tribute to him.

I accept what the member for Floreat said about the Western Australian Water Resources Council. I think it performs a very important function. I do not think most Western Australians realise the colossal nature of the task which any Government has in providing water to an area as

huge as Western Australia, a very large country by any standards, and one which is very arid. We must manage this resource carefully; we must conserve it far more than we have.

I acknowledge the role of the member for Floreat who, as the Minister, emphasised conservation by introducing a greater component of "pay-for-use". We must endeavour to ensure payment for use so that we conserve the resource. Although we might like to live in an ideal world, we still live in one in which the mechanism of finance operates very powerfully as a deterrent when one is thinking of conserving any resource.

With respect to the comments of the member for Gascoyne, the problem in Carnarvon to which he referred is a very great one. Once again, the people there and elsewhere have not accepted that they live in an oasis in a desert, and that the water is a fragile and limited resource. Any Government must consider the return it receives from the expenditure of dollars. Dollars are scarce for Governments, and the expenditure of \$1 million or \$10 million must be weighed against the expenditure forgone, not only in water resources in other parts of the State, but also in other activities. We would all like to see smaller classes for our children and better health services for those of us who are sick; and they are only two very important other functions of State Government. We must consider the opportunity costs that must be calculated when we talk about extending a scheme such as the Gascoyne one. Within those constraints, I am sympathetic.

The Carnarvon region provides a very important service to the State because of the products it grows. If we can, we should extend the area. If the area is extended, it is doubtful whether we would extend the number of months in which it was drought proof, or whether we would enable the people who already have water allowances to plant more crops. The amount planted to bananas, for example, has doubled. I am not sure of the exact period, but it might be something like a decade. Certainly it doubled in a fairly short space of time; so increasing the amount of water might in fact not lead to drought proofing.

Another factor, of course, is that it would lead to great pressure on every Government to give out more water allocations to more farmers. The problem is a great one.

I suppose I was almost as delighted as the people of Gascoyne when the river ran so well recently. I say "almost" because my future was not at stake, as theirs was. They were in a very difficult position. Certainly I was delighted because the Minister for Water Resources must dole out

water like Midas, and it is not pleasant to say to people whose livelihood depends on it, "No, you can't have the water, because the water isn't there". I hope we see a long time before the drought conditions return.

This time should not be spent in congratulating ourselves upon the good rains; it should be spent in looking at the various alternatives. I am interested in the report which will come to me shortly from my engineers with respect to Yandoo Creek, to see whether that is a possibility for off-river storage at some time in the future.

I thank members for their contributions to the debate. I remind the House that this is a very tiny amendment—really, a technical one—but members have taken the opportunity to make remarks relating to other aspects of water resources. That was a valuable exercise, because it is important that members have the opportunity to make comments relating to such an important resource.

I commend the Bill to the House.

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

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to the third reading.

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

WATER AUTHORITY BILL 1984

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 22 March.

MR MENSAROS (Floreat) [7.30 p.m.]: The philosophy embodied in this Bill, which is to have one State-wide major water authority, is not opposed by the Opposition. Indeed, it was our policy to do the same thing, more or less. The difference is that we would have done it in quite a different way and, more importantly, for different reasons and for different purposes.

Our aim was for the water supply utility to be more efficient, particularly more cost efficient; in other words, we wanted to reduce the overall cost of the supply of services and hence reduce, in real terms at least, the rates and charges faced by consumers. This would have included a reduction in the total number of employees of the merged

authorities. It would not have involved sacking them, but their being public servants as they are at present means they could be accommodated elsewhere when vacancies occurred. Certainly we would have reduced the number of employees serving the joint authority because that would have been quite easy to achieve in order to give the same high service in a more efficient, yet cheaper way.

Our aim also included the view that, whatever we did with an amalgamated authority, we should always provide that the position of country consumers should be maintained and safeguarded. This was our position when approaching the idea of one main water authority.

The Minister said in his second reading speech—his speech is the only real indication the Opposition or the public have of the Government's philosophy—that the Government's position is not to reduce the work force of the merged authority but for the authority to do more things and in this way be more efficient. The Government believes that the new authority will provide a better service from the point of view of quality and quantity, figuratively speaking. However, the Government does not say a word about reducing costs and instead says that for the same cost the authority will provide additional services.

The question is: What do the public want from a public utility? Remember, the Government has just been elected to office by the public. Do the public want a larger and improved service? Perhaps that would be so in some pockets of the community such as in the country where the quality of water does not measure up to what is considered as acceptable.

However, by and large, and particularly in the metropolitan area, the services are considered to be reasonable and acceptable. This fact was denied by the Government when in Opposition, which is indicative of how politicians can say different things depending on where they sit in Parliament. The previous Opposition embarked on a constant attack, particularly of the Metropolitan Water Authority, and this attack was gladly taken up and supported by the media—it was almost a vendetta. But the previous Opposition, now in Government and responsible for water supplies, now says the services provided are good. I cannot read anything else from the various utterances made by the responsible Minister or any other Government member. That being so, why the need to improve the services, which I think the public and the Government are satisfied with? Why not instead reduce costs?

The Minister could easily arrange for the Metropolitan Water Authority to conduct a market survey. It would not be an expensive exercise and it has been done by various public utilities in the past, including the MWA on other matters. Some sort of Gallup poll could easily be arranged with the question asked: Do you want the joint authority to provide increased services by having the same number of people employed? The Minister believes it will be easier to achieve this without there being any duplication. The question could be: Do you want a possibly increased quality of service with the same rates, increasing year after year as costs generally increase, or do you want reduced costs and reduced rates and charges, and to continue with the same services? I have no doubt that if such market research were carried out, most consumers would say that they wanted reduced rates.

Further reasons for the merger, as spelt out in the Minister's second reading speech, would not really necessitate or warrant the amalgamation. He referred to balancing water resources, but this would not need an amalgamated water authority and it could be done by co-ordination with existing authorities and in conjunction with the Western Australian Water Resources Council, about which we have just completed a debate. The aim of the Opposition by having a merged authority was to better satisfy present and future consumers.

Let us see what other reasons the Minister has brought forward for this amalgamation. He refers firstly to the integration of staff and he goes on to mention the reduced duplication of work in many areas, including the areas of finance, administration, engineering, surveying, and so on. If that is the Government's aim, why not reduce the overall number of staff? I can see that the merger will result in reduced duplication. This is the right thing to do. However, as a consequence, the overall number of staff should be reduced. Again I emphasise that the staff do not need to be sacked, because they could be absorbed into other Government departments and other arms of the Public Service. That applies to the situation pertaining to the surplus of accountants and financiers. It is possible to use the surplus of engineers and blue collar workers as well who will be superfluous as a result of better efficiency.

Further, the Minister said that a single authority will result in the ability to have reduced representation at interdepartmental committee meetings. That is a very weak reason for the amalgamation because these meetings could be held with reduced staff as things presently stand, as one Minister is responsible for both the metropolitan

and the country water undertakings. Therefore these meetings could be arranged by simple ministerial direction.

The Minister then mentioned facilitating the introduction of common by-laws. Again, this can be achieved now and it is no reason for an amalgamation.

He referred then to facilitating the establishment of common policies for subdivision and developmental planning. That is going on at present. I can remember that in my time we had various discussions with land developers, the Urban Lands Council and various other people including arms of the Government in an attempt to evolve a policy which would be to the reasonable satisfaction of all. We went on to evolve very similar arrangements with country people. There will always be similarities between the metropolitan and country areas, albeit some differences will remain.

The next reason given was to facilitate the establishment of consistent but not necessarily uniform charging and rating policies. I cannot understand this wording—what does it mean when the reference is to “consistent but not uniform”? It cannot be uniform because the conditions are so vastly different. As an example, despite the fact that we live in an arid area and despite the fact that occasionally, possibly every 10 or 11 years, we need to have water restrictions, by developing our ground water resources and having surface reservoirs the metropolitan area has plenty of water. If we consider this from a business-like point of view, the water authority should have a policy here in the metropolitan area that is the reverse of the policy in the country. It should encourage metropolitan people to use water, because the more water sold the more revenue received. On the other hand, in the country, although we cannot generalise because a majority of places have very scarce water supplies—and it is not like supplying electricity by a large grid system—most areas have to rely on individual supplies of water. In some places that supply is so meagre that the consumption of it has to be kept down to such an extent that a water authority should not have to indulge in much capital expenditure by enlarging the source of supply, which in turn would add tremendously to the cost of servicing such areas.

Hence in the country for a long time the position has been to have a water charging system which is progressive; in other words, the more we consume, the more we pay—almost like taxation. Country people need to be discouraged from using water as opposed to the situation in the metropolitan area where people could be encouraged to use

water. I cannot understand how there can be a consistent charging and rating policy, let alone a uniform one.

The next reason the Minister gave was the encouragement of planners to view the various sources of water, both surface and underground, in the south-west as one single resource for the use of the community as a whole. That was a very nice sentence for someone to have drafted at his desk in Perth. I suggest the Minister asks his colleagues, such as the member for Bunbury, the member for Mitchell, and the member for Collie, just what their constituents think about amalgamating all the water resources and using them for the metropolitan area. This point was discussed in earlier times, although I was not involved and nor, I think, was the present Minister. But bitter complaints were made from the local country members, because the south-west people wanted to safeguard their water resources and did not want the people in St George's Terrace using their water.

Mr Tonkin: When you manage as one unit you do not give all to one person or one area; you manage it. It is a big difference.

Mr MENSAROS: With the managing argument which preceded this one, that could be done without necessarily amalgamating the two water supplies. It could be done through joint policy co-ordination by the Minister.

The main reason for the amalgamation should be efficiency, provided that the country interests are maintained and safeguarded. When giving us his reasons for the amalgamation, the Minister prefaced his argument by saying that he had answered various questions. I suppose 90 per cent of those questions were mine. The Minister's answers really do not constitute an argument that it is absolutely necessary to amalgamate these two bodies.

Apart from the reason of efficiency, the amalgamation would need to ensure that the country interest is maintained. I will give a bit of detail of the finances involved, because it is a tremendously important matter. The country areas water undertaking led by the Public Works Department engineering division was subsidised to the tune of roughly 50 per cent of its on-going cost. It is difficult to say exactly what the subsidy was because there were so many sunken accounts which one had to ferret out in order to obtain a correct figure.

From the answers to my questions, and looking at the Budget figures it would be fair to say that the subsidy for the country water supply was 50 per cent as far as ongoing costs were concerned. If

we amalgamate the ongoing costs—that is, the income and the outgoings of the two authorities which are to be merged—it would be fair to say, without giving accurate figures, that the country part represents approximately 25 per cent and the metropolitan area 75 per cent of the merged authority. That means that the country is represented by 25 per cent, with that subsidised to the extent of 50 per cent. That would mean that the subsidy is $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent or one-eighth of the total turnover of the joint authority.

If we wish to add to this the capital expenditure, it is a more difficult exercise because one cannot foretell exactly the capital needs of the metropolitan area or the countryside. In the countryside it is mainly a question of how much money the Government wants to spend, because with the vast size of Western Australia we have probably more parts without reticulated water than any other State in Australia. This occurs because of the vastness and aridity of our continent. If one were disposed towards the countryside one could spend an enormous amount of money, if one wished so that all areas could have reticulated water.

In the metropolitan area normal capital expenditure is needed, but one question mark remains. We could spend from nothing to enormous amounts of money—in fact, four times the yearly turnover on backlog sewerage. Much more than half the metropolitan area is not sewered. If we wished to have all areas sewered, any amount of money could be spent. It is more difficult to calculate the proportion of capital expenditure for the country and the metropolitan area. It would be safe to say, under normal circumstances, that there is a need in the country for more water reticulation or more sewerage, so this proportion would be higher from the point of view of the country. Therefore, the total would be about 30 to 35 per cent for the country and 65 to 70 per cent for the metropolitan area for ongoing and capital expenditure.

That means in total the joint authority will have to have at least 15 per cent of its total capital and ongoing expenditure subsidised by the Treasury. That was precisely the reason I, having been in charge of the Water Resources portfolio, did not rush into that proposition, even though I was in charge of that area for three years. I have had experience with the Treasury so I am not speaking politically, I am talking about reality.

Members may recall that the Fuel and Power Commission was established by Don May during the time of the Tonkin Government. When we became the Government in 1974 and we amalgamated the SEC with the Fuel and Power Com-

mission, the Under Treasurer said the Treasury would foot the bill. The proportion was not very great because the SEC's turnover at that time was about \$100 million, and the Fuel and Power Commission's turnover was only about \$1.75 million. Yet, I was conscious that I should not load the customer with more expenditure. For one year the SEC enjoyed the Treasury subsidy, however, it had absorbed the costs of the commission.

I am sorry I will have to take some time to deal with this important legislation, but it is important we receive an unconditional undertaking from the Minister that there will be no serious difficulties with the subsidies for the country, and that in real terms the subsidies will be maintained.

As I have explained, if they are not maintained, up to approximately 15 per cent of the total requirement of the joint authority will be missing, and this can only be made up by increased charges. That will mean rates and charges on water and ancillary services would have to be increased above the normal increases, with an additional 15 per cent for the metropolitan area and the country area. That would be an intolerable prospect to even think about.

The Bill provides for Government subsidies, because it provides for Treasury input into the sources of revenue. In his second reading speech the Minister said that the subsidy will continue. However, I do not think it is good enough, particularly for the country people, to only say that they will enjoy the same subsidy and therefore their rates and the metropolitan rates will not go up. My first question to the Minister is whether he can firmly undertake that this subsidy will be maintained. Unfortunately, we have seen signs of a different policy.

Let us consider the two Bills which are before the Parliament at present—the Country Towns Sewerage Act Amendment Bill and the Country Areas Water Supply Act Amendment Bill. Both Bills introduce charges for services which hitherto were free. That is part of the subsidy to the country, because it was a public service such as the taking of accounts and doing various things in a country office. In both Bills, the Minister has introduced amendments so that the consumer will be charged for the services.

I am not arguing whether those amendments are right or wrong in principle; I am just stating the situation which has prevailed so far will be discontinued, if the Bills are passed, and the people will be charged.

In the Country Towns Sewerage Amendment Bill the Minister introduced a retrospective

charge which may be applied for losses which might have occurred 20 years ago.

Mr Tonkin: That is a loose use of the word "retrospective".

Mr MENSAROS: It is a retrospective charge. For example, when sewerage was built into a particular town, nobody thought that at some stage in the future a Minister would say that he would charge more than the present Statute prescribes. That, in my book is retrospectivity. Anyway, it is a matter of semantics. What is relevant is that more charges will be paid and they will constitute an increase of a larger proportion than ever before. That is a sign that the country people will enjoy less subsidy.

I do not like to cite examples of quotes from newspapers, but the Minister has commented that the water supply to certain places is on a contributory basis. I asked a question of the Minister the other day on this subject and received the response that there were no such schemes before, apart from those concerning mining companies and individuals. If a community were supplied with reticulated water, it did not have to pay; it was not a contributory scheme. Again, that is a sign that the country areas will be worse off.

Added to this, the Minister has said—apparently for the consumption of his masters in Trades Hall—that there will be no reduction in employees. I hope that the Minister will refute my comments—I will be happy if he does—but that statement points to the fact that there will be less subsidy for the country areas. That is the reason I have emphasised that matter so much.

I ask the Minister to give an undertaking that my fears are unfounded, and that the Government will subsidise the new country water authority in the same way as it is now in terms of money and that there will be no disadvantage to the country people.

We have in this State three small independent water authorities at Bunbury, Harvey, and Busselton. These authorities, oddly enough, are to be left alone. Perhaps the reason for that is that the Government holds the seats of Bunbury and Mitchell. Of course the members representing those seats would not have the courage to say so in Parliament, but they probably went to the Minister and chewed his ear and said that it would not be the most popular move in those electorates to absorb the water authorities. After some consideration, the Minister said they would be left out. If the Bill is enacted it will empower the Minister—not the Governor-in-Executive-Council, not the Parliament; but the Minister—to absorb them

by executive action at any time. It is left to his discretion.

The second question I put to the Minister, and I hope he will respond, is whether he will give an undertaking not to use these powers to absorb them. One might say that the Minister could reply, "Of course, I can give an undertaking I will never have to do that because there will be no need to do it. There is no need for the simple reason that I can squeeze them and they will come on their knees in a few years' time and beg to be absorbed".

I asked a question of the Minister recently in which I wanted him to spell out what he had sought from the three independent water boards. I wanted to know the price they had to pay for not being absorbed. The Minister replied that the boards had been advised that they would be charged for work including investigation and design done by Government agencies for the benefit of the boards. That sounds very nice but they will be charged for something they previously received as a public service; they have not had to pay for it. The Public Works Department in particular, and other agencies and arms of Government gave those services because the boards were efficient, independent bodies. That will no longer be so and now they are to be charged.

The second reply by the Minister was that the Government would no longer reimburse the boards for rebates and deferments to pensioners under the Pensioners (Rates Rebates and Deferments) Act. That is preposterous not only so far as the Bunbury, Harvey or Busselton boards are concerned; it is bad enough that the MWA which is a Government utility should be compelled to behave as a welfare agency. I protested against this when we were in Government.

Mr Tonkin: Were you overruled in Cabinet?

Mr MENSAROS: Possibly, yes. It is still a bad provision. I could not care less whether I was overruled or not. It is not good enough for the Government to go to an independent water board and say it has to give pensioners rebates. I suppose Busselton has a higher number of pensioners than any other area in Western Australia. Should the Busselton Shire Council say it does not want more pensioners to go there and that pensioners should not go there because the council will not be able to help pay their water bills? What will be the next step? Will the Government go to the bakeries and tell them they have to produce cheaper bread for pensioners, or to the pubs and say they have to supply cheaper beer?

Mr Tonkin: That is a nice idea.

Mr MENSAROS: It is the same principle. It should not apply simply because a utility is Government owned, or local government owned, or a co-operative business. In Japan it is handled by private enterprise, and in America such facilities are mostly provided by private enterprise. In Hong Kong sewerage works are carried out by consultants and the Government department is only a shell. Those private bodies do the work efficiently and cheaply. We are used to it being done by Government or local government utilities because that is the setup here. The Government of the day decides whether it wants to have more social services. It should not say to the utility that under its charter it has to pay for the pensioners. Apart from being a bad principle it is another nail in the coffin of the utilities.

The next point is that the Bunbury Water Board has been asked to set firm programmes for roofing its reservoirs. Surely it should be up to the people of Bunbury to decide whether they want that done.

Mr Tonkin: The health of the people is a State responsibility.

Mr MENSAROS: I know I implemented the policy of roofing reservoirs but I always questioned it very objectively and asked whether in the interests of the people it was really money well spent. I am not being cynical about this. There might be two cases of meningitis a year. It is not proven that it results from the reservoirs being unroofed.

Mr Tonkin: It is not just meningitis; it is the general standard of water purity. We have to chlorinate because they are not roofed and we get a lot of complaints about the taste and odour of water.

Mr MENSAROS: There may be different views on this but I had a question mark in my mind at the time.

Mr Tonkin: Why did you start roofing them?

Mr MENSAROS: Because a false public opinion is created in these matters. Nothing is easier than to stir up the public. Talking about safety is like talking about motherhood; one cannot argue. If one compared the millions of dollars spent on roofing with the benefit derived from it—and if I were a businessman I would be doing a cost benefit analysis—

Mr Tonkin: You would be back in the Middle Ages with cholera and typhoid.

Mr MENSAROS: The word "cost-benefit" did not exist in the Middle Ages. More beneficial things could have been done by spending the same

amount of money that is being allocated to roofing reservoirs.

Mr Parker: Are you saying we are spending millions of dollars of ratepayers' funds because of the public relations aspect?

