

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 2 August 1983

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

SWEARING-IN OF MEMBER

The Clerk of the Council produced and tabled the writ for the election in the North-East Metropolitan Province.

Hon. Lyla Elliott took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance and signed the Roll.

FIREARMS AMENDMENT BILL

Assent

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the Bill.

DEPUTY CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

Appointment

The following members were appointed as Deputy Chairmen of Committees for the session, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 35, on motion without notice by the Hon. D. K. Dans (Leader of the House)—Hons. John Williams and Lyla Elliott.

BUSINESS FRANCHISE (TOBACCO) AMENDMENT BILL

Petition

On motions by the Hon. Margaret McAleer, the following petition bearing the signatures of 31 750 persons was received, read, and ordered to lie upon the Table of the House—

TO: THE PRESIDENT, THE HONOURABLE C. E. GRIFFITHS AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED:

The Petition of the undersigned representatives of the smoking public and retail business in the State of Western Australia respectfully sheweth that the proposed increase of 180 per cent in the Business Franchise (Tobacco) Act would:

Impose additional punitive, and discriminatory taxes on the lower to middle income segment of the community.

result in loss of jobs, increase the consumer price index, impede upon peoples lifestyle, introduce criminal acts of boot

legging, and contradicts the Government Policy on excessive price increases.

Your Petitioners most humbly pray that the Legislative Council in Parliament assembled, should reject the abovementioned Amendment.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

(See paper No. 194.)

QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

[Resolved: That motions be continued.]

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION

Election

The following members were elected to sessional committees, on motion without notice by the Hon. D. K. Dans (Leader of the House)—

- (a) Standing Orders Committee—Hons. John Williams and Lyla Elliott.
- (b) House Committee—Hons. G. J. Edwards, Kay Hallahan and John Williams.
- (c) Printing Committee—Hons. H. W. Gayfer and Fred McKenzie.
- (d) Government Agencies Committee—Hons. Kay Hallahan, John Williams, and N. F. Moore.

PUBLIC AND BANK HOLIDAYS AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by the Hon. D. K. Dans (Leader of the House), and read a first time.

STANDING ORDERS

Suspension: Motion

HON. D. K. DANS (South Metropolitan—Leader of the House) [5.33 p.m.]: I move—

That Standing Orders be suspended so far as to enable the following Bills—

Business Franchise (Tobacco) Amendment Bill;
Local Government Amendment Bill;
Supply Bill;
Temporary Reduction of Remuneration (Senior Public Officers) Bill,

to be passed before the adoption of the Address-in-Reply to His Excellency the Governor's Speech.

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Select Committee: Motion

HON. I. G. MEDCALF (Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) [5.34 p.m.]: I move—

That a Select Committee of this House be appointed to inquire into and report on—

- (a) what committees of this House additional to those already in existence might be appointed with a view to the more efficient, proper and orderly passage of the business of the House including the support of its review and investigatory function;
- (b) the constitution, manner and form of operation of any such committees;
- (c) such other matters as may be appropriate including proposed rules relating or incidental to the appointment and management of any such committees,

the committee to report not later than 31 October 1983.

Initially I shall refer briefly to the historical situation in relation to the appointment of committees over a period of some time and, in doing so, I shall refer to the position in Parliaments other than this one.

In this Parliament we have largely confined our committee activities to the appointment of standing committees to deal with administrative or domestic matters in relation to each of the two Houses of the Parliament. Apart from those standing committees, Select Committees have been set up periodically for particular purposes, such as to investigate matters on which the public were currently focusing attention or to look at issues of a general nature. However, for one reason or another, we have generally confined our activities in this Parliament to the appointment either of standing committees on domestic or administrative matters, such as the ones the Leader of the House has just moved a motion to appoint—that is, the Printing Committee and the Standing Orders Committee—or to Select Committees appointed for particular reasons from time to time.

Of course, there have been two notable exceptions to this practice. The first is that a Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Assembly has been operating for a few years and in the last year or two a Government Agencies Committee of the Legislative Council has been set up as a standing committee to inquire into and scrutinise the activities of government agencies. This committee is commonly referred to as the QANGO committee.