Mr MENSAROS: I was saying that when it comes to safety everybody suddenly trembles and says that one cannot argue against it. We have not reached the stage where we can objectively, without a trace of hypocrisy, talk seriously about it—at least not publicly—and that is a pity. This proposed action rightly or wrongly is an additional expense for the Bunbury Water Board.

The next point made by the Minister was that the price of the water to be supplied to Harvey will be increased. In other words, a subsidy is being taken away from the board. If one looks at the conditions contained in the answer the Minister gave me, one sees that it gives him power to require the water board to take remedial action if the water it supplies is not of a satisfactory quality. I point out to the Minister—and this happened under our Government as well—that there are problems associated with water quality particularly in areas of low rainfall, and even the PWD is unable to supply the required quality. To say to a small authority that it must adhere to this condition overlooks the fact that the quality of its water is better than that provided by anyone else; it is because that area has underground water. To say that the council must take responsibility for water quality as the Minister directs is a sort of bully-boy tactic.

The Minister's answer to my question goes on to say that he will approve the rates that a water board proposes to charge in an ensuing year and the basis on which those rates are calculated. Again, that is bullying. If it were not good enough for the local people there would have been an uproar. The board has earned the respect and satisfaction of the local people and I do not think it needs any ministerial guidance in relation to charges.

The next point reveals that the Minister is given power to require a water board to provide sufficient storage and distribution facilities. That is another Big Brother tactic. The Government is saying, "You must do as we tell you". When we consider the replies to my questions it is clear that my proposition that the water boards will be taken over, either by ministerial discretion or by being squeezed out of business, is very real.

My second question to the Minister is whether he will exercise the discretion provided in this Bill to take over the boards, or whether he will squeeze them out. Will he give an undertaking

that nothing of the sort will happen and that they will be able to pursue their business as independent boards? These questions are more important for our country members than for us, and they are vitally important for the member for Bunbury. If these things happen in Bunbury I do not think he will be very popular, and neither will be the member for Mitchell. I am sure the member for Vasse will query the situation as well. Unless the Minister gives a clear undertaking that he does not intend to take them over after the unrest in connection with his own members disappears, and does not intend to squeeze them out of business, it is not enough that the absorption of these authorities should depend on the Minister alone; it should depend on Parliament.

My third point relates to the accountability of the large utility-to-be. We know the MWA as a Government instrumentality, like the SEC, is not accountable to Parliament in the sense that we do not appropriate money for their running. They do not appear in the Revenue Budget and in the Loan Budget only to the extent that they are getting Government loans—loans which are not acquired on the open market. Until now the country water undertakings had the benefit of their ongoing budget and capital budget being subject to the full scrutiny of Parliament in the Budget papers. Country members have been able to ask the Minister all sorts of questions about why he preferred this or that capital work, and why this district appeared to be benefiting more than another, and so on. This will be withdrawn. Members of Parliament will have no opportunity, particularly in view of the shorter speaking times, even in the Address-in-Reply debate, to query the water supply in a particular electorate.

Will the Minister consider as we did—but we were defeated before implementing it; my colleague the then Minister for Fuel and Energy wanted to bring in such a proposal—bringing the SEC under parliamentary scrutiny—and I would have followed with the MWA. Not only the Public Accounts Committee, but the whole of the Parliament, should be able to scrutinise this public utility.

Mr I. F. Taylor: The State Energy Commission, when the Public Accounts Committee failed to look at it when you were in Government, virtually refused to take it any further. It is interesting, now that we are in Government, when we contacted the State Energy Commission, the current Minister and the previous Minister made it clear that we had absolute access to anything we wanted in the SEC.

Mr MENSAROS: I cannot accept that the member for Kalgoorlie is right because the State

Energy Commission would not have the right to refuse. Supposing the member for Kalgoorlie were right, for the sake of argument; that has nothing to do with my assertion. In fact if he says what he says as a complaint, then he supports my argument, and that is that they are utilities, and they are large consumers of money not subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

We talk about the State Budget with a total of something over \$2 000 million. The two utilities, the SEC and the new WAWA, will have a quarter of that combined or even more. These two authorities will consume an enormous amount of money. It is not the taxpayers but the consumers who pay, despite the fact that almost every taxpayer should be a consumer.

In relation to accountability, we were thinking of making these utilities accountable to Parliament. I think the Government, which prides itself on being an open Government, should consider taking some steps towards this end.

My third question is whether the Minister would consider some sort of undertaking—I do not want a firm undertaking because that would be quite impracticable—about taking steps to make these utilities accountable.

My final general remark is directed towards the decline in the Public Works Department as we have known it. That is referred to in the Minister's second reading speech as a consequence of this Bill and of the merger. To my mind it is a pity that this department will disintegrate and will virtually cease to exist. I maintain that there should be this arm of Government—I am against day labour and doing the necessary work by a public body—or department to advise the Government. The Government of the day needs objective advice from professional people and the Public Works Department has always been a good department, not only from the point of view of buildings, water supplies, and ancillary services but also from the engineering point of view, and that will ease off.

The new Marine and Harbours Department will take over the harbour and rivers branch. I do not think that is right, because its work does not fall under Marine and Harbours Department works only, agencies like the Marine and Harbours Department should be able to hire expertise from a source in the Government.

Take a mine in the Pilbara. It does not want to generate its own electricity; it wants to get it from somewhere else. Various things come under consideration. They are not experts in electricity supply; they want to do their own work and leave

the rest to subcontractors who understand various other exercises and can supply the services.

It is a great pity that the Public Works Department is to be dismembered and will be a building department only. The department had an enormous expertise and was able to give advice. All the development which is now pooh-pooed by the Government because it was conducted under a non-Labor Government was originally the responsibility of that department. I think from the bottom of their hearts they agree with what I say, because without these resources we would be nowhere. These developments took place on the advice of various Directors of Engineering—Dumas, Parker, Munroe, right up to the present occupants. Of course, the Department of Industrial Development and the resources development department have nowadays their own people. The men I mention played an enormous part in development and engineering feats, starting with C. Y. O'Connor.

If I may I want to pay tribute to Bob Hillman, the present director of engineering, who was involved in this merger. There is no doubt that his objectivity; his knowledge of human beings, individually and collectively; his capacity to brief and advise in the shortest possible time, but so the layman could understand; and his integrity and impartiality are virtually without equal. I do not think I exaggerate, having had nine years in Government and having had much to do with many public servants whom I respect, if I were to say that he possibly would be the top public servant of the State of Western Australia.

I must turn now to the various individual provisions of the Bill. I can understand the Minister's contention, and I support him when he argues that we are only preparing for a changeover in the water authority for Western Australia. The earlier appointments to the board should be an apprenticeship for their jobs. If I may digress for a moment, that means that the Minister wants to change the whole board. That would not allow continuity, and that would not be right.

This would be my next question to him. I hope he makes some notes and answers these questions. Is it really his intention to change the boards of so many statutory authorities and to do away with the expertise of all these people? Is it the intention to employ union men instead? I am not against this, but if one has a metropolitan water authority and the Minister were able to appoint anyone, he would look for a civil engineer who was involved in those things as well as a businessman, someone with past experience. I pay tribute to Dr Zink. He is a tremendous businessman, he has tremendous foresight, and he

really knows what it is all about. He has an extraordinarily quick ability to absorb things and to be the master of things which he learns in a very short time.

This is only by the way. I suppose the Labor Government's policies will change everything and create an elite club for the Trades Hall or one wing of the Labor Party. It is a pity, but I suppose we are used to it.

The Minister said that it is his endeavour to make a framework and point the way, and then the authority, amalgamated as it will be, should find out its needs. It should work those out both for the metropolitan area and for the country areas, and then slowly evolve the legislation.

Then I ask why it was necessary to bring in this large Bill. I spent a tremendous amount of time comparing this Bill with the Metropolitan Water Authority Act No. 36, 1982. Apart from those provisions which I could have put in about six pages at the most, there was very little difference. I am not being cynical, despite the response of the Minister during the previous debate, but the clauses have been shuffled like cards. Almost every clause of the Bill in the index is identical to a section in the Act. What used to be section 26 in the Act becomes clause 63 in the Bill. They are almost identical, but they do not follow the same sequence; they are shuffled like cards.

I am not saying this does not stand up. The Act stood up, and they both stand up in the same way. One only has to put the one against the other and they are almost verbatim the same.

Based on the second reading speech of the Minister, which was not prepared by the Crown Law Department, this repetitious, laughable Bill is entirely superfluous. The Minister says he wants the framework, and I agree with him. The merged authority should find out the needs and give advice. Until then the existing Acts should be used as they are.

If the Bill which we are now debating becomes operative, or if part of it becomes operative, there will be the same provisions with two or three different points here and there. The Act should be repealed entirely, although one section has been taken from a subsequent Act—I think it is 101 of 1982. There are one or two sections dealing with the responsibility of the Authority. The rest is the Act which I introduced. I could only introduce it piecemeal because I could not get it in toto. If these two pieces of legislation operate at the same time there will be the greatest chaos imaginable.

This Bill is entirely superfluous; there should have been six pages setting out the differences between one and the other. Later, when the faults

and errors become apparent, they could be changed. That is not really a criticism; it is simply giving the facts.

There was a similar situation when I was in charge of the SEC and I reorganised it. We only put the framework legislation in and the reorganised utility worked out the necessary rules and regulations. We introduced the main body of legislation much later—I think it was in 1978 or 1979. Until then we went on with the old legislation.

It would be much better to have a single Act instead of all the amendments, even if it must wait for a while. After all, there is no great difference between the philosophies of the two sides of Parliament from the point of view of the joint authority. The difference would not be so great that one could not pass the legislation, even with the risk of a change in the Government, because it would be virtually the same legislation. If the Government changed, those principles which are spelt out in the legislation regarding staff and some other things could easily be changed. The body of the legislation would be really the same.

Let us look at some of the provisions which I shall criticise or which I would change were I in the position to do so. I oppose the principle that the employees of the new authority should remain public servants. If we want to have an efficient authority, it should be set up in the same way as the Main Roads Department or Westrail, in which the employees are not public servants. Why do we have a utility which is not responsible to the Parliament—a Government instrumentality—but which retains its employees as public servants? Efficiency would be greater and better results would be achieved if the employees of the authority were not public servants. They could retain their superannuation entitlements; indeed, they could establish their own fund. However, the employees of the authority should remain outside the Public Service.

There is no secret that I wanted to do this with the Metropolitan Water Authority when I was Minister, but I could not do that, because the Public Service Commissioner was stronger than I.

Mr Parker: That is an interesting commentary on Government, isn't it?

Mr MENSAROS: Efficiency would be improved if what I am suggesting occurred. It would also be in line with "open Government" although we do not hear such sentiments expressed very often now. We used to hear them frequently when the Government was in Opposition, but they seem to have fallen by the wayside now.

Mr Tonkin: It has been achieved.

Mr MENSAROS: It is even better if it has been achieved. However, if that is the case, why does not the Minister ask the employees of the new water authority whether they would like a nice little niche of their own, divorced from the Public Service?

Mr Parker: There is a problem with having it outside the Public Service. For example, take the SEC. You cannot redeploy people from the SEC in other areas if they are not needed any longer; that can't be done because these people are not public servants.

Mr MENSAROS: That is no problem at all, because the Government of the day can, if necessary, change the rules. If the Government wants to move employees from one area to another, it can legislate to enable it to do so. However, the authority would be more efficient if its employees were not public servants. I do not think it is businesslike for them to remain as public servants. I have made that comment for the record; it is my view, and I do not think my colleagues disagree with me.

I turn now to the composition of the board. It is an open question and I do not criticise the fact that the board will be increased from seven to nine members, which does not represent a great increase in numbers.

The new authority, particularly in its amalgamated form, will be very large and it could be argued that more co-ordinators will be required. After all, the boards of large companies frequently have seven or nine members.

Three of the seven members of the present board are executive members, but the proposed new board would have only one executive member out of nine members. That sort of composition of the board is open to question.

I do not say that the present composition of the board is better than what is proposed in the Bill; it is a matter of one's point of view. It appears to me that the trend is for boards of large, private, successful companies to have more rather than fewer executive members. However, I do not say whether that is a good or bad trend; I simply state the facts.

The boards of CRA, Western Mining Corporation Ltd., Broken Hill Proprietary Co. Ltd., and the like seem to appoint more and more executive members. Oddly enough, with the exception of CSR, the chairman is an executive man with these large companies.

We tried this with the SEC and we had the opposite situation in the Metropolitan Water Authority. I do not comment as to which is the best of

the two situations but perhaps an independent chairman is the most suitable composition.

I do not necessarily criticise the changes proposed in the Bill; I simply comment on them. Indeed, I welcome the provision that one member of the board should be an employee. That is infinitely superior to what I expected, which was that one member should be a union representative. Under the provisions in the Bill the employee member of the board can be anyone; he does not have to be a union member—if such an animal exists—but can be anyone from the joint water authority no doubt duly elected by some sort of process which will be worked out.

I do not oppose the six discretionary appointments either, provided they are not made on a purely party-political basis. I wonder what the Minister's response will be to that. If the Minister knows these appointees will be party-political people, I hope he has the courage to say so in the Parliament. I hope he will say "Yes, I am going to appoint people who will be followers of the Labor Party and that will be the first ingredient required of a member of the board of the Metropolitan Water Authority".

It is sensible for the Minister to use his discretion in this respect and to appoint, say, a good civil engineer—not a party man—a business man who is familiar with business activities, and a financier who knows about financial matters. The Minister should definitely appoint one or two people who are involved in country interests, because, as I said in my general comments, the danger is that country interests will be in the minority from the point of view of the staff and consumers—indeed, from all points of view—and consequently at least one or two people who specifically represent country interests should be on the board.

It will be very difficult to choose the members who should represent country interests. It is not enough to say that they should come from the Primary Industry Association of WA (Inc.) or the Pastoralists & Graziers Association of WA (Inc.). Rather we should appoint people who are known to have an interest in country matters and who are respected for that. Plenty of people fall into this category.

I welcome the establishment of regional advisory committees. Such committees have always served well the cause of the people they represent and the Minister of the day. When we had to restrict groundwater usage, we had such non-statutory advisory bodies. On occasions we had to restrict the use of groundwater because it was inadequate to meet demands. This had to be done

in the most equitable way. If the Minister said, "This is the most equitable way" he was criticised, regardless of how fair he tried to be. However, if local people were employed to advise the Minister and they said to the people, "You have to do it this way, otherwise nobody will have enough water" people accepted it. I do not think the Minister rejected a single recommendation made by one of these local, non-statutory advisory committees. That, in itself, is proof that the system worked well. Therefore, I am very happy with that situation and I commend the Minister on that aspect of the Bill.

Clause 9 of the Bill compares with section 11 of the Metropolitan Water Authority Act, in respect of the powers of the Minister. I do not know why the powers of the Minister are increased in the Bill, and perhaps the Minister can explain it. Clause 9(e) contains greater additional powers than exist in section 11 of the Act which deals with the Minister's authority. I do not know the reason for that, and hopefully the Minister will explain why these additional powers are required. He may or may not know the necessity for them.

Another aspect which has much more importance than the matter to which I have just referred relates to clause 19 in respect of indemnity or exemption from personal liability. You, Sir, would know that if one wants to employ a good officer in a Government instrumentality or department, one has to give that officer indemnity against liability. One has to establish that the officer cannot be sued when doing his duty. If that were not the case, nobody would take these jobs.

I cannot recall a Statute of this Parliament, however, which extends that indemnity to the Minister. According to our system of Government the Minister is responsible to the Parliament and it is the Minister who is sued. My friend, the Minister for Works, would agree that frequently in that position one is sued every month. If something goes wrong with a building the Minister is sued. He does not complain if he loses the case, because he is reimbursed—he does not have to make the payment from his own pocket. But his ministerial responsibility is infinite. He is the Minister; he is the person who can be legally sued or who sues on behalf of the Government.

I stand to be corrected here, but I cannot recall a Statute in which the Minister is indemnified. This is the first time I have experienced it and I would like the Minister to explain why that has been done. It is contrary to our system of democratic Government. I do not know whether that provision was inserted at the suggestion of the draftsman or at the Minister's request.

A few minutes ago the Minister said a little carelessly that the quality of drafting depends on the quality of instructions. I do not disagree with the Minister, but that means he must have instructed the Crown Law Department that he wanted a Bill which indemnified him of his responsibilities. That is the first time that has been done in Western Australia. If it is not the first time, I am sure when he replies the Minister, will tell me so and set out the reasons that provision has been included.

A further query relates to clause 12 (2) which refers to appointing parliamentarians to the board or any of the regional committees of the new authority. That is why I asked the Minister whether he intended to appoint a parliamentarian to the board. In his reply, the Minister said he had not considered doing so, but he might consider it in respect of a regional committee. However, the Minister did not reply to the effect that such a provision existed in the Bill and, once again, that provision may have slipped in without his instruction.

Mr Tonkin: It certainly was not my instruction that it be included, but, when I saw it, I thought it should be left there, because it gives greater flexibility especially in relation to regional committees.

Mr MENSAROS: However, like any legislation, this Bill expresses the opinion of the Government of the day and, presumably, the majority of the community. If, in the future, somebody looks at this legislation, he will say, "At that time in their system they found it necessary to appoint a member of Parliament to do this". We all know that if we appoint a member, in some cases, even if he does not receive remuneration, he might be in conflict with the constitutional provisions. A member cannot be in contract with the Crown or the State, therefore, this provision is necessary to avoid such conflict. It is wrong to appoint a parliamentarian to this authority.

Mr Tonkin: A Minister or a member?

Mr MENSAROS: A member. I used the word "parliamentarian" earlier. The Minister will recall when the Murdoch University Bill was introduced. At that time there was a provision that both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition should appoint a member to the senate, and the member for Cockburn and myself were appointed to the university senate, and we enjoyed it. The member for Cockburn and I have respect for each other and are friends. Later that provision was repealed because it was found to be unnecessary.

I am inclined to agree that the legis-

lators should be remote from Government instrumentalities. We have a system whereby administration is with the Legislature and where Executive come from the Legislature. Be that as it may, we have heard from the Minister that he is not attempting to appoint members of Parliament to the board or to the committees but he might consider appointing them to the regional advisory boards.

The other interesting thing—and I query whether it was an instruction or a coincidence—is that in clause 20 the board members are included in the secrecy provisions. I do not criticise the secrecy provision; indeed, it was contained in the other Act, but it only applied to the executive, the employed people, and not to the board members. Surely, if the Minister has a discretion to recommend to the Governor who should be a board member he should have sufficient confidence in the people whom he appoints and should not embody a draconian provision in the Act that if they divulge any secrets they are punishable with X, Y, and Z. That is an affront to the type of people who could be considered to be members of the board unless—again I am not being cynical—he foresees that the appointments will be made by Trades Hall and amongst the appointees will be people who have similar inclinations as we have experienced with many other people who were union bosses. If that is not the case, it really is an affront to board members to keep them under a penal provision—thou shalt not divulge secrets.

Such a provision did not appear in the SEC or in the Metropolitan Water Authority and, of course, the Public Works Department is a department, anyhow, under which different conditions prevail.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have been fairly tolerant of the member for Floreat, but debating clauses of a Bill in the second reading is clearly disorderly. A number of rules apply to this matter. These matters can be debated in Committee. It has been established that when debating a Bill in a second reading debate one sticks to the principles and does not get into a debate on the various clauses of the Bill.

Mr MENSAROS: Mr Speaker, I thank you for your advice. I would be the last person in this Chamber to argue with your ruling, but I simply explain my position. I will go on as I did previously without mentioning clauses because I am talking about very important principles in the Bill. The reason I mentioned the clauses was simply to co-operate with the Minister so he will be able to more clearly follow what I am talking about. Mr Speaker, your ruling about my not mentioning

clauses will create more difficulty for us to follow each other. I know that ruling very well. As a Minister I removed clause numbers from second reading speeches and that has made it very difficult for the Opposition to study a Bill.

However, the regulation-making power, which is a very important provision in any Act of Parliament, appears again to be fairly unique in this legislation. I have seen many regulation-making provisions in Bills but they usually have enumeration in subparagraphs or subsections regarding what regulations can be made. In this Bill it simply is a general provision. It provides that regulations may be made under this Act in respect of all matters that are required, permitted, necessary or convenient to be prescribed. One cannot find anything wider than this. Again, without having particular research staff, I was unable to recall any other piece of legislation which had these wide regulatory powers and I hope the Minister will give some explanation for this.

The last clauses of the Bill, which were taken from the first two sections of the Metropolitan Water Authority Act, mention the liability of the new WA water authority, and that liability is roughly structured in the same way as is the liability of the SEC and the MWA. Apparently this is something which the Government likes. I can remember vividly that members opposite criticised it in both the case of the SEC and the MWA on the grounds that in the case of an entry the authority is fully liable and it has to compensate, replace, or something or other; but if, on the other hand, it is any other action it is only liable if it is proven that it was negligent. This, of course, is good for the utility, but it is not as good for the general public. If the Minister cares to respond in a detailed way—I gave my time to work out the questions in connection with this legislation—he might say why he likes this public liability provision.

Other questions I would term as omissions as they were included in the Metropolitan Water Authority Act No. 36 of 1982. The Minister can correct me on this but, for instance, who will administer this Bill when it becomes an Act? There is no provision like that in section 10 of the Metropolitan Water Authority Act. In that Act there is a clear provision that responsibility for the administration of the Act is vested in the Minister. It then goes on "subject to such and such". I cannot see any provision in this Bill which goes to that extent. Surely there should be such a provision. Every Act should be administered by a responsible Minister.

An omission was picked up the other day. I asked a question of the Minister for Water Re-

sources in his capacity as Minister for Parliamentary and Electoral Reform, and being responsible for the Electoral Office. He said that he was not responsible for the daylight saving question put to the electorate at the referendum. It transpired after my question to the Premier that, yes, he was responsible. In the *Government Gazette* list the Referendums Act was not included. No Minister was said to be responsible for it. The question was postponed for a day until it was further considered and the reply was that, yes, the Minister for Parliamentary and Electoral Reform would be in charge of it because he is in charge of the Electoral Office and consequently he must be in charge of the questions imposed under that Act. I was correct; he was responsible for that question. Therefore, I query why I cannot find a provision which says that a Minister will be responsible for this Act.

A very genuine question on which I want a response is: Why is it that the Bill always talks about the duties, functions etc., of the authority, whereas the Metropolitan Water Authority Act speaks of the board? There is no doubt that the board is responsible for the function and duties of the authority. So I cannot understand the sudden change in the Crown Law draftsman's mind. The previous Act, which has only been in force for three years and has not really been tested properly, talks about the board of the authority whereas this Bill talks about the authority all the time. This is mentioned in many clauses which I cannot cite because of the Speaker's ruling, which I respect very much. Because I cannot cite these clauses it will make the Minister's job in responding a little more difficult. I would greatly appreciate the Minister commenting on this question because it genuinely interests me.

I will sum up my remarks. The amalgamation should be done for efficiency; it should be done for people paying lower rates and charges in real terms, and not for any other flowery expressed reasons. That is what the customer wants and that is what we should do.

The country interest should be preserved. The subsidy of the country should be preserved, and this is one of the most important questions to which I want the Minister to respond. Will it be preserved? Can he give the undertaking that the country will enjoy the same subsidies as it has during the past few years?

I seek the Minister's response as to whether he will leave the three smaller water boards in peace, or will he through the discretionary action available to him and which is incorporated in the Bill, absorb them; or will he squeeze them to sub-

mission virtually so that they would have to come, cap in hand, asking for an amalgamation?

I would be interested in the Minister's comments on my proposition of making this public utility, the second largest in the State, accountable to Parliament. That, of course, would involve the Government's policy in relation to the largest utility and perhaps the others. I want to hear the Minister's view in regard to whether he wants to shed the present board members together with their experience and contribution and appoint a new board according to the needs of the utility and the consumers, or will it be an elite club of the ALP or the TLC?

A member interjected.

Mr MENSAROS: On past experience, this is what we can expect.

Mr Laurance: Jobs for the boys!

Mr I. F. Taylor: Excellent point, though.

Mr MENSAROS: It might be an excellent point. I want to hear his reply and if it is so, the Minister should have the courage to say so instead of saying one thing and doing the opposite.

Why has the ministerial indemnity been introduced and the ministerial responsibility wiped? Perhaps the Minister has received advice that there are other cases which I was not able to find because of a shortage of help.

Why does the Minister have more powers than he has under the Metropolitan Water Authority Act? With regard to parliamentary appointments, I think we dealt with that to some extent during question time today. My last point was in regard to the regulation-making powers. I do not apologise for expressing the Opposition's view at some length because I think it was necessary. I think every point was important, and I hope I have not repeated myself. The Opposition has a lot of criticism of the Bill, but basically we are not opposed to it.

Declaration as Urgent.

MR TONKIN (Morley-Swan—Leader of the House) [9.00 p.m.]: In accordance with agreement with the Opposition through its deputy leader, I move—

That the Bill be considered an urgent Bill.

Motion put and passed.

MR TONKIN (Morley-Swan—Leader of the House) [9.01 p.m.]: I move—

That following the completion of the speech of the first Member responding to the introduction of the "Water Authority Bill" a total of not more than four hours shall be

spent in considering the remaining stages up to and including the putting of the question for the third reading of the Bill.

In moving that motion, I indicate that in discussion with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition he suggested a reasonable time would be three hours. I have added one hour to that to make it four hours and I think that indicates that the Government is trying to co-operate with the Opposition in this matter.

The idea of this motion is not so much a wish to rush this Bill through, but a desire to try out the sessional order passed through this House last week so that if, at the end of the session, we find there are problems, we will be able to talk and improve matters. I have moved this motion in that spirit and after consultation with the Opposition.

MR THOMPSON (Kalamunda) [9.02 p.m.]: This is a case where, in my view, there is absolutely no need for the procedural motion to be used. No way in the world will there be a requirement for four hours of debate on this Bill, and I feel this will not be a test of the order at all. I think a fair test would be—

Mr Tonkin: I will move an amendment and make it 30 minutes.

MR THOMPSON: We are not inviting the Leader of the House to reduce the time, but it is a futile exercise using this debate as a test to determine whether the procedural motion will be effective.

The other point I make is: Can the Opposition always be assured that it will get a third more time on those occasions when it is necessary or more appropriate for this sessional order to be moved?

Motion put and passed.

Debate Resumed

MR BRADSHAW (Murray-Wellington) [9.03 p.m.]: I support the Bill, but have a couple of reservations. The Bill will lead to better results in respect of the water supply in Western Australia. In fact, it will improve the efficiency of the water supply, remove some duplications, and, with a bit of luck, help to reduce taxes for the public.

Matters which are of concern to me and the people in my electorate are those which concern irrigation, sewerage, and drainage. As members may be aware, irrigation charges over the last five years have increased at an average of 22 per cent. Prior to that, they averaged around 18 per cent, but the increase will probably continue at a huge rate. One could imagine that in another 10 years the irrigation rates being paid by farmers will be

exorbitant. Last year, sewerage rates increased by a mammoth 20 per cent and these increases cannot continue.

In his second reading speech, the Minister said that consideration was being given to absorbing the Bunbury, Busselton, and Harvey Water Boards into the Metropolitan Water Authority. These boards are providing a good service to the community and it would be better if they continued to operate independently. I am sure that the furore which took place after the Minister announced the Government's intention to take over the Bunbury, Busselton, and Harvey Water Boards had something to do with the Minister's deciding not to continue with that proposal. I am sure also that the fact that it involved a marginal seat led to the Minister's having a change of heart and altering his attitude towards these boards.

I am sure, as has already been mentioned, that it is not necessary to cover the reservoirs in the Bunbury, Busselton, and Harvey areas. I know that uncovered reservoirs exist all over the State and that farmers have uncovered water tanks. In this day and age, with chlorination there is little risk of infection being spread through the water.

As far as the Harvey Weir is concerned, dead sheep, dead cows, and baits left by marroners are often found in the water.

Mr Hodge: They add to the flavour!

Several members interjected.

Mr BRADSHAW: The water from the Harvey Weir is of top quality. There is little chance of disaster because of the chlorination programme.

The Minister did have a firm commitment to take over the Bunbury and Busselton Water Boards and there was little he could do when he had a change of heart and decided not to take over the independent boards. It is a little different in the case of the Harvey Water Board and he has set a path which will lead that water board into submission.

The Bunbury and Busselton Water Boards have their own water bores, but the Harvey Water Board purchases its water from the Public Works Department. When the Burke Government took office, the price of water to the Harvey Water Board was 3c per kilolitre, but in July this year it will increase from 6c per kilolitre to 9c per kilolitre with further increases in the near future. It appears to me that it will not be long before the Harvey Water Board will be priced out of its independence.

Irrigation rates must be contained, and if this Bill achieves its aim, there will be many happy

farmers. A 22 per cent increase is undesirable and something should be done about it.

The reply I received from the Minister when I wrote to him last year asking him to speak to people in my electorate depressed me. The letter reads as follows—

I refer to your letter dated November 14, wherein you requested I attend a public meeting with farmers in your Electorate to discuss the future pricing on irrigation charges.

He went on to say that because an inquiry was proceeding, he would like to leave the matter for the time being. It appears strange to me that he will be discussing similar matters in the near future with the people in the Mitchell electorate, but he does not have the time to speak to people in my electorate. The other day he raised the point that I had sought to sit in on a deputation to him by the Harvey PIA concerning water resources and irrigation charges. These matters are of concern to farmers in my electorate especially when they receive a 22 per cent increase in their rates each year. I must admit that there were a couple of years when there were no increases, but since then the farmers have had increases of 40 per cent, and so on, which have averaged out to around 20 per cent.

Another matter which impressed me was a Press release by the Minister on 17 May 1983.

Mr Tonkin: Did it impress you or didn't it impress you?

Mr BRADSHAW: It did not impress me—it impressed me in a way, but not in a way I liked. The article in the *South Western Times* was headed "Limited groundwater buyers are warned", and it referred to the ground water supplies between Australind and Mandurah. It reads as follows—

He was also bringing the matter to the attention of the Mandurah, Waroona and Harvey Shire Councils to assist them in future town planning policies. He said he had been having discussions with Mandurah MLA, John Reid, about the need for all authorities and interested parties to be aware of groundwater limitations in the area.

The fact is that 90 per cent of that area is in my electorate and again the Minister did not have the decency to contact me, but I guess he has to worry more about the marginal seats than about being a fair Minister for the whole of Western Australia.

Mr Davies: That is not true and is not kind.

Mr BRADSHAW: He is the Minister who was telling us last year how fair he is and how he does not carry on like members of the previous Government. I cannot speak for the previous Government, but I can speak about what I have seen of the present Minister for Water Resources. Fortunately, I have a better relationship with other Ministers who are a fair group.

Mr D. L. Smith: Who is fixing up the Australind water supply?

Mr BRADSHAW: It was the result of pressure from residents and me.

In his second reading speech, the Minister said—

The water authority of Western Australia, like the Metropolitan Water Authority, will be a statutory authority and like that body will have its own borrowing powers. However it will not be possible in the foreseeable future for the operations of the various water services serving the country areas to become self-supporting, and so unlike the Metropolitan Water Authority the new authority will require financial support from Consolidated Revenue.

This does tend to worry me and I ask the Minister whether he will guarantee funding at the present level for the country areas or whether the emphasis on funding will shift to the metropolitan area? Will the metropolitan area be the main source of revenue?

The idea of the merger is that it will stop the duplication and will control prices. Further on in his second reading speech, the Minister said—

Despite this the financial form of the new authority will have much in common with that of the existing Metropolitan Water Authority. For this reason the financial provisions in part III of the Bill have drawn extensively on the provisions of the existing Metropolitan Water Authority Act.

Another point which worries me is that these authorities are under pressure from the Minister and the Government to contain their prices, and in the long term I can see the country areas which run at a loss being subsidised from the Consolidated Revenue Fund. The first thing the authorities will do is ascertain where they can cut costs, and I am sure it will be in the country areas. In the long term, this Bill could lead to services in the country areas being run down.

Mr D. L. Smith: Under the policy of your previous administration, you developed a user-must-pay philosophy and it has been the cause of great increases to people in the country areas.

Mr BRADSHAW: To be honest, I am not sure of that. I am not disputing it; I do not know. It has been a user-pay policy in the metropolitan area but it has still been substantially subsidised in the country. I would hate to see that changed, and the member for Mitchell should also be worried about this as he represents a country electorate. In principle I agree with the Bill but I register my concern at the long-term effect on country areas and I oppose the provision which gives the authority the ability to take over the Harvey, Busselton and Bunbury Water Boards. I believe a separate Bill on this matter should come before the Parliament and be debated at a future date.

In general I support the Bill.

MR LAURANCE (Gascoyne) [9.16 p.m.]: I make some comment on the way this Bill has been declared an urgent Bill. It is certainly a major piece of legislation and it is obvious from the lead Speaker's comments from the Opposition that the Opposition will support the measure. Because it is a major Bill a number of points will be discussed and this is quite proper. The people would want to see Government and Opposition members fully debating this matter because of its importance for the good management of Government instrumentalities. However, it is not an urgent measure. If there had been any indication to the Government that it would be battled out over lengthy debate I could see some reason for declaring it an urgent Bill and trying to reduce the time of debate.

If it is not urgent and the Government has declared it to be urgent one must ask why this action has been taken. What is the real motive? It is a sprat to catch a mackerel. At some future stage when the Government intends to suppress the Opposition in its rightful task of adequately holding up, delaying or fully perusing legislation, it will say that the Opposition cannot have the time it seeks and only a certain amount of time will be made available. The Government will refer to the fact that it gave the Opposition four hours to debate a major Bill and the Opposition did not use that time. The Government is inviting the Opposition to debate this Bill for four hours, whether or not it requires that time. The Government is doing so purely to make a point and it has some ulterior motive. The Government will adopt this course on a couple of non-controversial measures and at some future stage will lower the boom.

I place on record that the Opposition knows what the Government's game is. I think the Government is abusing the Parliament. It is particularly hypocritical for the Minister handling this Bill to employ this tactic as he is also Leader

of the House who moved the motion to declare this Bill urgent. Above all others he would criticise this action uphill and down dale. I have heard him on many occasions talk about Parliament being a rubber stamp for the executive. He is himself becoming a rubber stamp. He has complained bitterly about this in the past and he is the person now implementing the procedure in Parliament.

It should be remembered that the Leader of the House is trying to cut down the debating time for the Opposition in this Parliament. We are tonight seeing an iron fist covered with a velvet glove. Tonight we have the velvet glove approach but in the future we shall see the iron fist. The Leader of the House should be aware that Opposition members will be ready and will fight when the iron fist is presented. The declaration of this Bill as an urgent Bill is not required because the Opposition is supporting it.

I raise a further point in relation to the timing of the debate on this Bill: Will the Bill be debated from 9.00 p.m. until 1 a.m. Wednesday? If the Bill is debated only until 11.00 p.m., will the debate be adjourned and a further two hours' debate allowed at a later stage? Is that the Government's intention? I take it we shall debate the Bill for only two hours this evening.

The implementation of the provisions of this Bill will show the public of Western Australia whether the Government is a better manager than the Opposition. Obviously the importance of the Bill is to prove that the operations of both the Metropolitan Water Authority and country water authorities can be improved and run in a more efficient manner if combined in this way. The Government may claim this action is being taken for reasons of efficiency. The Opposition and the public of Western Australia will be waiting to see that point proved. I believe the Government will be found wanting. Once again it will be proved that if this amalgamation occurred under the Liberal-Country Party coalition much greater efficiency would be achieved. In fact, when in Government we were moving towards the amalgamation which had been set in train. The Government and the Minister took that on board as soon as they took over the reins and they have had good people carrying out the task.

Mr Burkett: He is a man of great integrity.

Mr LAURANCE: That is an interjection that cannot be proved and I suggest the member does not try to pursue it.

Under the chairmanship of Mr Hillman the working party has done a good job and Mr

Hillman has already been praised in this place by the Minister and the Opposition spokesman.

Mr Tonkin: What had the previous Government done in regard to this matter?

Mr LAURANCE: It has been indicated that a great deal had been done in order to get the Metropolitan Water Authority to the point where it could take on this amalgamation. I think the Minister acknowledges that, because there was a tremendous cry from the then Opposition that a great deal needed to be done. The Government was highly critical of this situation while in Opposition.

Mr Tonkin: I personally was not but some members of the then Opposition were.

Mr LAURANCE: A great deal was achieved by the former Minister and that paved the way for the next step which was amalgamation. We had clearly signalled our intention in that regard. The Government has pursued that objective and the result is the legislation before the Parliament. The Opposition was pursuing that policy to cut out duplication and to provide a better service at a lesser cost. The present Government may well be pursuing the same objectives and, for the sake of this State, I hope it is. However, if it creates a larger operation which is less efficient it will reflect badly on the Government.

The Government has an opportunity to prove that it is a better economic manager than the previous Government, and I think it will be found wanting. I do not believe the Government is a better manager for the reason that it will buckle under to the unions. It will end up with more staff rather than less as should occur when amalgamating a service and streamlining an operation. That should be one of the savings one could expect to achieve. The Opposition will keep close tabs on this situation.

I think the Government will use more day labour rather than less and it has been conclusively proved that day labour is a less efficient way of providing a service or running a Government utility. Therefore, the authority will be more expensive to run and the people of Western Australia will pay the cost. The proof of the pudding will be in the eating and we shall see whether this new arrangement will provide efficiencies which will benefit the people. If it fails, it will be an indictment of this Government, whose economic management is well and truly on the line.

Mr D. L. Smith interjected.

Mr LAURANCE: When I am given an extension microphone, I will answer the member's interjection.

The SPEAKER: The microphone for the member for Mitchell is not turned on.

Mr LAURANCE: I believe the interjections are too loud and complaints have been made about that previously.

Several members interjected.

Mr LAURANCE: I will use the microphone in that way and I remind the member that the Speaker has clearly indicated today that interjections—

The SPEAKER: The member can carry on if he wants to but he is not impressing me.

Mr LAURANCE: If the member for Mitchell wants to interject on me I will use the microphone in this way but it would be better if the Government gave me a longer lead on the microphone.

Mr Hodge: You could always pull your head in.

Several members interjected.

Mr LAURANCE: The member for Mitchell's head is well and truly pulled in; that is the problem. We can usually only hear him and we cannot see him. When the member uses that tactic I think he should be reminded that you, Mr Speaker, said earlier that interjections are to be entered in the record only if they are answered by the speaker. In that case he would make no interjections.

Mr Bateman: That is not what he said at all.

Mr LAURANCE: That is what the Speaker was alluding to.

The SPEAKER: I suggest that the member for Gascoyne read the statement I made earlier.

Several members interjected.

Mr Tonkin: It is speakers like this who create the need for time-management motions.

Mr LAURANCE: Not at all; the Minister for Water Resources should tell his member to pull his head in.

A Government member: Interjections are unseemly and unparliamentary.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure the member knows all about that. I suggest we get back to the Bill.

Mr LAURANCE: I thank you, Mr Speaker, for your indulgence. I have now finished on the subject of management and efficiency. It will be a matter for public record not too long after the Government takes over its new responsibilities as to the effectiveness of its leadership and management and whether it produces better results for the people of Western Australia. I have grave doubts as to whether the Government can provide the economic management required by this State.