In addition, the Legislative Review and Advisory Committee was set up outside the Parliament under the Legislative Review and Advisory Committee Act. That created what I might best describe as a high-powered citizen committee comprising three eminent people in the community who have the task to review such legislation as Parliament may ask it to review and, in addition, to examine regulations, rules, and by-laws which come before the Parliament.

Therefore, the Legislative Review and Advisory Committee's function is to supervise regulations, statutory rules, and by-laws, but it is not a committee of this Parliament. I shall have more to say about that in a moment.

The time has come for us to consider an expansion of the committee system in this Chamber and, in support of that contention, I shall quote some of the reasons given in favour of the introduction of a committee system in other places.

Firstly, I shall refer to the reasons advanced in the Commonwealth Senate when, some years ago, the Senate took what was then the unprecedented step of setting up a whole series of committees. Generally, the Senate copied the situation which applied in the Federal House in Canada.

I shall refer to some of the reasons which were advanced then for the setting up of the committees in the Senate. They were—

- (1) The increase in the activities of Government;
- (2) the increasing volume and complexity of legislation which cannot always be satisfactorily considered within narrow parliamentary timetables;
- (3) present-day specialisation and the impact of the tremendous progress in science and technology;
- (4) the inadequacy of opportunities and means on the floor of the Senate to discharge fully Parliament's important duty to probe and check Government activities;
- (5) the lack of any formal follow-up procedure to examine citizens' grievances or requests, as expressed in petitions;

That, of course, will strike a chord here. We do not have any form of follow-up procedure in this Chamber. To continue—

- (6) the need for more question and answer sessions with Ministers and departmental officers regarding Bills, policies, and administration;
- (7) the need to establish, through committees, formal channels of communi-

cation between Parliament and interested organisations and individuals;

Several members interjected.

Hon. D. K. Dans: Miss McAleer will be listening very intently.

Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: To continue—

- (8) the fact that Parliament is in session for only about half the year calls for a delegation to committees of power to continue inquiries, and the investigation of Government activities, during the period when Parliament is not in session; and
- (9) the need, in an increasingly expert society, for senators to be able to call upon scholarly research and advice equal in competence to that relied upon by the Government.

A number of distinguished people have favoured this system. Firstly, I would like to quote Sir Robert Menzies who, when dealing with wartime committees during the 1939-45 war, decided that Parliament should be asked to set up a number of joint committees and, in explaining his reasons for that decision to the House of Representatives, he said—

... having regard to the fact that in war-time a considerable transfer of power to the Executive had been found necessary, and to the further consequential fact that Parliament meets for comparatively brief periods, it seemed to me of the first importance that in order to preserve the continuity of parliamentary influence, and the continuous responsibility of members of Parliament, they should be given some continuous function in relation to administrative affairs. This committee system does that. Every Honourable member knows that in the absence of some committee system of this kind, he comes to Canberra for the few weeks during which the House may sit, and then goes away again. If he wishes to exercise a critical function, he must do so without access to material which would make his criticism informed.

As a member of one of these committees, he will have placed before him facts which he may study: Thus, when he comes into this House, he will be an informed critic of the administration.

That quotation came from Odgers' *Australian Senate Practice*.

Mr Whitlam, in his policy speech for the Senate election in November 1967, being the then Leader of the Opposition in the House of Rep-

resentatives, addressed himself to the same matter in the following terms—

The Senate can take important initiatives in drawing attention to important national problems, establishing the facts about those problems and suggesting remedies for them. The Senate has unlimited opportunities to search out the facts, sift the evidence and propose remedies on a whole range of urgent national questions.

We therefore propose that a Labor majority in the Senate will establish committees from both sides of the Senate to inquire into and report upon education, health, natural disasters such as fire, flood and drought, housing, poverty and the urgent question of control, exploitation and ownership of our best natural resources by overseas interests, particularly minerals and submerged lands.

These are all fields in which the national Parliament must accept increasing responsibility.