I refer now to the points raised by the members for Floreat and Murray-Wellington relating to country undertakings. Water supplies in this very large, dry State represent a particularly difficult problem for the Government. In recent years country water supplies have run at a deficit of some \$30 million. That is a matter of great concern. It is a cost which the State has borne in order to provide a service to country areas of Western Australia. If these undertakings are merged we want to know what will happen to country people. Many members on this side of the House, and I am sure many on the Government side, who represent country areas will want to know whether the country people will be protected. It is important for the good management of this State and for its development that some assistance is given particularly in the more remote regions. We can still identify whether assistance will be given to country areas but we shall also be closely watching the level of assistance forthcoming.

That \$30 million represents the direct cost of providing a decentralised service in this State. In the provision of water, as in the provision of other essential services, particularly the provision of power, the previous Government established a system of standardised tariffs or equalised charges across the State. Often Governments of all political colours are accused of paying lip-service to decentralisation, but when one considers the provision of equalised charges across this vast State, one realises a great deal has been done in the name of decentralisation, and a high cost has been borne by the State.

It is easy to say that some things are more expensive in the remote part of the State, but the basic needs such as State Housing Commission rentals, the supply of power, and the supply of water, have been equalised across the State. That is not easy to do, because the cost of providing those services varies greatly between different areas in the State. Nevertheless, we have come to accept equalised charges from one end of the State to the other, at considerable cost.

If the Government is to break away from the precedent that has been set, we want to identify that breaking away and inform the public about it. We are concerned that the established arrangement will be pulled back from by the Government. If that is the case, we want to know about it. We want to identify clearly what the Government has in mind, and what it will do to the country people as a result of any departure from the policy.

Mr I. F. Taylor: What causes you that concern?

Mr LAURANCE: It is right to express a concern. We are talking about a major change to the operations of these undertakings, particularly the country water undertakings.

Mr I. F. Taylor: Nothing was said by the Minister which could justifiably cause you such concern.

Mr LAURANCE: Three members on this side of the House have spoken this evening, and each has expressed that concern in a different way. That should be enough to convince the member that it is a concern felt by members on this side of the House.

Mr I. F. Taylor: Country people have an adequate voice in the Government. They have a say.

Mr LAURANCE: The member would not like me to start criticising the adequacy or otherwise of country members on his side of the Chamber.

Mr I. F. Taylor: I am just telling you that is the case.

Mr LAURANCE: The member is entitled to make outlandish claims if he wishes.

We are concerned about the country people in Western Australia. They have had a great deal done for them in the provision of basic services at equalised costs throughout the State. That situation should be maintained.

The next matter I will cover is the regional advisory committees that are to be established. They will be important bodies, and we would like to know more about their establishment. In particular, I ask the Minister whether the regional advisory committees are intended to replace existing local bodies. He would be aware that one such body is the Gascoyne River advisory committee. Will he comment on whether that body and similar bodies around the State will be replaced by the regional advisory committees? If that is to be the case, I would not necessarily oppose it, but I would want to know in great detail what sort of membership is intended to replace the existing advisory committee. The work of that committee is of tremendous importance to the local area, and the representation from all the affected sections of the community would need to be adequate if the regional advisory committee were to do adequately the job that the existing committee is doing adequately.

I move on to a more localised matter; I refer particularly to the water supply at Denham. With the new administration, one body will be responsible for metropolitan and country water supplies. Some towns have no water supply and others have water supplied only with great difficulty. One of those towns is Denham. This is the only town in

this State with a desalinated water supply. It is a very expensive operation to provide a water supply by desalination. When that supply was established by the previous Government some years ago, it was necessary to apply a second meter charge and a second service; so people in that town have a dual public water supply. They have a bore water supply provided by the Public Works Department and a desalinated water supply also provided by that department. They pay a meter charge for both meters.

In many ways that is unfair, because the second meter charge was originally designed as a charge for those who requested a second service. The people of Denham did not request a second service; they are obliged to have one because of the second water supply.

When the second water supply was connected, an additional figure of \$10 per annum was charged. That has risen now to \$78 per annum as the basic rate, plus the second meter charge. One may say that the people of Denham pay a considerable impost for the benefit of having a reasonable water supply. I am not criticising the Government for the water charge because the previous Government imposed it—

Mr Tonkin: A good reason.

Mr LAURANCE: —and would not remove it, despite some criticism.

Mr Tonkin: We are removing it.

Mr LAURANCE: I will come to that in a moment, because it refers to equalising the charges across the State.

The second meter charge, as I said, has increased dramatically in recent years and is now \$78, so I do not criticise the Government for imposing it because it was the previous Government which imposed it and would not remove it. This Government has already refused to remove it and is responsible for the very substantial increase.

Mr Tonkin: We are removing it.

Mr LAURANCE: I will give the Minister an opportunity to answer in greater detail in a moment.

That and the charging system have caused a great deal of anxiety and acrimony in the Denham community. All the local members of Parliament have campaigned to have the charge removed in order to get back to the system of equalised charges across the State. The Public Works Department has recently put to the local community a proposition for the removal of that second meter charge, which I applaud. However, what it is proposing in its place is a much higher rate for the water service. As a result, each kilo-

litre will cost a great deal more than in any other town around the State. That is breaking the tradition of having the same water charges right across the State.

The Minister is offering a solution to a second meter charge by imposing a very substantial increase in the rate per kilolitre that Denham residents would be charged. Over a certain amount they would be charged something like 70 cents per kilolitre for a basic amount of something like 105 kilolitres. Above that, the proposal is that, for the excess, Denham residents would pay \$5.20 per kilolitre. If one used 105 kilolitres, that would be on a three-monthly basis of 35 kilolitres per month. Anything over that would be charged at the \$5.20 per kilolitre rate.

That is unbelievable. That is given to us as the cost of production, but obviously it would have the effect that people would use their 35 kilolitres of desalinated water, and then they would turn the taps off hard, because I cannot imagine anyone anywhere using water at the rate of \$5.20 per kilolitre when other people around the State are paying 24 cents per kilolitre.

Mr Tonkin: Not necessarily at that level.

Mr LAURANCE: They would get 600 kilolitres at that level. Most people use around 600 kilolitres.

Mr Tonkin: You cannot really compare the two because they have a saline supply as well.

Mr LAURANCE: That is true, they have. That compromise is not really a compromise at all.

Mr Tonkin: It is. It will be cheaper for the residents.

Mr LAURANCE: It would depend upon their use.

Mr Tonkin: I know.

Mr LAURANCE: The Minister wants to keep usage down.

Mr Tonkin: That is right.

Mr LAURANCE: If we are to keep the very important principle which has been established that water charges should be equalised across the State—

Mr Tonkin: You haven't established a principle at Denham.

Mr LAURANCE: At Denham there was a second meter charge rather than a departure from the clearly established principle of equalised charges. The water charge should be 24 cents for 105 kilolitres, and then it should go up more steeply till one reaches \$5.20 when they go off the top end of the scale. The present system is quite

wrong and it breaks the well-established principle. I ask the Minister to look at this very carefully, because if he is prepared to do this in respect of Denham, he may be prepared to break the principle in respect of other country towns. I ask him to have a look at that particular situation and come up with something that does not break the established principle. He should give a commitment that the Government will stick with the idea of equalised charges across the State. The previous Government did that in the name of decentralisation, and his Government should keep that firmly in mind.

That represents the points of concern I have in relation to this Bill. A couple of them refer to my electorate only and others refer to the State as a whole. I conclude by saying that we support this measure. However, it will be up to the Government and to this Minister to prove that they can make this new administration and new authority a more efficient one in the interests of the people of Western Australia.

I support the Bill.

MR BLAIKIE (Vasse) [9.43 p.m.]: Like the previous speaker, I am disappointed that the Government has seen fit to declare this Bill an urgent one. There have been only three or four speakers on this Bill, and the Government has said it will allow four hours for the finalisation of the Bill following the address given by the member for Floreat.

During the preparation of the Bill, a large amount of work was undertaken by the officers concerned. The Minister in his second reading speech said that there had been in excess of 170 meetings as it is obviously a very complex Bill; and the proposal has given the department a great deal of concern. Obviously the Government has been concerned to ensure that everything is done properly, and that adequate time has been given to ensure the preparation of the Bill so that it is presented to Parliament in a reasonable and proper way. However, this has been declared an urgent measure and I do not believe that should have occurred.

As the Minister has indicated, the Bill has been introduced in the interests of efficiency, cheaper water services, and to provide an added benefit to the community. The Minister indicated also that local country water supplies will remain autonomous. It is my assessment that will be the position only for the time being, because the Minister has served notice on the water boards of Harvey, Busselton, and Bunbury and he is only marking time while he tightens the noose on their operations and eventually takes them over.

This is all contained in an answer the Minister gave the member for Floreat on 4 April. Notwithstanding the ultimatums the Minister gave the boards in regard to their being able to continue in operation, they are still considering what the Minister told them in respect of his requirements. I have been told the boards of Busselton and Harvey are meeting in concert and they will return to the Minister and advise him as to what they are able to do. The next week or so could prove to be rather interesting as far as the local water boards are concerned and what they regard as a fair and reasonable alternative to the approach taken by the Minister. I would have thought the Minister would be aware of that, but apparently he is not.

I shall quickly go through the "shopping list" as I call it of what the Minister has told the water boards they will be obliged to do. Firstly, he said they will be charged for work, including investigation and design, done by Government agencies for the benefit of the board. I ask the Minister at what level and at what rate will the boards be charged and who will make that determination?

Will that mean in future the overall salary of the district engineer in Bunbury, who may spend part of his time looking after some service requirements of the Bunbury Water Board, will be reduced to what normally would have been charged to sewerage, drainage, and harbour works? Will it mean also that the people normally charged in those areas will get the benefit of reduced salary fees?

I shall answer that question for the Minister. Of course it will not mean that. Those charges will still apply. The Minister will decide charges and these boards will be charged at a level determined by him. Notwithstanding that, it will be a system of double charging, because although the officers are employed within their respective work areas, the charges will be made against these boards. That is part of the way in which the Government will tighten the noose on these water boards so that they will have difficulty in being able to operate as previously.

This is a matter which gives me some cause for concern and I would have thought the members for Mitchell and Bunbury would have spoken on it. Certainly the member for Murray-Wellington has indicated his concern and I would have thought the members for Mitchell and Bunbury would have made their representations to the Government to allow these boards to retain their autonomy.

Secondly, the Minister has said the Government will no longer reimburse the boards for rebates and deferments allowed to pensioners under the Pensioners (Rates Rebates and Deferments) Act. That is scandalous. The Government is implementing a policy under which it has determined that all people in Western Australia will be able to obtain a deferment of rates and allowances based on the rates that are actually paid. That is Government policy. Therefore, the Government ensures that the taxpayers of Western Australia pick up the tab in respect of the metropolitan water supply.

Mr Tonkin: We got that idea from you. You did it in the metropolitan area

Mr BLAIKIE: The taxpayers will pick up the tab in respect of the country areas water supply also, but in relation to the Harvey, Busselton, and Bunbury Water Boards, the Minister has said, "You will not get any rebate from the Government. You will have to carry the full burden yourselves".

Mr Tonkin: We have not said that.

Mr BLAIKIE: I refer the Minister to his reply to question 2733 (1)(b) of Wednesday, 4 April. That is what he said.

Mr Tonkin: What did I say?

Mr BLAIKIE: The Minister said—

The Government will no longer reimburse the boards for rebates and deferments allowed to pensioners under the Pensioners (Rates Rebates and Deferments) Act.

Mr Tonkin: That is right, in respect of that, but I thought you said we were not going to agree to any subsidy to the board. We have not said that.

Mr BLAIKIE: The Minister does not intend to give those boards any rebates or deferments and that is grossly unfair. These are the only organisations in the State to which the Minister has adopted that attitude.

Mr Tonkin: What do you mean? You did it to the Metropolitan Water Authority. We are copying you.

Mr BLAIKIE: The taxpayers are picking up the tab for the Metropolitan Water Authority, but these people are expected to pay twice; that is the difference.

Mr Tonkin: The taxpayers aren't picking up the bill; the ratepayers are picking up the bill for the Metropolitan Water Authority.

Mr BLAIKIE: Let us go on—

Mr Tonkin: Don't go on! Just a minute!

Mr BLAIKIE: Who is picking up the tab for the country areas water supply?

Mr Tonkin: In respect of the Metropolitan Water Authority, which is what you did, the rate-payers picked up the tab. We thought that was a good idea and we copied it.

Mr BLAIKIE: Let us return to the position of the country areas water supply. The taxpayers are picking up the tab for that. Item (c) said that the boards would be required to make contributions at the same rate as the proposed water authority of Western Australia under the Public Authorities (Contributions) Act. The same situation applies in respect of the metropolitan area, but that is not what will occur in relation to the country areas water supply. I ask the Minister the rate which he will strike. Will it be two per cent, three per cent, or what will the figure be? How much will the Minister expect these authorities to contribute?

Mr Tonkin: The same as the Metropolitan Water Authority.

Mr BLAIKIE: Will it be the same as the country areas water supply? The answer is, "No", because they do not make a contribution.

Under item (e) the Minister has directed that, to retain its autonomy, the Busselton Water Board must extend its area to the west. Surely that is a matter for the board and its ratepayers to decide. It is for the ratepayers to decide in due course whether they are prepared to service that extension. No doubt that will happen in the fullness of time.

It is grossly unfair for a direction to be given that, in order for the boards to retain their autonomy, they must do this extension. Although the Government is forcing these boards to make these extensions, it does not intend to extend its water supply to Yallingup, Prevelly Park, Cowaramup Bay, or Hamelin Bay. The Government does not intend to do that, yet it is telling these boards, "If you want to retain your autonomy, you must extend your water supply irrespective of whether it is economically possible for you to do so". That is the condition the Government is imposing on the boards.

Mr Tonkin: It is not irrespective. We decided it was economically possible. It is part of the area.

Mr BLAIKIE: That is the Minister's determination. My determination is that Yallingup is also part of the Minister's area, that Cowaramup Bay is part of the Minister's area, and that Prevelly Park is part of the Minister's area. But the Minister is doing nothing. No doubt, in the fullness of time, the Minister will service those areas, anyway. The boards should have been given the opportunity to extend their lines in the fullness of time when they were able to do so economically

and by their own decision, but the Minister has issued them with instructions.

Mr Tonkin: We had discussions.

Mr BLAIKIE: The boards were presented with a *fait accompli*. They are not happy and they are still having discussions about this matter. They are coming back to see the Minister again to discuss the matter further, because they are not happy.

Mr Tonkin: I will show them the same courtesy as before.

Mr BLAIKIE: I must say that the Minister's courtesy has improved dramatically over the last nine months. It was damned awful nine months ago, but it has improved a little. The Minister made the boards an offer they could not refuse. If they had refused, the Minister would have taken them over.

Mr Laurance: Every time country people go to see him, he insults them. He says, "Because you are country people, you don't vote for us".

Mr BLAIKIE: The Minister's package has meant that the water boards have now had to extend their mains and increase their charges for water or lose their autonomy. Notwithstanding the fact that the boards have said that they will have to extend their mains, the Minister has said that as part of the package he will approve the rates a water board proposes to charge in an ensuing year and the basis on which those rates are raised. The Minister will also require the water boards to take remedial action if supplies are not of a satisfactory quality.

The Minister imposes far greater conditions on those three water boards; he is certainly exerting far more authority over them than he does over all the other areas of water supplies that come under his control. These three boards have been singled out for special, specific and unfair action.

It is my view that the boards of Harvey, Busselton, and Bunbury have proved to be an embarrassment to the Government because of their good performances. Already the Minister has indicated that, because they have performed reasonably well, he will not take them over at this stage. Their low water rate is a benefit that is well received by the consumers.

Mr Tonkin: Because they haven't been paying their way fully.

Mr BLAIKIE: That is the Minister's determination.

Mr Tonkin: For example, they get the services of engineers for nothing.

Mr BLAIKIE: Despite that fact, the Minister will find also that when he makes these charges

he still will not make these recoups from the other Government agencies.

Finally, and notwithstanding all the rhetoric about the creation of this new water authority, how will this body be more efficient?

Mr Tonkin: Because we will be running it.

Mr BLAICKIE: How will the performance of this body be measured? For example, does the State Energy Commission charge a reasonable rate, and how can we measure it? What the people in the south-west corner of the State want to know is whether they will be getting value for money. If those consumers were tied into the Public Works system, they would be infinitely better off because they would have the ability to measure performance. This ability to measure performance is something very zealously guarded by the people who have had the benefit of these three boards.

There is an argument for a series of small organisations rather than one ultra, maxi-organisation. I want the Minister to explain how this new maxi-body will supply cheaper water and operate more efficiently.

MR WATT (Albany) [10.00 p.m.]: Those of us who live in the country are concerned about this move to amalgamate the two existing water authorities. I must confess that even though such a move was the policy of the previous Government, it was not one about which I was over-enthusiastic, and indeed I had distinct reservations about it. Many of those reservations were expressed in the speech made tonight by the member for Gascoyne.

I am particularly concerned to know more detail of the Government's intentions on pricing policies for water to be supplied by this new authority. We are all aware that in the past when we have had the metropolitan water authority supplying water to the metropolitan area, it has charged a rate designed to cover the total cost of its operations. We know that water supplied by the Public Works Department water supply branch has been subsidised to the tune of something like \$25 million to \$30 million a year from Treasury. I have understood that to be the reason for there being two separate authorities. Clearly, we need to know whether country people will maintain that subsidy and if not, why not.

Alternatives are available. The first is that under the new authority, all water costs could be averaged out and charged at an equal rate over the whole State, in the same way as the deliberate policy was made to charge equal electricity tariffs right throughout the State. That would have the result of everyone in the State paying more for his

water, because obviously that \$30 million in subsidy would have to be met from somewhere else. An alternative would involve the new authority's achieving \$30 million in savings. I cannot accept that this will happen, and I have reservations that there will be any savings at all, but I will come to that aspect in a moment.

Another possible alternative would be a differential rating system which would mean that the charge for water in country areas would be at a higher rate than that in the metropolitan area. At present, we have two methods of charging for water, but the result for the average household is much the same. Some groups, such as single and married pensioners in the country, use a low volume of water, partly because they have small gardens and obviously fewer people. It works out that they are charged proportionately more for water than the average family which uses a reasonable amount of water. Perhaps this aspect needs to be addressed to ensure that those low-volume water users are not disadvantaged.

The third alternative might be to continue the present system with a subsidy from Treasury. The way I read it, I cannot see provision for that, so I presume that is not an option; it is a possibility.

Mr Tonkin: What is not an option?

Mr WATT: A direct subsidy from the Treasury.

Mr Tonkin: To the authority?

Mr WATT: Yes.

Mr Tonkin: That is going to occur.

Mr WATT: I cannot see that. I would have to be reassured about that.

In the Minister's second reading speech he listed a number of objectives and one of the stated ends of the new authority is to try to bring about a number of economies. I am seriously concerned that this will not happen. If we are talking about the operations in larger centres such as Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, and similar places, it may be possible because the operations in those places are probably big enough to absorb the independent activities of each authority, the Public Works Department, and the new water authority, whatever it is to be called. We have an enormous State, and we are supplying water in some form or another—not necessarily reticulated supplies—to most parts of the State where settlements exist. Assuming it will be the water authority's responsibility to continue to supply water in one form or another in many parts of the State which do not have a reticulated service, in many of these places it is a part-time occupation for an officer of the Public Works Department who com-

bines his operations with other areas of work which come under the Public Works Department.

I cannot see savings in this; I can see many problems in regard to duplication, for example, of manpower of the PWD and the water authority men. If an ample workload is to be achieved for these people, the district in which they will work may have to be enlarged and officers will probably have to do considerably more travelling with overnight stops at hotels or motels, at an additional cost. Added to that is the cost of additional vehicles, because obviously there will be a need for each of the people concerned in servicing the water supplies and the other PWD activities to have his own vehicle.

Of course, if we talk about a utility or something like that, we will probably duplicate many times over the equipment that needs to be carried. There will be a duplication of buildings in the centres where these people could operate, and altogether a massive duplication of equipment, manpower, buildings, and the various resources required. In many cases stocks of spare parts would be required for vehicles and equipment; and I find it difficult to accept that there will be a saving.

One of my fundamental objections to the concept of this separate authority is that it represents a centralist approach. Recently I attended a Chamber of Commerce meeting in Albany at which Dr Ernie Manea, the Chairman of the South West Development Authority, was present. He addressed the meeting on the "Bunbury 2000" policy. His rationale for "Bunbury 2000" was that many facets of public administration exist throughout the State. I cannot recall the statistics, but he quoted percentages of the number of people who were employed in the Public Service in this State and the number of public servants who lived in the Bunbury region, and the percentage living and working in Perth to administer the various facets of public administration in that region. The number was surprisingly high. Here, on the one hand, we have a Government policy which is designed or aimed to try to reduce the number of people, not by adding public servants, but by relocating them at Bunbury. This is how he explained it. They are involved not in the day-to-day running of it, but in the administration of the various public bodies, whatever they happen to be. It seems to me to be creating a centralist bureaucracy of a State-wide water supply in the metropolitan area.

Mr Tonkin: That is rubbish. Where do you think the PWD has headquarters now?

Mr Blaikie: The member is quite right.

Mr Tonkin: That is right.

Mr WATT: It is heavily decentralised.

Mr Tonkin: That will be so with the new water authority district engineers and so on.

Mr WATT: I see it as a contradiction of the policy which has been espoused in the "Bunbury 2000" policy to relocate as many as humanly possible—the Government will run into trouble there—of the public servants who are engaged in these various activities. If the Minister can give me the assurance that I am seeking—that the number of people who will run these various water supply operations throughout the State as opposed to the metropolitan area will be maximised in the country districts—I would be happy to hear it. That is my point. I seek an assurance—

Mr Tonkin: For the same reason as the PWD needs someone in Albany, so will the new water authority of Western Australia.

Mr WATT: I am happy to have that assurance, although I remain sceptical about it. Of course I recognise that these things take time to work out and I will be watching with great interest to see how it works out.

One of the objectives which the Minister identifies states—

... various sources of water, surface and underground of the South West is one single resource for the use of the community as a whole, not as a number of resources subject to claims.

In the former Government, when the Hon. Graham MacKinnon was Minister for Water Supplies, he coined the name "Resource 1" for water supplies, indicating that it was our No. 1 resource.

Mr Tonkin: Resource 2. People are our No. 1 resource.

Mr WATT: Without water there will be no other resources. Perhaps the Minister should tell us something about that.

Mr Tonkin: You could say the same thing about anything.

Mr WATT: We live in a State in which the provision of water supplies is absolutely crucial but even in areas along the south coast where I live, where water supplies, one would imagine, could be provided with considerable ease in the last couple of years, because of drought conditions we find it very difficult to find a supply, and, of course, in times of drought the underground aquifers are also strained to the limits.

I do support that part of the objectives. With those comments, I point out I have some reser-

ventions about the marriage of these two bodies. I only hope it works out, but I remain not very well convinced.

MR TONKIN (Morley-Swan—Minister for Water Resources) [10.14 p.m.]: I thank the members who have given their qualified support to the Bill. I will deal firstly with the lead speaker for the Opposition, the member for Floreat, who asked me whether I would give an undertaking that the three boards would not be taken over. Of course, no Government can say, either on behalf of itself or of any other Government, that nothing will happen in the future. It is foolish and dishonest to give promises that cannot be kept. No undertaking can be given, any more than the member for Floreat, when a Minister in this place, could give an undertaking about the future operations of the Public Works Department, the size of the subsidy from the CRF, the level of water rates, and so on. That kind of undertaking just cannot be given.

Mr Blaikie: But that is the general intention; you are hoping.

Mr TONKIN: It is certainly not our intention.

Mr Mensaros: I asked whether it would be in the foreseeable future.

Mr TONKIN: It is not our intention in the foreseeable future. I am making that statement on 10 April and I think it is important we be honest with one another and realise that circumstances can change and things can happen in the future. As far as we can give an undertaking for the future, at present it is not our intention.

The member for Floreat referred to the roofing of reservoirs. I was astounded by his comments because as Minister in charge of the Metropolitan Water Authority the member seemed to implement the roofing of reservoirs. It is something this Government has continued, yet he seems to be pooch-pooching it and saying it was not a good idea. I do not know what kind of Minister he was if he had that attitude and yet allowed it to happen.

It is quite clear that when the member for Floreat was the Minister and was rewriting the Act for the Metropolitan Water Authority he gave himself more power than a Minister had had when it was a Government department. So, the Minister had tremendous power in this matter and could have stopped the roofing of the reservoirs if he wished.

The member for Floreat said that it was easy to scare people. I noted this paternalistic attitude of the member, and I am reminded of his arrogance over the matter of final notices when we said—when in Opposition—time and time again

that people should have final notices issued to them before their water supply was cut off, or restricted. He refused, but when I became the Minister I found that final notices were being sent out. I asked the reason for that and I was told that there was a different Minister and a different Government, and they knew our attitude. In other words, if the Minister had lifted his finger they would have complied.

I suggest this attitude of deciding by the Government what is best for people—this paternalism—is not part of the British attitude which has far more emphasis on the rights of individual freedom. We do not think that Ministers should be saying, "I know what the people want, they can get worried about their water, but I will not be worried about it. We will not roof the reservoirs". I do not think that is the way a Government should carry on.

The member for Floreat also asked the reason for this Bill and said it was similar to the Metropolitan Water Authority Act. Of course it is. It is some kind of compliment to him and his Government because imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. The reason for the new Bill is that we want to build on a firm foundation. The other Acts will also be amended. Eventually we will have a cohesive whole, but at the moment we do not want to throw everything into the melting pot by repealing every Act. We thought it better to have a firm foundation and to leave these other Acts as they were and amend them if necessary. That is the reason we have done it in that way.

The comment was made that employees should not be public servants. I think the Minister for Minerals and Energy made the comment that one of the problems of that is that we then have people locked into an authority and it is not easy to get out. What we would have had to say to the officers of the Public Works Department, and all the officers of the Water Authority at this moment is, "Please choose. Do you want to be in this utility for the rest of your life?" Many may have left because they would have felt more secure in the Public Service where there are more avenues for promotion.

The reason we have left it that way is that it does provide greater flexibility. It also gives greater discipline and that can be one of the problems we could mention in respect of the other statutory bodies and to which the member for Floreat referred.

The matter of the Minister being sued was raised. Of course the authority will be sued. It is usual to say that members of the board, as individuals, are exempt and the reason that the Min-

ister hitherto has been sued is the Public Works Department is a Government department.

The member used the example of the Minister for Works being sued; this is, because the Minister is the body corporate. I, as Minister for Water Resources, am a body corporate and I can be sued in that capacity, but not as an individual. In fact, I am being sued at present, and it is not as painful as I would have thought.

Mr Parker: I get about a writ a week.

Mr TONKIN: The Minister must misbehave himself!

The fact of the matter is that the authority will be sued and the Minister will no longer be in that sense the body corporate.

Mention was made of wide regulatory powers in the Bill. This is so; more modern drafting is getting away from some of the obfuscations of the earlier style, and I believe that is a question of drafting.

Several members asked about the question of the subsidy for Government water operations and have asked for guarantees. Could the member for Floreat, as Minister in the previous Government, or the member for Gascoyne, as Minister in the previous Government, have given guarantees about the future shape of the Budget? Of course they could not.

Mr Mensaros: At least what provisions will be recommended to Parliament. Of course you cannot pre-empt what Parliament is saying.

Mr TONKIN: I cannot say what Cabinet will decide will be an appropriate level of subsidy, any more than the member could. I cannot give guarantees; all I can say is that the subsidy will continue and I would not expect it to be markedly different from the subsidy already provided.

I think that answers one of the queries of the member for Murray-Wellington.

Mr Laurance: It is the sort of assurance we are looking at—the principles of the situation; not so much in dollars that can be provided in any one year.

Mr TONKIN: The member for Gascoyne was out of order for at least three or four minutes, and, showing my tolerant attitude to the Opposition, I refrained from taking a point of order. The member dealt with the matter as to the reason that this should be an urgent Bill. He should have debated that during the other part of the debate. I mention that to the member for Gascoyne to show how indulgent I am.

The question he asked was whether we will get greater efficiency. We believe we will. I think it is remarkable that Western Australia has not had a

water authority for the whole State for all this time. We have a Police Department for the whole State, a State Energy Commission, a Forests Department and a Public Works Department—

Mr Blaikie: You are doing your best to get rid of the Forests Department.

Mr TONKIN: It is extraordinary that we have never had a water authority for the whole of the State. I think it is a normal kind of development that one would expect.

The member for Murray-Wellington complained that the Harvey Water Board was paying only 3c per kilolitre and we put the price up. The previous Minister put the price up a tremendous amount—from 1c to 3c per kilolitre. Until that time it had not been shifted from the price that applied in the depression years.

Mr Mensaros: That is the subsidy I was talking about.

Mr TONKIN: The subsidy given to the people of Harvey is much greater than the subsidy given to the rest of the country users.

Mr Mensaros: It was a constitutional provision.

Mr TONKIN: Three cents is an absurd figure, when we consider the Metropolitan Water Authority sells water to the Public Works Department, and the other way around, which occurs for the conjunctive use of Mundaring Weir and metropolitan water dams at a cost of 17c per kilolitre. That is considered a very reasonable price by these authorities and that puts the 3c into perspective. We believe the people of Harvey should be paying their way. I am sure the people of Harvey want to pay their way.

We make no apology for putting it at a more realistic level.

The question asked by the member for Gascoyne concerning whether the Government will replace the Gascoyne advisory committee has not been decided. I agree with him that it does good work and it is an advisory committee to the Minister who has the statutory responsibility to make decisions. I had not given any thought to that matter and it might be argued that a regional body would be a wider body on general matters and that the Gascoyne body might be able to deal with the special kind of problem that exists in the area. That is not an undertaking because it has not been considered. However, I can see the reason that we might decide to leave it alone and have a body that would encompass a wider area.

With respect to Denham, a particular problem exists because of desalination and because people have two services—a saline service and a desalinated service. The member for Gascoyne

claimed there had been uniformity of pricing under his Government, but, of course, there had not been. I have already referred to Harvey buying its water from the PWD at 3c per kilolitre. Of course, with two service charges one must argue—the people of Denham have certainly argued most vociferously since I have been Minister—that that is not right. I received a deputation earlier this week from the people of Denham, and the Government put a suggestion to it about the 70c and the \$5.20 per kilolitre which the member for Gascoyne has already outlined. The deputation came back with counter proposals which we are considering. The work we have already done indicates they will be paying less under our proposal.

It actually costs \$5.20 to produce each kilolitre of desalinated water in Denham. When the Government sells the water at 24c or 70c per kilolitre, it is losing money. Unfortunately, some irresponsible people in Denham make it difficult for the majority. They are going over their allowance and this is putting on the pressure for a desalination plant which will cost an enormous amount of money.

The deputation which I received the other day had no intention of defending the irresponsible people who go well above their allowance and make the situation difficult. The deputation referred to them as being irresponsible and said that the \$5.20 should be higher to try to keep down the excess consumption by very few people who cause shortages during the crucial times. Thousands of people will say that is not a responsible way to behave.

When I talk about a limit of 125 kilolitres or whatever, one might say that it is not very much compared with the 150 kilolitres in the metropolitan area or the 650 kilolitres at a lower rate in the country. However, that 125 kilolitres has to be desalinated. The people in Denham use saline water in their toilets and on their gardens. One cannot equate those levels.

Mr Laurance: I can see what you are trying to achieve and it does overcome the problem. You should change the second meter charge for the sale of desalinated water or remove the charge entirely.

Mr TONKIN: It has been worked out that most people are paying half of what they were paying before.

Mr Laurance: I believe you should charge for some water at the lowest rate and then use another figure which is a third or fourth level. You should have a lower amount and a higher

amount before moving to \$5.20 per kilolitre, which is prohibitive.

Mr TONKIN: That was the point which was put forward by the deputation. If, for example, a child leaves a tap on, the parent suddenly finds himself paying \$5.20 and, in that case, he was not being irresponsible.

If there were a buffer zone, there would be some leeway.

Mr Laurance: Pensioners would make sure that they stayed in the first category. The people who use 120 kilolitres would make sure they did not get into the \$5.20 category.

Mr TONKIN: Members opposite have been making a strong case for a subsidy to country people and I ask: Is it to be a one-way subsidy? What about country people who get water very cheaply? Should they be helping to subsidise those in Denham where each kilolitre costs \$5.20 to produce?

Mr Blaikie: What about the city people who get their food cheaply?

Mr TONKIN: The system we have developed at the present time is that the people in the metropolitan area subsidise the country water supplies from the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

Mr Blaikie: Country people have been subsidising people in foodstuffs for donkey's years.

Mr TONKIN: There are all kinds of cross-subsidies; there is no doubt about that. However, I am referring to water supplies. If members say that the charge of \$5.20 should not be borne by the people of Denham or the people in some other difficult area like Hopetoun, those people who are lucky to live where there is cheap water have to bear their share of the burden. We cannot have it both ways. If we want equalisation, we must say to the people who live in an area where water is cheap, "Look, you are lucky, you get your water cheaply and other Western Australians pay \$5.20 and there is to be a cross-subsidy". That is what is happening to the three water boards in the south-west and it is not their fault.

Mr Blaikie: It is to their advantage.

Mr TONKIN: It is not their fault that they have, in fact, not been paying their way fully.

Mr Blaikie: That is a fallacious argument. By the same token, a person living at the bottom end of Adelaide Terrace does not pay the same bus fare as a person who lives in Kalamunda.

Mr TONKIN: I suppose there is an argument for subsidising, but the people who live in an area where the water is cheap should have to help those people who are unfortunate and are paying

higher rates. If those people do not subsidise the others, who does? It is not the man on the moon who subsidises; we subsidise each other. That is the point I am making.

The people from the three water boards in the south-west have not been paying a reasonable rate for their water. They have not been paying the cost for engineers. They are saying that they are efficient and that is why their prices are down. The reason for the low prices is that they are getting a lot of their work done by the engineers who spend days with them assisting with designs and the boards are not charged for their services. However, if one talks to the people in the south-west, they will be told that the water boards in that area are paying their way.

Mr Mensaros: Next time I will receive a bill for \$18.80 for a six minute telephone call with the under secretary.

Mr TONKIN: People who are subsidised by the metropolitan water scheme will be paying for the engineers' salaries. All I am saying is that if part of the cost of producing water in any other part of the State involves an engineer's salary then the board concerned should pay for it.

Mr Mensaros: That is the difference between us. I said the country subsidy should be maintained.

Mr TONKIN: That is right, and I am saying the country subsidy will be maintained. Although the member says there is a country subsidy, the PWD's rates are a lot higher than those of the three boards. All we are saying is that the water board charges will go up closer to the PWD charges. There will still be a subsidy and we will be helping them with various capital costs. We will not be saying, "You do it". When they expand to Gelorup and the west of Busselton we will not be saying, "You go there and sink or swim". We will be helping them and subsidising them, and assisting wherever possible. The subsidy will continue, but in some areas where charges have been excessively low they should approach a more realistic level.

Mr Mensaros: Under this provision you can announce now that you are going to increase the water charges in Denham.

Mr TONKIN: No, we are going to decrease the amount paid.

Mr Mensaros: You said a minute ago you could not treat people differently. There is no logic in your argument.

Mr TONKIN: I do not think the member is treating my argument very honestly. We accept the argument for subsidy. As far as Denham is

concerned most of the ratepayers there will be paying less under our proposal. We have worked it out carefully and we will be getting rid of the second service charge, so they will be paying less. It is not our intention to make them pay more.

Mr Mensaros: They are getting more benefit than other people.

Mr TONKIN: Instead of some people paying very low rates, they should approach a more general level.

Mr Blaikie: If you take over those water boards, and in the extensions they will be paying a flat rate anyhow, the Public Works Department country water supply would increase the loss currently being incurred by those water boards. That is a fact.

Mr TONKIN: I do not think so. We would be raising rates at a much higher rate than at the moment in those areas. For the same reasons the cost of producing water would be low because of the advantages that area has in being a well-watered part of the State. The rates having increased, I think one could show that the loss had not been increased at all.

Mr Blaikie: If you go to the other country areas currently being serviced and look at their performance you will see it is pathetic, even in high rainfall areas.

Mr TONKIN: I do not agree. There is a cross subsidy. Where water is accessible the rates are higher than they would be if there was a small water board. That does not mean it is an inefficient operation; it means they are subsidised. Denham is not the poorest place; there are some terrible problems throughout the State. That is why I have paid tribute to Governments and those who serve them for providing water in very arid areas of the State. It is so expensive to provide in some parts of the State that the well-watered areas are subsidising other areas because the people in the more accessible areas are paying the same amount for the first 600 kilolitres in the north, or 24c for the first 400 kilolitres in the south. I am not arguing against that; we believe those who are more fortunate should subsidise the less fortunate.

Mr Laurance: Did you say Denham was about fifteenth on the list?

Mr TONKIN: About fifteenth of all towns in Western Australia as far as the cost of producing water is concerned.

Mr Laurance: Other towns are more expensive than Denham?

Mr TONKIN: Yes.

The main problem with many towns is that they are tiny and there are so few services; it is enormously expensive. We try to do it; they are being heavily subsidised, not only by the taxpayer through the CRF, but also by other ratepayers who are paying higher rates than they would if they did not belong to this system.

The member for Albany raised the question of the duplication of buildings and staff in small areas. That is a very interesting and possibly valid point, and one that gives me some disquiet. I will look at it very carefully.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

The Chairman of Committees (Mr Barnett) in the Chair; Mr Tonkin (Minister for Water Resources) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2 put and passed.

Clause 3: Interpretation—

Mr MENSAROS: This is a minor and technical point. I query why the designation "subclause (1)" is required if there is no subclause (2).

Mr TONKIN: If that is an error it will be taken care of and we do not have to do it here.

The CHAIRMAN: The Clerks can attend to it before the Bill leaves this Chamber.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4: Appointed days, in relation to statutory authorities—

Mr MENSAROS: This clause is one of the most contentious matters in the Bill because it gives ultimate authority to the Government without consulting the Parliament, not only to amalgamate the Public Works Department engineering division with the MWA, but also to absorb the three small water boards if the Minister wishes. We were arguing about this and I asked the Minister to give an undertaking that it would not happen. He went so far as to say it was not his intention to absorb them in the foreseeable future. However he does not know what will happen in the future. We have not heard from the members for Mitchell and Bunbury and I wonder what their views are in connection with this matter. If they feel that they serve their constituents better by remaining silent, so be it. However, I am not sure how they may have served their friends with that silence.

We on this side of the House think that the people connected to the Bunbury, Busselton, and Harvey Water Boards would like more assurances than the Minister was able to give that their inde-

pendence will be maintained in accordance with the wishes of the ratepayers. If the Government is really genuine about this, I cannot honestly think of a better way than changing the provision in this clause which allows for a simple order by the Governor-in-Council which can be done in an administrative way with no check on it, with no announcement made, and without its being published in advance for comments. The change should be that the Parliament of the State should decide on the question of absorption unless the water boards themselves wish to be absorbed. They would take this action only if the ratepayers were in agreement.