Two very prominent advocates of the committee system in the Senate at the time were Senator Sir Kenneth Anderson, who was then Leader of the Government, and Senator Lionel Murphy, who later became a judge of the High Court. Both held strong views on the subject of a committee system and, in many respects, their views coincided. Due to the united support which was given by both parties in the Federal Parliament, a comprehensive committee system was set up.

Other well-known people in this Parliament have made comments similar to those I have quoted. I do not propose to quote all the comments that have been made, but members on both sides of the House in the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly have extolled the virtues of a committee system and have suggested that we should appoint more standing committees of this House to inquire into various important aspects of government.

One of the people who was most outspoken and perhaps first drew this matter to attention, was the Hon. Arthur Bickerton, who was a Minister in the Tonkin Government. Although he made a number of statements about the matter, generally he confined himself to advocating the appointment of committees of the Legislative Assembly in relation to public works, subordinate legislation, and public accounts matters. Indeed, partly as a result of the Hon. Arthur Bickerton's advocacy, the Legislative Assembly set up a Public Accounts Committee.

It took a while for the message to seep through. Indeed, it is something we do have to ponder

upon, because we do have to accept in principle that this is the proper action to take. Not all members accept that point the first time it is raised; however, quite a deal of justification is available for the setting up of a system of committees.

Parliament is generally seen by the public today—there are many writings on this subject, which can be found in the popular Press and textbooks—as being an ineffective monitor of government.

Traditionally, in the last 50 years, there has been a clash between the Legislature and the Executive. Perhaps this has been accentuated in recent years, but it has continued for a long time, and the Executive has got the better of the Legislature. It has generally succeeded as a result of its having expert advice, the power of the purse—it has the money—and the ability to take the initiative. Parliament has come off second best, and it is desirable in the interests of good government that firm action be taken to rectify the situation.

Parliamentary responsibility is very important, and in this atmosphere of bureaucratic supremacy which we have today, it seems to me we should strike a blow to maintain parliamentary responsibility. An important principle is at stake: We should have greater parliamentary scrutiny of the Executive, thus making the Executive more accountable for its actions—the Parliament has been losing to the benefit of the Executive.

I will outline some of the general characteristics and attributes of committees: Committees should have a fact-finding function; their principal purpose is to find facts. Committees should not be looked upon as having a legislative function; that is the job of the Parliament. Committees make recommendations only; they do not make decisions. The decisions should be made in Parliament to the extent that they are not, necessarily, decisions of the Executive.

Committees do provide a means for the public to have access to the deliberations of Parliament, and a means for the committees to have access to the public and to determine officially what are the public views on various matters. Committees also have access to Ministers and their departments, and are able to transmit the information obtained to members of Parliament, the public generally, and to interested bodies.

For members of the Legislative Council to increase their knowledge and improve their standards is a matter of considerable value to the community; it is not only a matter of obtaining answers to questions asked in Parliament, but also a matter of obtaining answers to questions that

cannot be asked in Parliament. Many questions cannot be answered in Parliament, and even certain questions cannot be framed adequately to be asked in Parliament. The committee system provides a higher standard of debate because the knowledge of members will be increased, and many matters will be able to be examined outside the House and, therefore, save a lot of the time of the House. The system ensures that legislators better understand the legislation that comes before them from the Government.

Committees, like some other bodies these days, have a watchdog role. A committee system should facilitate the speedier conduct of business in the House, and perhaps departments and other responsible authorities could be persuaded or induced to change some of the things they are doing if those things are found to be out of order.

In one sense a committee has a negotiating role, and may well establish some compromise with an authority or body responsible for the preparation of regulations or orders, or actions outside the Parliament. I stress that a committee should not be used to scrutinise Government policy; it should be treated as part of the proceedings of Parliament and, therefore, be covered by the privilege of Parliament.

Matters would be referred to a committee; it would not initiate actions other than those which the Parliament—in this case, the House—conferred on it. To the extent that the findings of a committee are required to be confidential, they could be confidential; and committees would be required to report to the House.