Accordingly, I move an amendment—

Page 5, line 16—Delete the word "effect" with a view to substituting the following—

effect, but where that statutory authority is a water board constituted under Part II of the Water Boards Act 1904 or under section 13 of the Country Areas Water Supply Act 1947, an Order shall not be made under this subsection unless that water board has requested that such an Order be made or unless the approval of both Houses of Parliament has been first obtained.

If the Government is genuine in wanting to do what the respective ratepayers of those water boards wish, it would have no difficulty in agreeing to this amendment or making the amendment in some other technical way which has the same effect. However, if the Government rejects this amendment it is a clear indication that it does not want the Parliament to decide on this but wants to maintain discretionary power by the Executive to absorb water boards when it likes. Presumably that would occur at a time when it is judged that the political situation in those electorates—either as they are or at some future time if they are redistributed—is such that without any penalty it can go and eat them up without caring about what the people of those areas feel.

During the second reading debate I pointed out that the Government already squeezes these water boards by having prescribed the conditions under which they are allowed to survive to such an extent that they can reasonably expect in due course that the boards will come cap in hand and ask to be absorbed. The boards will be unable to survive; they will not be able to match the rates and charges of the amalgamated water authority. If that is the case, for a different reason—almost an entirely opposite reason—the Government should not oppose this amendment because it can say

that it has all the conditions as a result of which these water boards will come to it for amalgamation. Therefore, the provision incorporated in my amendment will apply. Regardless of the view taken by the Government, I think this amendment is a good test of the genuine intent of the Government towards the ratepayers of these three water boards. This amendment is moved to test the intention of the Government.

Mr BLAIKIE: It will come as no surprise to members that I support the amendment moved by the member for Floreat. I hope to be allowed to range into the words to be added by the amendment because it will clear up the debate in the Committee stages more expeditiously.

I have previously explained my views on the autonomy of the local water boards. I do not agree with the arguments advanced by the Minister when he indicated that the water boards of Busselton, Bunbury, and Harvey have been cheating on the system because they have been getting water supplies too cheaply.

Mr Tonkin: I did not use those words.

Mr BLAIKIE: The Minister implied that the consumers had been getting water too cheaply compared with the price paid by other people in this State.

Mr Tonkin: I did not blame them for that, but they had not been paying the full cost.

Mr BLAIKIE: If the Minister is not blaming them, he is doing a great deal to ensure that they pay an equal amount compared with other people in this State.

These water boards have been efficient enough to maintain a satisfactory supply to their consumers through good management, and the consumers have been relatively satisfied with the job done over the years. That is the reason they exist today. If one goes back 40 or 50 years one would find water boards all over the State, but these are the only three remaining. Only a few years ago I saw the demise of the Dunsborough Water Board, which asked to be taken over because it could not cope with the load which had been placed on it. It had not made sufficient provision to cater for new growth and development in the area and it asked to be taken over by the Public Works Department. The three boards referred to have performed and stood the test of time.

I am disappointed not to have heard from the members for Mitchell and Bunbury. I would have at least expected them to take part in tonight's debate.

Mr Tonkin: They have saved the boards; do not ask them to do more.

Mr BLAIKIE: I believe I had something to do with saving the boards.

Mr Tonkin: You had no influence with me.

Mr BLAIKIE: I had no influence with the Minister but I had some influence over the members for Mitchell and Bunbury.

[Laughter.]

Mr BLAIKIE: I hope *Hansard* is able to record laughter. I hope that by the time the evening is out the members for Mitchell and Bunbury will make a contribution to the debate. I am hopeful they will make their contribution in order to ensure that the boards they represent are in fact saved and that no future Minister, simply by an Order-in-Council, can elect to take the boards over. That is what this amendment is all about.

Mr Tonkin: Do not talk about the Governor like that. He is Her Majesty's representative.

Mr BLAIKIE: It is all right for the Minister to try to intimidate. The Governor, by Order-in-Council by a simple stroke of a pen, can take over these boards. The member has moved that unless a water board requests to be taken over, the approval of the Houses of Parliament is required. That is a far more satisfactory way, and it does at least give the boards some degree of autonomy.

The Minister will tell us he does not act in a cavalier fashion or ride roughshod, which I do not believe, but perhaps his successors might use jack boot tactics. At least it gives the Parliament an opportunity of understanding the arguments which have been advanced by the boards as to why they should not be taken over, and it gives the Parliament an opportunity to decide.

I have a very strong view that in relation to the board which I represent and the other two boards, this amendment is a most effective way of ensuring that the boards retain the little degree of autonomy they should have. The Minister is proposing to tighten the noose. He is tightening his hand on the purse strings. This will make it difficult enough for them; without this amendment it could well mean their demise.

As far as the amendment is concerned, it gives the water boards the opportunity to hand over to or to request that they be taken over by the State authority. If they do not make that request, the Parliament has to make the order and make the decision. I believe that is a far more satisfactory set of circumstances than will apply with the Bill as it is.

With those remarks, I am very pleased to support the amendment moved by the member for Floreat.

Mr TONKIN: I wish the member for Vasse would not try to lash the member for Mitchell and the member for Bunbury into a frenzy, asking them to intervene in the debate. They have already done enough damage. They made such strong representations to me that it would not have been worth my life to have taken over those boards. I pay tribute to those members for the very strong representations they made asking that the boards should be left alone.

A Government member: Hear, hear!

Mr TONKIN: This is not in the Bill tonight, and the boards have not been taken over, due to those members. I have been into that area. The boards came up to see me. Make no mistake, they have been able to persuade me.

Mr Blaikie: And that takes a lot of doing.

Mr TONKIN: It does indeed.

Mr Blaikie: I did not realise they had so much influence.

Mr TONKIN: Leave the boards alone. The boards are doing a good job. They are quite prepared to meet the conditions the Government has indicated to them. It was more of a discussion and a liaison with the member for Bunbury and the member for Mitchell. There is no intention at the present time of taking the boards over. We went to the people promising a water authority of Western Australia.

Mr Blaikie: You did not say boo about that in the south-west.

Mr TONKIN: You are insulting the people of the south-west, suggesting they cannot read. I know very well they can and do, and there was a very active interest in our policies in the south-west. I was in Bunbury before the election and I

was assailed on all sides by people wanting to know about our policies, and this, that, and the other. I believe the people of the south-west did know, and this was one of our policies.

In bringing this Bill to the House the Government has already made a very large concession by saying it would bring in a Bill to cover the State. We have been persuaded to leave those boards alone. That is a very fair and reasonable thing, and we should leave the Bill as it is.

I am appalled at some of the comments made about His Excellency the Governor.

A Government member: We all are.

Mr TONKIN: I am sure the Queen would not lightly appoint such a person as a Governor. The Governor is not just anyone, he is in fact acting under the Constitution. A decision by the Governor-in-Council is the same as a decision by Her Majesty the Queen. I can see no reason that such a provision should not remain in the Bill, so I oppose the amendment.

Progress

Progress reported and leave given to sit again, on motion by Mr Carr (Minister for Police and Emergency Services).

FATAL ACCIDENTS AMENDMENT BILL 1984

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Council; and, on motion by Mr Tonkin (Leader of the House), read a first time.

House adjourned at 11.05 p.m.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

2680 and 2681. *These questions were further postponed.*

TECHNOLOGY

Park: Freehold Land

2698. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Technology:

- (1) Will the Government provide free freehold land at Technology Park for high technology companies?
- (2) If "Yes", would preference be given to Western Australian companies?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) and (2) I refer the member to my answer in response to a question without notice by the member for Bunbury during question time in the Assembly on Wednesday, 4 April 1984.

TECHNOLOGY

Park: Medical Incorporated

2699. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Technology:

What is the main product which will be researched, developed, and manufactured by Medical Incorporated at Technology Park?

Mr BRYCE replied:

The first major product will be heart valves.

A range of artificial, implantable human organs will be researched, developed, and manufactured.

TECHNOLOGY

Park: Payroll Tax

2700. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Technology:

Will the Government provide payroll tax holidays for foreign companies established at Technology Park?

Mr BRYCE replied:

I refer the member to my answer in response to a question without notice by the member for Bunbury, during question time in the Assembly on Wednesday, 4 April 1984.

ABATTOIRS

Industrial Disputes: Loss of Throughput

2762. Mr BLAIKIE, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) How many people are employed at—
 - (a) Globe Meats abattoir, Bunbury;
 - (b) Clover Meats, Waroona;
 - (c) Borthwicks, Albany?
- (2) What is the number of days that each abattoir was closed because of strike action by slaughtermen?
- (3) How many—
 - (a) cattle;
 - (b) sheep and lambs;
 - (c) pigs,
 were not slaughtered as a result of this action?
- (4) What was the loss of wages by this action?
- (5) What has been the estimated total cost to industry of this action?

Mr EVANS replied:

I have been advised by the companies concerned as follows—

- (1) (a) Globe Meats—197
- (b) Clover Meats—Waroona—144
Clover Meats—North Perth boning room—244
- (c) Borthwicks—341
- (2) The total number of days lost by strike action is shown below. The days lost include disputes involving slaughtermen and follow-on labour.
 - (a) Globe Meats—12 days (during March)
 - (b) Clover Meats
Waroona—
Beef floor—17 days
Sheep floor—18 days
Pig floor—21 days
North Perth—15 days (since 29 February)
 - (c) Borthwicks—6½ days (during March)
- (3) It is not possible to estimate any final net effect on numbers of stock slaughtered.
- (4) The following estimates have been provided for the particular days specified—
 - (a) Globe Meats—\$169 000

(b) Clover Meats—
 Waroon—\$118 000
 North Perth—\$140 000

(c) Borthwicks—\$80 155
 TOTAL—\$507 155

(5) This information is not available to my department.

2765. *This question was further postponed.*

STATE FINANCE

Financial Institutions Duty: Rural & Industries Bank of Western Australia

2766. Mr HASSELL, to the Premier:

Did he or any member of the Government or public servant on behalf of the Government seek to influence the Rural and Industries Bank of Western Australia not to charge financial institutions duties against the accounts of some of its customers?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

No attempt was made to influence the bank although contact was made to ascertain the effects of the financial institutions duty.

BUSINESSES: SMALL

Drought Declared Areas: Assistance

2768. Mr COWAN, to the Deputy Premier:

Can he inform the House of the latest developments in the provision of financial assistance to small businesses in drought declared rural areas?

Mr BRYCE replied:

This matter is currently under review by the Department of Industrial Development in the context of a loan guarantee scheme for small business throughout the State.

EDUCATION

Teachers: Retirement Age

2775. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) What is the compulsory retiring age of teachers employed by the Government?
- (2) Is that age the same for males and females?
- (3) Is there an age limit for part-time casual teaching employees? In other words, could people above the compulsory retir-

ing age be employed as casual part-time teachers?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) 65 years.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) The regulations do not address this matter. However, it would be rare for a casual teacher older than 65 years of age to be employed, and it would only occur in a contingency situation or where some unusual experience is required.

EDUCATION: PRIMARY SCHOOL

Burrendah: Improvements

2791. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Have any funds been allocated to Burrendah Primary School under the minor works programme for improvements to a withdrawal area in one of the school buildings?
- (2) If so, when was the allocation approved?
- (3) Has the work to carry out these improvements yet begun?
- (4) If not, why not?
- (5) When will the work proceed?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) Yes. \$12 500 was committed to the project pending documentation and satisfactory design.
- (2) August 1983.
- (3) No.
- (4) The design by the Public Works Department was not satisfactory to the school principal and a revised design has been prepared, with advice from the schools environmental architect that evaporative cooling should also be considered. At the request of the regional director (education) the revised design is to be discussed at a meeting arranged with the school principal on Monday, 9 April 1984 by an officer of the planning branch.
- (5) When a satisfactory design is agreed to, the work will proceed as soon as documentation and estimating are complete and local tenders called.

EDUCATION

Primary School: Bibra Lake

2794. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Education:

When can I expect a definitive response to my letter to him of 6 October 1983 concerning the proposed primary school in the South Lakes or Bibra Lake area?

Mr PEARCE replied:

The Bibra Lake Ratepayers and Residents' Association was advised on 29 March that a school on the Bibra site cannot be built until the sewer main, which is to pass through the site, is laid. Work through the school grounds is expected to be carried out in February 1985.

No decision has been made about a school for South Lakes as yet.

EDUCATION

Primary School: Rostrata

2795. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Education:

(1) In relation to his answer to question 2593 of 22 March 1984, does his answer to parts (5) and (6) of that question mean that stage 2 of Rostrata Primary School will not be built until some temporary rooms are on site?

(2) If so, how many temporary rooms are planned to be on site for use in 1985?

Mr PEARCE replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The present estimate is that two or three temporary rooms will be needed in February 1985, and this will be confirmed late in 1984 when the situation can be assessed.

MINISTER OF THE CROWN: PREMIER

Accommodation: Carpet

2799. Mr MacKINNON, to the Treasurer:

(1) Was the carpet installed in the Premier's new office suite manufactured in Western Australia?

(2) If not, why not?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

(1) and (2) The carpet in the Premier's Office, along with other carpets in the City Mutual Tower, were installed by

the owners prior to any decision by the Government to lease space.

EDUCATION: COLLEGE

Bunbury Institute of Tertiary Education: Opening

2804. Mr BRADSHAW, to the Minister for Education:

(1) When is the expected opening of the Bunbury institute of tertiary education to occur?

(2) What courses will be initially offered?

(3) What is the expected enrolment for each course?

Mr PEARCE replied:

(1) The Bunbury institute of advanced education has been created in terms of the Colleges Act, and the new WA College of Advanced Education Bill provides for a board to manage the affairs of the institute. The date of the formal opening of the institute through the commencement of courses will depend on advice from the board and the WA College.

(2) Courses currently planned are in teacher education, business studies, agriculture, visual crafts, and humanities; and support will be provided for courses offered through external studies by the WA College, WAIT, and Murdoch University. The offerings will be dependent on enrolments and may be varied if the publicity to be undertaken in the region by the board indicates that support for a particular course is insufficient to commence a class. In this process, support for additional courses may be strong enough to warrant the introduction of other programmes.

(3) As indicated in (2), it is difficult to be definitive at this time. A total enrolment of about 60 equivalent full-time students has been adopted for planning purposes.

2813. *This question was further postponed.*

2828 to 2830. *These questions were postponed.*

FUEL AND ENERGY: ELECTRICITY

Power Lines: Herbicides

2831. Mr THOMPSON, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

Further to the response to question 2738 of 1984, will he please state which active chemicals are present in each of the

products for which the trade names were given in his answer?

Mr PARKER replied:

List of active chemicals as requested—

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Velpar 20G | 200g/kg Hexazinone |
| Ustilan granules | 50g/kg Ethidimuron |
| Ustilan herbicide spray (powder) | 700g/kg (70% w/w) Ethidimuron |
| Banvel M | 80g/l Dicamba (present as the dimethylamine salt) |
| | 340g/l MCPA (present as the dimethylamine salt) |
| Roundup | 360g/l Glyphosate present as the isopropylamine salt |
| *Amitrol Plus | 260g/l Amitrole |
| | 220g/l ammonium thiocyanate |
| *Weedosol | 100g/kg Amitrole |
| | 572g/kg 2,2-DPA present as the sodium salt |
| *Nuzinole | 400g/kg Amitrole |
| | 400g/kg Atrazine |

*No longer in use by the commission.

RAILWAYS

Westrail: Public Relations

2832. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Following his visit to Narrogin, was he correctly quoted in the *Narrogin Observer* of 28 March 1984 stating that, "As yet there is no final Westrail corporate plan—and I stress it is a Westrail plan because nothing has come to the State Government for approval yet"?
- (2) Was he also correctly quoted in the same article when he acknowledged the poor public relations performance by Westrail?
- (3) Will he ensure that Westrail will now improve its public relations performance especially where the proposed staff reductions in the great southern are concerned?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) Yes, in the context of Westrail's overall five year corporate plan.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) Yes. Positive action has been taken in this regard.

2833. *This question was postponed.*

RAILWAYS: WESTRAIL

Staff: Great Southern

2834. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Education:

Having regard to the Government's commitment to promote alternative industry and employment opportunities for those Westrail personnel affected by the considerable staff reductions in the great southern, will the Government immediately commence the planned technical and further education facilities in Narrogin to provide the necessary training and re-training requirements?

Mr PEARCE replied:

A technical education facility for Narrogin is contained in the capital works forward plan for construction in 1986-87. However, it is possible that this may be brought forward to 1985-86 if the availability of General Loan Funds permits.

STANDING ORDERS

Amendments

2835. Mr MENSAROS, to the Speaker:

- (1) On how many occasions in the past have Standing Orders been amended in the Legislative Assembly without the amendments having been properly proposed, discussed, and decided upon by the Standing Orders Committee of the House?
- (2) Could he please say which were these occasions?

Mr SPEAKER replied:

- (1) A search of the records of this House over the last 30 years has revealed one occasion when amendments were made to the Standing Orders other than as a result of a Standing Orders Committee report.
- (2) The occasion was on 11 November 1970 when the then Premier (Sir David Brand) moved amendments to Standing Orders to enable establishment of the Public Accounts Committee.

2836. *This question was postponed.*

FUEL AND ENERGY: ELECTRICITY

Power Station: Bunbury

2837. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

- (1) Adverting to question 2558 of Thursday, 22 March 1984, what is the estimated value of funds committed so far towards the project development costs referred to in the reply?
- (2) What costs were involved in locating a State Energy Commission engineer, Mr D. Rich, in Korea for protracted periods during 1983?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) Question 2558 referred to by the member for Narrogin referred to the provision of technical assistance to Korean interests and the value of such assistance. I repeat that there has been no assistance provided to Korean interests.

Activities carried out to date relate to a number of commission activities which are not solely related to the proposed development. I believe it would be misleading to quote estimates of expenditure in this area.

- (2) Mr G. Rich, in his capacity as executive director for the new south-west power station project, visited South Korea for a total duration of 12 weeks during the period May-December 1983. The total cost of travel, accommodation, and office expenses associated with these visits was \$36 000.

FUEL AND ENERGY: ELECTRICITY

Charges: Other States

2838. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

- (1) With regard to electricity tariffs applying to small business customers consuming approximately 1 000 kWh/month, what is the current relativity between the Western Australian tariff and the tariff applying in other States?
- (2) What is the average production cost in Western Australia and that applying in other States?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) Western Australian small business customers consuming 1 000 kWh/month pay less than their counterparts in Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane and

Darwin, and more than those in Hobart and Sydney.

- (2) The average cost of producing electrical power on the energy commission system in Western Australia is higher than in all other States. The Northern Territory's cost of production is, however, higher than Western Australia's. The Northern Territory is of course heavily subsidised by the Commonwealth Government. For further detail on these costs I refer the member to the annual reports of the various authorities operating throughout Australia.

FUEL AND ENERGY: STATE ENERGY COMMISSION

Staff: Terms of Appointment

2839. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

- (1) Do any senior officers of the State Energy Commission appointed under the State Energy Commission Act 1979-1981 have specific terms of appointment?
- (2) If so, which officers are appointed for specified terms?
- (3) What is the termination date of any current specified terms of appointment?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The commissioner, deputy commissioner, Dr J. R. Saunders, Mr A. Richardson, and Mr M. J. Palmer.
- (3) The commissioner was appointed by the Governor for a seven year period expiring 30/6/1989.

Mr Marwood C. Kingsmill, deputy commissioner, entered into a contract to act as a senior executive officer and permanent employee of the commission for a term of seven years expiring on 20/1/1991.

Dr J. R. Saunders, executive member, aluminium smelter task force, was appointed for a term of three years expiring 19/7/1985.

Mr A. Richardson, senior marketing consultant, was appointed for a term of two years expiring 10/9/1984.

Mr M. Palmer, coal consultant, was appointed for a term of two years expiring 18/7/1985.