I have outlined some general characteristics and attributes—if one may use those words—of committees, and I have spoken in a general sense because I want to be sure all members appreciate the kinds of things committees should be set up to do, and should not be set up to do.

Committees of the Senate have been set up. The first, way back in the 1930s, was the Regulations and Ordinances Standing Committee; it is the oldest. Its charter is to scrutinise regulations and ordinances to ascertain that those regulations and ordinances are in accordance with the Statute under which they are made; that they do not trespass unduly on personal rights and liberties; that they do not make the personal rights and liberties of Australians unduly dependent on administrative rather than judicial decisions; and that they are concerned with administrative details and do not amount to substantive legislation which should be a matter for parliamentary enactment. The charter of that committee is much the same as the charter for our Legislative Review

and Advisory Committee under the Legislative Review and Advisory Committee Act.

Of course, there are more recent committees of the Senate, which deal with foreign affairs and defence, constitutional and legal affairs, health and welfare, finance and Government operations, education, science and the arts, social environment, and primary and secondary industry and trade. Recently the Scrutiny of Bills Committee was set up.

The first part of the motion before the Chair is that a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report on what committees of this House additional to those already in existence might be appointed with a view to the more efficient, proper and orderly passage of the business of the House, including the support of its review and investigatory function. This House has a review and investigatory function, and it is desirable that this House be furnished with the details to enable it to carry out that function.

The kinds of committees which could be set up by this House—of course, they would be standing committees—could deal with the Estimates; that is to say, the financial Estimates of the Government. These committees could check on the income and expenditure figures set out in departmental estimates put before the House. Another kind of committee is a legislative committee for particular legislation. We may have a scrutiny of Bills committee—to use the terminology used in the Senate—a subordinate legislation committee, possibly a combined scrutiny of Bills and subordinate legislation committee, and a general purpose committee to further examine parliamentary papers and petitions. As I mentioned earlier, I do not think petitions receive any examination after their tabling in this House; if they do, I would be surprised, and corrected.

Hon. Peter Dowding: Surely you read them all from last year, Mr Medcalf!

Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: The Senate has Estimates Committees, which have been influential in obtaining through the Government detailed explanatory notes on expenditure from numerous departments and authorities. This has greatly assisted the scrutiny process performed by the committees. Ministers and their departmental officers have been questioned by Senate Estimates Committees. As the President of the Senate has said, "This has led to a respect for the examination of expenditure which is really worth while. The stature of the Senate, and its effectiveness have been enormously enhanced since the introduction of this system."

The overseeing of the general expenditure of Government, the calling up of departmental officers and the obtaining of a little more accountability by Government departments and authorities, is an important part of the work of Estimates Committees.

I will now deal with the scrutiny of Bills committee, which, I believe, is very important. Such a committee would deal with the fundamental conformity of a Bill rather than the Government policy in it. I will quote from the Legislative Review and Advisory Committee Act, section 9(1), which sets out what the Legislative Review and Advisory Committee is empowered to do but has never been asked to do. It states—

Any Act, regulation or other statutory instrument may be referred by either House of Parliament or the Minister to the Committee for consideration and report on whether the Act, regulation or instrument—

- (a) unduly trespasses on rights or liberties previously established by law or inherent in the traditional freedoms of Her Majesty's subjects in Western Australia; or
- (b) unduly makes rights dependent upon administrative, and not upon judicial, decisions, or unduly restricts or inhibits rights of appeal against administrative decisions.

That is an important charter, and it represents an important area which could be examined by a scrutiny of Bills committee. As I have said, the Legislative Review and Advisory Committee is empowered to consider a Bill the Parliament refers to it, but so far the Parliament has not referred any Bill to it.

The third important committee is a subordinate legislation committee. Section 7 of the Legislative Review and Advisory Committee Act empowers that committee to scrutinise and examine regulations. The section states—

The functions of the Committee under this Part shall be to consider whether the special attention of Parliament should be drawn to any regulations on the ground that—

- (a) the regulations appear not to be within the power to make regulations conferred by, or not to be in accord with the general objects of, the Act pursuant to which they purport to be made;
- (b) the form or purport of the regulations calls for elucidation;
- (c) the regulations unduly trespass on rights or liberties previously established by law or inherent in the traditional freedoms

of Her Majesty's subjects in Western Australia;

- (d) the regulations unduly make rights dependent upon administrative, and not upon judicial, decisions; or
- (e) the regulations contain matter which, in the opinion of the committee, should properly be dealt with by an Act of Parliament and not by regulations.

That is the most important charter which the Legislative Review and Advisory Committee can carry out effectively, and on which it makes reports to this House and the other House. Unfortunately no action of a continuing nature is taken to ensure the recommendations of that committee are carried out. When I say "no action of a continuing nature", I mean it is difficult to find where Parliament takes any action of a continuing nature. The committee has reported to Parliament, but so far—I can say this without equivocation—Parliament has not done anything as a result of such reports unless a member takes up the issue, and the Parliament thereupon decides to take some action, either to disallow or otherwise deal with the regulation.

As I mentioned a moment ago, it is important for some body to have a discussion and negotiating role with the regulation-making body, whether it be a department, an authority or a Minister. Some organisation or body of this Parliament should enter into discussions and negotiate in regard to any regulation recommended for disallowance. These matters can be taken up, and should be taken up by a committee of this House. That would be an important function a committee of this House could carry out.

I will refer to a quotation which relates to the situation in South Australia. Mr Bickerton, when referring to that situation, as reported in *Hansard* of 10 September 1969, page 823, said this—

Mr. BICKERTON: I hope the Premier will see how members are protected, and their rights, too, by the information which is readily placed before them. At page 563 of the 1967 *Hansard* I had the following to say:—

In this notice paper are stated the regulations which are before the House. At the top of the column on the righthand side is the final day for the notice for disallowance. So members are fully acquainted as to how long they have to move for a disallowance. There is an asterisk in front of certain regulations, and this indicates that disallow-

ance is recommended by the standing committee on subordinate legislation.

Therefore, as this information appears on the notice paper, it is not necessary to see a notice in the *Government Gazette* which is tabled but rarely seen by people. The decision of the committee is brought before the notice of members by its inclusion on the notice paper for both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. This list is added to as regulations are laid on the Table of the House by the Ministers concerned; and on the expiry of the period for giving notice of motion for disallowance, the relevant regulation is removed from the list.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: I quoted that to illustrate that there is a method which can be used to draw the attention of members to the expiry of the date by which regulations may be disallowed. It also draws attention to the current situation in South Australia, and any member can take action. That State has a subordinate legislation committee. We have no such committee here, but we have the Legislative Review and Advisory Committee which has much the same task. However, no parliamentary committee is responsible for implementing the reports of that public committee, which reports to you, Mr President, and to Mr Speaker.

I understand at this very moment reports are before the House from the Legislative Review and Advisory Committee recommending disallowance of regulations. My attention has been drawn to two tabled by Mr President tonight in which there is a recommendation for regulations to be disallowed. They deal with such matters as the licensing of street vendors and the sale of instant lottery tickets. In each case there are recommendations that the regulations are *ultra vires*; that is, they go beyond the powers which the Act allows, so the regulations are out of order.

It is very important that a report made to Parliament in relation to such matters should be treated seriously by Parliament, and follow-up action should be taken. That on its own would be an important justification for a standing committee of this House to police and enforce. It is not necessary for disallowance action to be taken in every case.

Indeed, it is very desirable that the bodies or authorities—local government or otherwise—responsible for the rules and regulations, should have their attention drawn to them officially by a

body of this Parliament, and suggestions should be made that they be rectified in an appropriate manner. If proper assurances were given there would be no need to move for their disallowance. The matter could be attended to by the regulations being amended and new regulations inserted by the appropriate authority or department.