FUEL AND ENERGY: COAL

Western Collieries Ltd.: Long-term Contract

2840. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

- (1) Are negotiations continuing between the State Energy Commission and Western Collieries regarding the negotiation of the long term coal purchase contract?
- (2) If so, what stage of negotiation has been reached?
- (3) What is the estimated tonnage that will be subject to the conditions of the purchase contract?
- (4) When is it anticipated that negotiations will be completed and the contract signed?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) A draft "heads of agreement" has been prepared.
- (3) The base tonnage is slightly more than 21 million tonnes over 20 years.
- (4) Depends on completion of (1) above.

FUEL AND ENERGY: ELECTRICITY

Power Station: Bunbury

2841. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

- (1) Adverting to reply to question 2640 of 3 April 1984, is he implying in part (1) of his reply that the previous Government acted independently and without the advice and involvement of the State Energy Commission in discussions and decisions leading to contractual arrangements with the North-West Shelf joint venturers?
- (2) Is he indicating that the total costs associated with the considerable initiatives undertaken between the State Energy Commission and various Korean interests is unknown and has not been calculated?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) Part (1) of my reply to question 2640 is quite clear. It is not implying any particular action or practice by the previous Government. The Minister responsible is able to seek whatever advice and from whatever source he may consider appropriate.
- (2) No.

MINING

Tenements: Water Rights

2842. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

Adverting to question 2636 of Tuesday, 3 April, does his reply mean the answer to part (1) is "Yes" or "No"?

Mr PARKER replied:

No. As previously advised, the Rights in Water and Irrigation Act and Section 91 of the Mining Act do not give exclusive rights to water.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: KWINANA

Steelworks: Reopening

2843. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

- (1) Adverting to question 2599 of 22 March 1984, who is undertaking the evaluation referred to?
- (2) What discussions have been, are being, or are proposed with Australian Iron and Steel regarding the future use of the Kwinana facility?
- (3) What progress has been made in efforts to re-open the Kwinana facility?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) BHP is carrying out an evaluation in close consultation with the State Government.
- (2) See (1).
- (3) Progress is being made and options are being assessed to enable further and detailed discussion with the Chinese.

SHIPPING

Australian National Line: Bulk Minerals

2844. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

- (1) Does the Government support the involvement of the Australian National Shipping Line in the overseas trade of bulk minerals from Western Australia?
- (2) In view of the substantial costs associated with using Australian National Line ships rather than foreign flag vessels, does the Government accept the trading penalties and difficulties which such high costs impose on Australian exporters?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) The Government does support the achievement of efficient and competitive involvement of Australian equity and manning in our overseas trade shipping.
- (2) Refer (1) above.

ALUMINIUM SMELTER

South-west: Manpower Study

2845. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

Adverting to question 2618 of 22 March 1984, will he provide copies of the existing State Manpower Studies relating to resource projects and which give estimates of trade skills likely to be required for the proposed project?

Mr PARKER replied:

As the member for Narrogin would be aware, a number of reports relating to manpower requirements of resource projects were prepared by the former State manpower planning committee. These reports may be obtained from the appropriate Government departments in the normal way. Estimates of trade skills likely to be required for the aluminium smelter and associated power station project proposed for the south-west region of the State are currently the subject of analysis.

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Community Employment Programme: Projects and Applications

2846. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister representing the Minister for Employment and Training:

- (1) Under the community employment initiatives programme designated as "community initiatives", how many small projects to assist local communities have been funded?
- (2) How many applications for the programme have been received?
- (3) How much has been allocated to the successful applicants?
- (4) Will he provide me with a list of the successful applicants?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) No projects have been funded as yet. However, preliminary discussions have been undertaken with approximately twenty local community organisations that may be interested in applying for funds.
- (2) Five.
- (3) None as yet. Applications are being processed.
- (4) Yes.

2847 and 2848. *These questions were postponed.*

TOURISM

Hotel: Dunsborough

2849. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Regional Development and the North West:

- (1) When does he expect that construction will begin on the proposed five star hotel in Dunsborough, in line with his announcement in Bunbury on 5 December?
- (2) Who will construct the hotel?
- (3) Who will operate the hotel?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) to (3) No commitment has been made as yet.

HEALTH: MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS

Country: Introduction of Medicare

2850. Mr GRAYDEN, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Have any discussions taken place between the Minister and the Australian Medical Association in respect of the position in which some country medical practitioners find themselves as a result of the introduction of Medicare?
- (2) If so, what is the current position in respect of this issue?

Mr HODGE replied:

- (1) Only general discussions have taken place. No specific geographical problems have been quantified.
- (2) See (1).

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT*Medical Insurance Funds: Retrenchments*

2851. Mr GRAYDEN, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Has there been any attempt to determine how many employees of voluntary health insurance organisations who were displaced as a result of the introduction of Medicare have been absorbed into the Medicare system?

- (2) If so, with what result?

- (3) If not, why not?

Mr HODGE replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) 90 full-time, 8 part-time.
- (3) Not applicable.

HOSPITALS: MEDICARE*Increased Demand: Current Situation*

2852. Mr GRAYDEN, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Has there been any indication of additional pressure on Government hospitals as a consequence of the introduction of Medicare?

- (2) If so—

- (a) Which are the hospitals thus affected;

- (b) in what way have the hospitals been affected?

Mr HODGE replied:

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

FUEL AND ENERGY: ELECTRICITY*York: Underground Cables*

2853. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

- (1) Relating to the commitment and written ministerial instruction that State Energy Commission cabling would be placed underground in order to maintain the historic nature of the main street of York, on what basis and for what reason was the precise ministerial instruction ignored by senior officers of the State Energy Commission?

- (2) Were further discussions held with the York Shire Council between the original commitment and February 1984 when

the State Energy Commission advised it would not undertake the agreed works and honour the given commitment?

- (3) If the answer to (2) is "Yes", what was the substance of the discussions?
- (4) When was he made aware of the commitment, and when did he receive advice from a senior officer of the State Energy Commission to abrogate the undertaking?
- (5) Is he prepared to further discuss the given commitment with representatives of the York Shire Council?
- (6) On whose instructions was the letter of 22 February 1984, signed by Mr D. A. Gooch, manager, north area, forwarded to the Shire Clerk, York Shire Council?
- (7) On what date was the quotation of \$27 000 for the underground cabling referred to in the above letter given to the York Shire Council?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) I have read the "instruction" and to my mind it was not precise, but equivocal. In fact, it is drawing a long bow to even describe it as an instruction. The final sentence left the door open. In any case it was not ignored. It was given on the eve of the last election and made as an election promise. By the time the commission was required to act, the new Government was in office; and in accordance with the provisions of section 10(6) of the State Energy Commission Act 1979 as amended, the matter was referred to the then Minister for Fuel and Energy, the Hon. Peter Dowding MLC, for confirmation. The Minister advised the commission that there should be no departure from the normal policy of charging the actual costs for such work.

I have since reviewed this decision and fully agree with my predecessor on the basis that other local authorities such as Fremantle, Albany, Kalgoorlie, Busselton, and Toodyay, have claims of equal historical significance. Establishing a precedent in the case of York would lead to similar requests from others which would be difficult to refute. I find it extraordinary that it be even suggested that an incoming Government should have to implement a defeated Government's election promises.

- (2) Further discussions were held with the York Shire Council and the SEC did advise of its decision as outlined previously.
- (3) This matter is of a commercial nature and is confidential between the commission and its customer.
- (4) Answered by (1).
- (5) I am prepared to have discussions at any time with the York Shire Council, but my decision on this matter is final.
- (6) Senior commission management, with my approval.
- (7) As with (3), this matter is also of a commercial nature and is confidential between the commission and its customer.

WATER RESOURCES: UNDERGROUND

Bunbury: Drilling Programme

2854. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

- (1) Could he please describe the latest results of the drilling undertaken around and south of Bunbury by the geological survey division of the Mines Department, both from point of view of shallow ground water and deeper?
- (2) Is any mapping to be done following these results, and if so, when?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) Exploratory drilling in the Bunbury area, which has been undertaken to evaluate ground water resources to depths of about 100 metres, shows that useful supplies are available for farms and small scale development over a wide area. Water quality is generally quite good and is suitable for irrigation or for domestic use. The full results of this work will shortly be published in a geological survey professional paper, report No. 12, as a paper entitled "Bunbury Shallow Drilling Groundwater Investigation".

The deeper ground water of the Bunbury area was explored in the period 1974-1978 with a line of bores in, and east of, Bunbury. The results, which are recorded in geological survey record 1981-2, indicate large storages of potable water extending to depths of 600-700 metres. These constitute important reserves for Bunbury and other public water supplies.

- (2) A geological map on a scale of 1:50 000 covering the Bunbury-Burekup area was published as part of the geological survey's urban geological map series in 1981. This incorporates some of the information derived from the ground water exploration referred to above.

MINING: IRON ORE

Brazil: Long-term Contracts

2855. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

- (1) Is he aware that some Japanese steel mills have signed long term contracts for the transport of iron ore from Brazilian ports to Japan which brings the over-all price of Brazilian ore—for the first time ever—below the Australian ore for Japanese steel makers?
- (2) As this arrangement came soon after the unusual outburst by Japanese steel makers against the Pilbara Maritime Union's industrial actions against Japanese flag-carriers, will he tell what action the Government has taken or will take to curb union domination of the State's exports to persuade Australian National Line to be either competitive or get out of the iron ore carrying business and to regain the confidence of Japanese steel makers in order to save the future of this important industry for Western Australia?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) I am aware that a very favourable 10-year shipping contract has been entered into with a Brazilian shipping company for the supply of iron ore to Japan. The two carriers the subject of the contract have not yet been constructed. It is misleading to say that the arrival price in Japan will be lower than for Australian ore. This would only be the case if the old ANL contract price were to be used. The ANL contract has expired and is now being renegotiated, and the article which would have been sighted by the member is in fact part of the Japanese bargaining strategy. By asking this question, the member is supporting the Japanese side in the negotiations.

It must be remembered that the Brazilians are desperate for foreign exchange and are prepared to accept very low prices. International freight

rates are also very depressed at present, and low contract rates are to be expected.

- (2) I point out that ANL is not the responsibility of the Western Australian Government. In addition, it cannot be claimed by the member that an isolated ban of only a few days' duration represents "union domination of the State's exports". In any event, the Government is taking positive steps to improve industrial relations in the industry.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND INSTRUMENTALITIES

Boards: Terms of Appointment

2856. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister representing the Minister for Consumer Affairs:
- Could he please list the instances when during the last nine year term of the Liberal-National Country Party Government the office of all the board/commission members of a semi-Governmental instrumentality under the jurisdiction of the Minister responsible for his portfolio has simultaneously expired, as reportedly happened with members of the Builders' Registration Board recently?

Mr TONKIN replied:

- (1) Motor Vehicle Dealers Licensing Board
 - 14 February 1977
 - 21 February 1980
 - 21 February 1983 (appointed by the previous Government)
- (2) Painters' Registration Board
 - 31 December 1974
 - 31 December 1977
 - 31 December 1980
 - 31 December 1983 (appointed by the previous Government)
- (3) Builders' Registration Board
 - 31 December 1974
 - 31 December 1977
 - 31 December 1980
 - 31 December 1983 (appointed by the previous Government)

WASTE DISPOSAL

Hazelmere

2857. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Has it been established whether the waste disposal project in Adelaide Street, Hazelmere, is acceptable from a health point of view?
- (2) If so, what guarantees are to be given by the owners in connection with the operators of the plant to safeguard ground water pollution and the interest of the neighbours generally?

Mr HODGE replied:

- (1) There has been no formal approach to the Commissioner of Public Health to use this site for waste disposal. If an application is received, an examination of the suitability of the site will be undertaken.
- (2) Not applicable.

WATER RESOURCES: UNDERGROUND

Ground Water: Collie

2858. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Has his department or the Environmental Protection Authority conducted a study regarding the ground water used and presumably continuously reused for cooling purposes by the proposed new power generating plant near Collie?
- (2) If so, can he tell whether there are any environmental dangers as a result of the discharge of more saline water used for cooling?
- (3) If not, why not?

Mr DAVIES replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) An environmental review and management programme is being produced by the State Energy Commission and will examine the environmental aspects of the usage of ground water and disposal of waste waters from the proposed power station. This assessment will be based on studies carried out and funded by the State Energy Commission to ascertain potential environmental concerns with respect to ground water usage.

I understand that the SEC proposes that saline waters—cooling water blowdown—from the existing and proposed power stations be discharged through a pipeline into the ocean at Bunbury. The State Energy Commission is presently preparing an environmental assessment of this discharge for submission to the Environmental Protection Authority.

FERTILISERS

Phosphorus Content

2859. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for the Environment:

What are the tangible results so far of his department's endeavour to reduce the phosphorus content of fertiliser used around the Peel Inlet and Harvey Estuary and claimed to reduce the growth of algae in these waters?

Mr DAVIES replied:

It is not the phosphorus content of fertiliser used around the Peel-Harvey estuary which needs to be reduced, but rather the amount of phosphorus applied to the land and the form in which it is applied.

Investigations undertaken by DCE in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture have shown that coastal plain farmers with sandy soils within the estuary's catchment could reduce application rates by an average of about 50 per cent without loss of production. Where phosphorus is needed, it should be applied in a slow-release form rather than by applying ordinary superphosphate.

A pilot extension programme which commenced in the summer and autumn of 1982-83 gave encouraging results. A selection of farmers with paddocks in areas with deep sands and sand over clay soils had their paddocks tested and were provided advice on fertiliser requirements.

The overall result was about a 23 per cent reduction in the phosphorus application rate on these farms and a 7 per cent reduction in the average concentration of phosphorus in drainage waters entering the Harvey Estuary. In key areas of deep sands, 70 per cent of farmers used slow-release coastal

superphosphate on part of their properties, and there was a 29 per cent reduction in phosphorus concentration in drainage waters from these areas. However, progress was hampered last year by the lack of a suitable slow-release form of sulphur, another essential plant nutrient, for farmers who had adequate reserves of phosphorus in the soil and who only needed to apply sulphur. Most of these farmers then applied needed sulphur by applying superphosphate which contains 10 per cent sulphur.

Significant further progress was made last summer with the commercial release by CSBP of new coastal superphosphate, which is enriched with elemental sulphur. This will enable farmers to apply lowered amounts of slow-release phosphorus while still maintaining adequate levels of sulphur.

Scientists in the Peel-Harvey study team estimate that if the Government-endorsed soil testing programme for all of the coastal plain catchments is continued for 3-4 years, most farmers will use new coastal super and other versions of slow-release fertilisers which are still under development. This should reduce input of phosphorus to the estuary by up to 40 per cent thereby making a significant and cost-effective contribution to reducing algae growth in the estuary while reducing fertiliser losses to farmers, hence saving them money.

On 15 February 1984, the Premier announced that the Government would provide a free soil testing service to some 400 farmers in the coastal plain catchments. So far this programme appears to have been well received and initial results of this year's efforts will be known by October.

WATER RESOURCES: RATES

Rebates: Rebilling

2860. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) What was the reason of the reported (*The West Australian*, page 2, 13 December), re-billing of rebates by the Metropolitan Water Authority to customers who have paid their respective accounts in time to be entitled to the rebate?

- (2) Have measures been taken to prevent the recurrence of overcharging?

Mr TONKIN replied:

- (1) and (2) The newspaper item referred to customers who had failed to receive the discount for prompt payment because their payments had not been received by the authority within the period of grace allowed after the expiry of the due date. Their accounts therefore showed a balance due, equal to the amount of discount claimed but not allowed.

Most of the customers involved acknowledged that they had paid late and accepted the situation. Unfortunately, there were some cases where the payments had been made within the prescribed time through official agencies but the transmission of those payments had been inadvertently delayed. The authority has been assured that its requirements will be more closely observed in future.

The discount has been given retrospectively in all cases where the customer's claim of timely payment could reasonably be accepted.

2861 and 2862. *These questions were postponed.*

WATER RESOURCES: DAMS AND CATCHMENT AREAS

South-west Land Resource Task Force

2863. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) To what extent has the control of present dams, catchment areas, future dams, and other areas affecting water resources been affected by the report of the task force on land resource management in south-western Australia?
- (2) What is he or the Metropolitan Water Authority going to do about it?

Mr TONKIN replied:

- (1) and (2) The recommendations in the report of the task force have not yet been implemented. However, the management of water supply catchments and reserves in Western Australia is the responsibility of the water authorities under their own Statutes, and the proposal to establish a department of natural land management will not introduce

any significant variations to existing arrangements in this regard.

2864. *This question was postponed.*

TOWN PLANNING

Committee of Inquiry into Statutory Planning

2865. Mr BLAIKIE, to the Minister representing the Minister for Planning:

- (1) What are the terms of reference of the committee of inquiry into statutory planning in Western Australia?
- (2) On what dates and where has the committee met?
- (3) What was the Government's rationale in appointing members of the committee, but not including shire councillors representative of city and/or country local government?
- (4) With the extensive role that local authorities already have in country areas planning, and recognising that any changes to planning will involve local government, will the Government give consideration to appointing at least one representative from that area?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) I refer the member to an answer given by my predecessor to a question on this matter on 26 October 1983, question 1694.
- (2) The inaugural meeting of the committee was held on 21 November 1983. The meetings have been held weekly in Oakleigh Building, St. Georges Terrace, Perth.
- (3) and (4) See (1)

2866 and 2867. *These questions were postponed.*

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

Board: Membership

2868. Mr BLAIKIE, to the Minister for Lands and Surveys:

- (a) Who are the members of the Zoological Gardens Board;
- (b) what is their term of office;
- (c) what interest area do they represent;
- (d) when were they appointed?

Mr McIVER replied:

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS BOARD

| Member | Term of Office | Area of Interest | Date of Appointment |
|---|----------------|--|---------------------|
| PROFESSOR A. R. MAIN (PRESIDENT) | 3 years | | 1 November 1981 |
| PROFESSOR M. E. NAIRN (VICE PRESIDENT) | 3 years | Appointments made under Section 6 of the "Zoological Gardens Act, 1972". Area of interest not defined. | 1 November 1981 |
| JUDGE B. T. O'DEA | 3 years | | 1 November 1981 |
| MR B. K. BOWEN | 3 years | | 1 November 1981 |
| Mr J. A. ROBERTS | 3 years | | 1 November 1981 |
| MR W. H. BUTLER | 3 years | | 1 November 1981 |
| MR C. P. BANT | 3 years | | 19 August 1983 |

BEEKEEPING

Apiarists: Number

2869. Mr BLAICKIE, to the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) What has been the number of apiarists as—

(a) private;

(b) commercial honey producers, in each year since 1980?

(2) What was the value of the product and amount produced in each year?

(3) What was the amount and value of the product exported from Australia in each year?

Mr EVANS replied:

(1) Number of apiarists (WA) Commercial*

| Year | Private | Commercial* |
|------|---------|-------------|
| 1980 | 1 217 | 90 |
| 1981 | 1 377 | 90 |
| 1982 | 1 581 | 96 |
| 1983 | 1 440 | 88 |

* The Department of Agriculture defines a commercial apiarist as one with 200 hives or more.

(2) Value and amount of product produced (WA)

| | Pro- duction (tonnes) | Value (\$) |
|-------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| 79/80 | 2 624 | 1 836 591 |
| 80/81 | 2 023 | 1 472 687 |
| 81/82 | 2 557 | 1 745 898 |
| 82/83 | 3 141 | 2 243 869 |

(Source ABS)

(3) Amount and value of exports from Australia

| | Amount (tonnes) | Value (FOB \$A) |
|---------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1979/80 | 11 530 | 11 730 574 |
| 1980/81 | 8 374 | 9 264 871 |
| 1981/82 | 12 870 | 10 646 210 |
| 1982/83 | 14 722 | 12 605 527 |

(Source ABS)

2870 to 2872. *These questions were postponed.*

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

FIRE BRIGADES

Board: Industrial Dispute

690. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

(1) Did he direct or indicate to the Fire Brigades Board or its staff that they should modify their stance in opposition to that taken by the Fire Brigade Employees Union on pay rises, supported by its industrial action?