The functions of a scrutiny of Bills committee and of a subordinate legislation committee could be combined in one committee of this House. I am not necessarily saying that is the answer, but I am drawing attention to the kinds of committees which could be inquired into by a Select Committee with a view to setting up such as were considered to be of importance. Another committee to which consideration could be given would be a general purposes committee in relation to Parliamentary papers and petitions.

When one contemplates the number of papers and reports—quite apart from petitions—that are lodged in this House, and receive no further attention unless some hard-working member who has a particular interest in a subject happens to study them or take an interest in them, one must appreciate that the public are being poorly served in many ways. It behoves us as members of Parliament to take some action or notice of the heap of documents and papers which come before us. Members are busy and have electorate responsibilities and, in the case of Ministers, ministerial responsibilities. Nevertheless, it becomes a task of this House and the Parliament to ensure some action is taken to process, examine and scrutinise these papers and documents and see they are dealt with in an appropriate way—in a way that behoves us as legislators.

In addition, it is possible to have legislation committees set up for particular Bills. A legislation committee could be set up, if we had provision for such a committee, to examine a particular Bill at the behest of the House, or the Government, or Parliament. Members would be better informed in relation to a particular Act and the details of an Act could be studied, examined and discussed with Ministers or departmental officers, or others involved, and perhaps public reaction obtained. In many cases that would be quite satisfactory to the Government if it took a long-term view and appreciated that some Bills will benefit from this kind of scrutiny. Other Bills, particularly those dealing with finance may not lend themselves to that particular treatment.

Plenty of precedents and authorities exist for the kinds of things about which I am talking. Odgers, in his work *Australian Senate Practice*, deals with this and sets out the kind of rules

which would apply to these committees. The rules relate to such matters as the calling of witnesses, the holding of meetings of the committees, the quorum requirements, admittance of the public, accessibility by the public to the committee and by the committee to the public, departmental representation at committee meetings, questioning of Ministers, sitting fees if applicable, and special advice to be obtained by the committees.

It is an essential requirement that the committees be able to get expert advice from time to time from various sources to assist in their deliberations. That would include obtaining the advice of counsel in some cases when complicated legal or technical issues arose.

It is obvious that there are so many advantages and benefits, and so many people have spoken in favour of this system that one might well ask why we should appoint a Select Committee, or why I should move to appoint a committee to inquire into this matter at all. Should we not set up the committees immediately?

My answer is that we must establish the principle of the desirability first and the need for the committees. I believe I have laboured this point enough, but it is necessary to establish the need and desirability.

The committees, if they are set up, need not be all established at once. A policy of gradualism in setting up such committees is desirable, and that certainly is the way the Senate embarked on the committee system. It set up two committees to start with. We have to bear in mind the resources of this House, and by that I do not mean only financial resources, but also manpower. We must appreciate that we as members of this House are serving Parliament and the people and not just the Government of the day, although members of the Government clearly and properly have a responsibility to the Government of the day.

This is a matter on which all parties should co-operate, and it is peculiarly a matter for the Legislative Council, or second Chamber. This has been discussed on a number of occasions and there can be no doubt that the Australian committee system has been more successful in the Senate than in the House of Representatives which has very few committees and where the Executive is more firmly based. That applies in any comparison between the primary and secondary Chambers.

Australia's foremost academic authority on Parliament, Professor Gordon Reid, has contrasted the relative success of the Senate committees with those of the lower House which, unlike the Senate, he says, has become "the captive

of the Executive Government of the day and is now a sadly repressed and debilitated Parliamentary Chamber". That is his view of the House of Representatives which he has expressed on a number of occasions.

The Legislative Council is an appropriate place in which these committees should be set up, partly because the Council is technically autonomous and independent. It has a different role from that of the Legislative Assembly; it is not so tied to party interests as the Legislative Assembly.

Government members: Rubbish!

Hon. Garry Kelly: A House of Review!

Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: It has a role recognised in other Parliaments. A committee system would enable us to obtain expert advice and to catch up with other Parliaments. It does not mean we want a proliferation of committees. It is something we can approach gradually and carefully. The acid test would be the success of the system. There is no point in setting up the system unless we can visualise it will be successful. It has been most successful in the case of the Senate and a number of other second Chambers. There is no reason it should not be successful here.