(2) Has he been advised that the claims of the union are in conflict with the wages system and the prices and incomes accord?

Mr CARR replied:

(1) I have issued no direction to the Fire Brigades Board with regard to the dispute that took place last week. I had discussions with representatives of the Fire Brigades Board executive, with the union, and with the Minister for Industrial Relations who was handling the

matter for the Government through his office of industrial relations. I understand that an agreement has been reached in principle; however, I understand that it will involve the matter going before the Industrial Commission for determination in terms of whether any amount of money should be paid towards the settlement of the dispute.

- (2) I have received no advice suggesting that the matter is outside the guidelines of the wages pause situation.

TOURISM

Secret Harbour Project: Current Status

691. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister representing the Minister for Planning:

I have given some notice of this question, which is as follows—

Now that the Secret Harbour agreement has been signed between the State and the company, what progress is being made on the development.

Mr PARKER replied:

I thank the member for the question and advise the House that the company has moved quickly to proceed with the development. It has already—

let tenders for deepwater bores and drilling programmes;
commissioned final engineering design work;
issued invitations to six WA architectural firms to submit for final design programmes;
let tenders for bathymetric—ocean floor—survey; and
undertaken a recruitment drive for management and administrative personnel.

The \$15 million first stage will begin in August-September this year with the construction of breakwaters and sea walls, sand bypass system, and entrance channel and inner harbour dredging. The development will be a vital long-term employment generator in the Rockingham area by creating hundreds of real and permanent jobs and has been largely brought about by the Government's positive approach to reach quick but considered development decisions in the community's interest.

GAMBLING: CASINO

Burswood Island: Decision

692. Mr MacKINNON, to the Deputy Premier:

- (1) When did the Government make its decision to proceed with the casino on Burswood Island?
- (2) Did the Cabinet subcommittee recommend in favour of this location?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) and (2) The Premier is handling this matter, and I am not in the Chamber tonight in the capacity of Acting Premier, because the Premier will be away for only half a day. I hope this will not cause too much inconvenience to members opposite wanting responses from the Premier on questions involving his portfolios. He will be back tomorrow, and should they wish to receive a quick reply to any queries they could perhaps place questions on the Notice Paper for tomorrow.

TECHNOLOGY

Department of Computing and Information Technology: Establishment

693. Mr P. J. SMITH, to the Minister for Technology:

Does the establishment of a State Government department of computing and information technology mean that the Government intends to centralise computing facilities within the public sector?

Mr BRYCE replied:

No. The establishment of the department of computing and information technology in fact is a move by the Government to broaden the base of knowledge about computing and information technologies within the State. It is on one hand an administrative rationalisation of existing facilities, and on the other hand a springboard for the Government to become involved in a range of activities which will enhance the stature of Western Australia in areas of strategic systems development and encouragement of better use of information technologies in the public sector.

It will also provide the Government with a "window" into the computer software and information technology industry.

The Government intends to use this "window" to encourage the private sector to take a more positive stance on the use of information technologies and best available systems developments in order to improve productivity and efficiency in industry generally.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS: DISPUTES

Public Transport: Government Action

694. Mr LAURANCE, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) What efforts is he making to avert the threatened transport strike on Thursday?
- (2) Has he made any attempt to make alternative drivers available should members of the Australian Tramway and Motor Omnibus Employees' Association proceed with their plans to disrupt metropolitan transport on Thursday?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) The Minister for Industrial Relations and I had a meeting this afternoon with two officials of the union in an attempt to ascertain exactly what the problem was and to see whether we might be able to come to some compromise. It appears that the union has taken objection to wording in an MTT discussion paper—it is only a discussion paper, not a policy document—referring to the use of minibuses in suburbs, the possible future use of taxis to complement bus services, and the possible use of part-time drivers, not on regular services but on charter services.

I made it clear to the union representatives that neither the Government nor the MTT had adopted any policy in respect to these matters, and that the discussion paper to which they were objecting in fact did not contain any recommendations on those subjects. The paper is simply a fairly academic discussion paper which does not present any threat at this time to union members—nor do I think it will pose a threat to the future employment of bus drivers.

The union representatives accepted a lot of what I had to say but felt nonetheless that there should be no discussion on these particular subjects, whether or not they became policy. I simply indicated to them that in a democratic society it

was not possible for a Minister to suppress discussion on any relevant issue. I have just signed a letter addressed to the union indicating that if they want to add a rider to the paragraphs which offend them within that discussion paper, to the effect that they thoroughly oppose any policy recommendations that might arise from the offending areas, I would be happy to see that written in. If they are prepared to accept a compromise along this line, we might be able to avert a stop-work meeting. I certainly hope we can.

Unfortunately the drivers have gone off half-cocked and have allowed fear for future job positions to concern them unnecessarily. They mentioned that they were not able to trust some previous Governments and so did not know whether they could trust this Government. I have assured them that the Government will not adopt the discussion paper as policy without full and frank consultation with them. I am therefore hoping the stop-work meeting will be averted.

- (2) No.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS: DISPUTE

Dampier-Wagerup Pipeline

695. Mr D. L. SMITH, to the Minister for Minerals and Energy:

Have there been any significant industrial disputes affecting the construction of the Dampier to Wagerup natural gas pipeline?

Mr PARKER replied:

No. The final production weld was completed ahead of schedule, setting world records for pipeline production welding and reflecting the healthy level of co-operation between the contractor and his employees.

Some 1 500 kilometres of the pipeline was laid in less than 12 months, and the pipeline has progressed at a rate of up to 240 kilometres a month of installed pipeline.

The project has directly employed more than 1 800 people, most of them Western Australians.

This achievement over the past 11 or 12 months has been a very significant one,

and a great deal of credit is due to all the people involved, including my predecessor, the SEC as a whole, Fluor Maunsell who are the consultant contractors, the ICC/Kulige group, Saipem (Australia) and the trade union movement and its members.

This project has been carried out in a way that has been to the great credit of this State, because in the past many people pointed to problems in our industrial relations record in various areas, and no doubt we do have areas where such problems exist. However, the industrial relations record has been tremendous—better than almost anywhere else in the world—not only in relation to our side of the project, but also in relation to the Woodside component of it. That gives a great deal of confidence to us and the private sector in going out into the world and attracting markets or investors here. It is a credit to the trade union movement and to the people I have previously mentioned who are working together to bring the project to a successful conclusion.

ROAD: FREEWAY

Mitchell: Stage 6

696. Mr CLARKO, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Has there been a firm public commitment by the Government that stage 6 of the Mitchell Freeway—from Warwick Road to Hepburn Avenue—is to be built immediately stage 5—Delawney Street to Warwick Road—is completed?

- (2) If so, when was this announcement made?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) and (2) The Main Roads Department is still looking at the question of time for stage 6. No categorical commitment has been made regarding timing.

ROAD

Murray St. Mall

697. Mr TERRY BURKE, to the Minister for Transport:

Does the Government agree that Murray Street should be turned into a

pedestrian mall between William Street and Barrack Street?

Mr GRILL replied:

The Government's view is that, at this stage, through-traffic should be kept out of this section of Murray Street with full pedestrian access being possible later.

At present there are two taxi ranks in this section of Murray Street and there is a bus service of moderate frequency. It is beneficial to retain the excellent access to the shopping area provided by these bus and taxi services.

In addition, there is no point in having shops if the goods cannot be delivered to them in a reasonably economical way. Therefore, the Government believes that service and delivery vehicles should continue to have access and that loading zones should be provided for them, unless and until some alternative arrangements are made, perhaps in a redeveloped Forrest Place.

The situation would be rather like Hay Street Mall during the hours when vehicles are admitted. There would be a fair amount of coming and going of slow moving vehicles. However, it should be remembered that Murray Street is wider than Hay Street.

The Government believes this would be a definite advance in turning over the centre of Perth to people instead of vehicles. It would benefit shoppers and it would benefit shopkeepers.

We have asked the Perth City Council to consider the possibility of closing this section of Murray Street to through-traffic, at least on an experimental basis.

RAILWAYS: FREIGHT

Joint Venture: Withdrawal of Mayne Nickless Ltd.

698. Mr COWAN, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of reports that Mayne Nickless Ltd. is considering withdrawing from the Total West transport venture with Westrail?

- (2) If Mayne Nickless does withdraw from the joint venture, can the Minister advise the House what action will be taken by the other venturer, Westrail, to maintain a transport service to rural areas and ensure full utilisation of the Kewdale freight terminal?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) I understand that at present the joint venturers are giving consideration to their equity position within the joint venture. I do not know more than that because I have not yet seen any definite plans.
- (2) The Transport Commission is vested with the responsibility of ensuring that adequate transport services are available for all parts of country areas. To date that task has been performed magnificently. I have no doubt that if there is a rearrangement of the equity participation within Total West the commission will continue to monitor the situation and ensure adequate transport services are maintained.

HEALTH

"Health Yourself" Shop

699. Mr BERTRAM, to the Minister for Health:

The State Government's "Health Yourself" shop in Perth has now been operating since early February. I ask—

Would the Minister please indicate what interest the public has shown in this centre and whether, as planned, it is being used by health professionals.

Mr HODGE replied:

I am advised that more than 7 000 people have visited the shop in its first months of operation and that over 600 computerised health appraisals have been conducted. More importantly, approximately 70 per cent of the people who have completed assessments have said they would like regular appraisals.

I am pleased to report that some doctors are taking the health appraisal questionnaires into their surgeries and encouraging people to book for an appraisal.

I can further advise the member that the National Heart Foundation of Australia (WA Division Inc.) used the centre recently for a week to give free blood pressure tests and that other programmes are planned at the shop relating to dental care and nutrition.

I am confident "Health Yourself" is achieving its objective; namely, to encourage people to examine their lifestyle habits.

WATER RESOURCES

Authority: Membership

700. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

Does the Minister intend to appoint members of Parliament to the board, or any of the committees, or regional advisory committees of the proposed water authority of Western Australia?

Mr TONKIN replied:

As far as the board is concerned, "No". In regard to the regional advisory committees, I have not given any consideration as to who may be appointed. Because of a strong recommendation by country members on this side of the House, it was decided to write into the legislation a provision for regional advisory committees. The people who are appointed to the regional advisory committees would largely depend on the needs of the area. I would not rule out a member of Parliament being on such a committee because a situation may arise in which people most able to represent a particular area may be members of Parliament.

However, the composition of the regional advisory committees has not even been considered.

EDUCATION: TERTIARY ADMISSIONS

McGaw Committee: Recommendations

701. Mrs BEGGS, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) What is the Minister's view of a recommendation of the McGaw committee inquiring into school certification and tertiary admissions procedures that English should not be a subject which can contribute to a student's tertiary entrance score?
- (2) Does the Minister agree with comments made by the head of the English department at the University of WA, Professor Hay, in today's edition of *The West Australian*, that the McGaw committee report downgrades English and that the proposal to replace English with literacy assessment is "pious nonsense"?

Mr Hassell: He answered that on the radio this morning.

Mrs Beggs: I did not have time to listen to it.

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) and (2) I am grateful to the member for her interest in the sweeping reforms which are taking place in Western Australian education at present, because it is of interest to Government members—an interest which appears not to be matched on the Opposition side of the House.

Government members: Hear, hear!

Mr PEARCE: The situation with regard to the McGaw proposals is this: Among a sweeping set of propositions which involve on the one hand the ability to institute a proper selection process for university and tertiary education, and on the other hand a broadly-based education system which would make the graduates of our school system much more acceptable to employers—if the graduates are going directly to work—than has previously been the case, is a proposal to restrict the number of subjects from which students could use their average mark in order to gain selection to a tertiary institution.

In fact, the McGaw Committee has not recommended that English expression as distinct from English literature be excluded from that set, although the report does include a table which has a possible arrangement of subjects, leaving English expression in the non-TAE situation, and retaining English literature in the

group of subjects which can be used for the TAE average.

When I released the report I indicated that I had some reservation about this matter because, although I accept the McGaw committee's two proposals on this subject—one of which is that there needs to be a certification of the literacy competence of all students as a factor in their school graduation—it would mean under the McGaw proposal that one could not gain entrance to a tertiary institution unless one were certified as literate at the time one left school. That is not the present case, even though the English score works for the aggregate. Under the McGaw proposal if one is not literate one does not graduate, hence one cannot gain entrance to a tertiary institution. The proposal places a much greater emphasis on literacy than previously has applied.

The other matter the McGaw proposal points to is that if we are to allow selection from a small group of subjects, those subjects must be accurate predictors of tertiary performance. At present, students are not only sitting for the English examination and passing it well, but also some of those students have not studied English at high school level. That is to say, they have not studied the course, but are doing well in the exam.

My proposal is that the Government should consider as an alternative to the McGaw proposition—namely, that English should be left out of the subset—the English course being made more academically rigorous for years 11 and 12, and continuing under those circumstances to be incorporated into the set from which the TAE average may be taken.

I have indicated that when we establish the new secondary education authority which will oversee this area, one of the tasks I will be setting the authority is to produce an English curriculum which is as rigorous as the one I have suggested.

TECHNOLOGY: PARK

Medical Incorporated: Freehold Land

702. Mr COURT, to the Minister for Technology:

- (1) Has the Government provided free freehold land for Medical Incorporated to establish itself at technology park?
- (2) If "Yes", how much land is involved, and what is its value?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) and (2) The member asked that question earlier today on notice; I do not know whether it is because he is the apprentice member for Nedlands that he does not understand.

Mr Court: I have not had an answer.

Mr BRYCE: The answer is that which was given a few days ago to the member for Bunbury who demonstrated an intelligent interest in this subject. Let me explain it in detail. If the member thinks I have refused to answer this question, perhaps he will accept chapter and verse right now.

When the agreement being negotiated between Medical Incorporated and the Government of Western Australia has been concluded it will be a public document. It will be brought to this Chamber and will be considered by the Parliament. It constitutes the first agreement of its kind in the State's economic history. It involves a project worth something in the vicinity of \$40 million and a great deal of important technology transferred from a multinational company with its headquarters in the United States to our community.

For the benefit of the member who appears to be terribly concerned that the Government may be doing a favour for a particular company as opposed to the interests of Western Australian companies, I point out that the Government is very firmly of the view that if we are to attain the level of technological expertise we need to enable us to survive and prosper well into the next decade, we will need to encourage local genius and talent which will be accommodated in the technology park. We need also to attract companies like Medical Incorporated from other parts of the world with skills and a form of technology

which they can transfer to Western Australia as a result of the agreement currently being negotiated between the Government and that company. When that agreement has been concluded it will be a public document and will be brought to Parliament for ratification.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Act: Delegation of Authority

703. Mr TROY, to the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) Is the Minister aware that the existing provisions of the Local Government Act limit the ability of councils to delegate many routine day-to-day matters for determination by council officers?
- (2) If he is, does he propose to take any action to improve the situation?

Mr CARR replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question, the answer to which is as follows—

- (1) and (2) Yes, I am aware of the situation, and subject to reaching agreement with the associations of local government, I anticipate legislation being placed before Parliament in the coming spring session to provide for delegation of certain powers to council officers.

I received representations from the City of Perth in February 1983, which were supported in principle by the Local Government Association and the Country Shire Councils Association.

A working party comprising officers of my department and two other officers from local authorities nominated by the then Institute of Municipal Administration was asked to look at the question in May 1983.

This working party has finalised its report, and this has now been referred to the associations of local government for comment.

RAILWAYS: WESTRAIL

Staff: Redundancies

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

- (1) What progress is being made with his promise to promote alternative employment opportunities in the great southern

for those Westrail employees who will shortly lose their jobs?

- (2) In attempting to attract industry, will he undertake with his colleagues to offer the same inducements to potential industries which may wish to establish in the great southern as offered to other industries in Perth and elsewhere in the State?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) and (2) I am pleased to be able to inform the member that the first meeting of the interdepartmental committee which I promised to set up in association with the Deputy Premier will meet in Narrogin next Monday morning. The member is welcome to attend the meeting if he so wishes. A number of departmental officers will be there, and I will send him the details if he would like them.

Mr Peter Jones: Thank you very much.

Mr Old: Is it to set up the working committee?

Mr GRILL: This is the interdepartmental working committee.

Mr Old: Are they going to co-opt any local government members?

Mr GRILL: Yes. Letters are going out to the people concerned. If any have been missed who the member thinks should be consulted, I would be grateful if he would let me know.

Mr Peter Jones: Is the second part of the question correct—the inducements to industry and that what is available in Perth will be available in the country?

Mr GRILL: That is basically a matter for the Deputy Premier, but he is co-operating with me on this exercise. I would imagine that those inducements would be forthcoming.

TRANSPORT: BUSES

Part-time Drivers

705. Mr RUSHTON, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Has the Minister given the Australian Tramway and Motor Omnibus Employees' Association an assurance that the MTT will not introduce part-time drivers, mini-buses, and subsidised taxis?

- (2) If "No" to (1), what commitments and assurances has he given the association?

- (3) Is he aware that the three proposals are directed towards improving the efficiency of the MTT and towards minimising its deficit?

- (4) Does he realise that the Government, by giving way to union pressure, will greatly increase the taxpayers' burden by increasing the MTT deficit and causing an unnecessary hike in bus fares, and demonstrate that the Government has abdicated its responsibility for managing the State's assets efficiently and economically?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) No such assurance has been given.

Mr Rushton: The second part of the question asked what assurances had been given.

Mr GRILL: To continue—

- (2) It is not necessary to give an assurance one way or the other at this particular stage. The document to which the union has taken exception is simply a discussion paper. It is not a policy paper and it does not even make recommendations in respect of the matters union representatives complain about. Secondly, no commitments have been made apart from this: I have said to them that if at some future date the MTT or the Government decides one of the recommendations arising out of the discussion paper should be implemented, we will consult closely with them.

- (3) At this stage there are no proposals. It is hard to say proposals are directed at increased efficiency when they do not exist. It is simply a discussion paper which talks generally about increasing efficiency on a range of subjects in a range of areas. The union takes some exception to three areas.

- (4) The Government has not given way to unreasonable pressure to the union.

EDUCATION

Pre-school: Playgroups

706. Mr BRADSHAW, to the Minister for Education:

In view of the funding being made available to the Withers play-group in Bunbury, now known as Withers four-year-old pre-primary, I ask—

What is the Government's policy for other playgroups in Western Australia?

Mr PEARCE replied:

Because the member is new to the House it is reasonable that he did not blush when he asked the question. The Government has moved to fund four-year-old pre-schools in this State to the tune of \$500 000. We had to do that because the now Opposition took funds away from four-year-olds two years ago. The former Minister for Education, who now sits in front of the member for Murray-Wellington, made it clear in the last year of his Government that under a Liberal Government there was no likelihood in the foreseeable future of any money being available for four-year-old pre-school education. This Government has made \$500 000 available in the first half-year that the system has applied, and we have increased the number of four-year-olds by about 50 per cent; in

addition we are paying for 60 per cent or 70 per cent of those currently in the system for whom parents were previously paying.

I have been to many parts of the State and have been pleased, where empty facilities exist, to provide teachers for four-year-olds. In the Withers playgroup situation we were able to make available an Education Department facility and establish a group for four-year-olds. The allocation of \$500 000 has now run out, but I am prepared to entertain a proposition from any community group which has a reasonable facility to provide money for four-year-olds in the next Budget. If any members on the other side wish to see me in this regard they will need to blush and come on their knees.