If I may summarise the advantages of a committee system, the first is that there is an increasing volume of legislation to be debated, inquired into and given careful consideration. It is not possible for us to give every piece of legislation the consideration it requires within the limited time necessarily imposed on us by the operational requirements of government and the procedures of the House. The establishment of standing committees to examine legislation in detail would provide an opportunity for a lot of detailed work to be done and would ensure legislation was properly examined before presentation to the Council for more informed consideration.

Secondly, there is a trend towards specialisation in every walk of life, and this also applies to Parliament. We need, therefore, expert advice from time to time, particularly on complex legislation. The committees would be able to call on expert witnesses to assist in consideration of complex issues. This facility is not available at the present time. The advice received would in a sense be able to be tested against the advice of departmental experts when that is available, and members of the House would be able to take that into account in their deliberations in this Chamber.

The third point is that petitions often are presented to this House which are given very scant consideration. I will not say anything further on that as I have dealt with it already. Many of these petitions deserve far more attention than the scant

consideration, if any, they receive. Papers tabled in the House would be more fully examined and would receive proper scrutiny. The important issues contained in each piece of legislation could be considered. That role could be more easily and capably carried out by a committee system.

It is not always easy to pinpoint the important issues in legislation. Indeed, one of the great problems for members of Parliament, particularly new members, is to try to find the gravamen or the important matters in a mass of legislation presented to them from time to time. This applies particularly to major Bills. On many occasions, members have said, "How on earth can I be expected to understand what this Bill is all about? I do the best I can. Is this important? Is that important?", and so on.

This motion presents the opportunity for a better background and a better system of providing a means of helping members to understand legislation. It would mean also a better channel of communication between the Parliament and the people in terms of public access, because they would have access to the committees; and vice versa, the committees would have access to the public.

If it were possible, by a Bill, to extend the life of committees beyond the prorogation of the Parliament—I understand the Government may have that in mind—that would be of great benefit to the committee system. It would mean that, instead of going out of action when the Parliament was prorogued or dissolved, the committees could be kept alive in some way within, of course, the constraints necessarily involved in some members' being members of Parliament no longer. I can see various problems in connection with that; but attention should be given to it. The system operates in some other countries, and it would be helpful in our case.

It would mean also that committees could consider matters away from the political arena in which we deal with most matters in the Chamber or in the Parliament. It would mean that the legislation put before the House would be better prepared and better understood by the members participating in the debates. The committees would provide an important method of checking the Government's regulation-making powers, particularly in the area of safeguarding personal rights and liberties. The committees would play an important role in the overall appraisal and administration of the law. Being thus informed, members would be in an excellent position to inform their constituents and keep the public informed in relation to Government operations, and so on.

As I have mentioned, reports have been placed before the House and they have been ignored. Possibly they may be ignored in the future, if the past is any indication of the future. Recommendations for disallowance have been made, and no action has been taken. In some cases, I doubt whether the reports have even been read widely. That must be discouraging to the members of the Legislative Review and Advisory Committee.

This House is the proper place in which some action should be taken to implement or at least check on the recommendations to see whether we should proceed with them. Sometimes there are good reasons for not proceeding with the recommendations, and those reasons could be brought to the attention of the public. Everyone would then understand we had special reasons for a particular action being taken. That would be more satisfactory than the present situation, which I have outlined. We would then have a proper system of follow-up or implementation in some cases; but that is only one aspect.

I have given many general reasons for believing it is desirable we should institute a committee system in this House; that is, a system of standing committees. In asking that the House support the motion, I hope that the Government will see the virtue of the proposals I have put before the House tonight. I would like to think that the Government would co-operate in this matter. Its past comments give me no reason for thinking it will not co-operate in this motion in an appropriate manner.

I commend the motion to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. D. K. Dans (Leader of the House).

BUSINESS FRANCHISE (TOBACCO) AMENDMENT BILL

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Assembly; and, on motion by the Hon. J. M. Berinson (Attorney General), read a first time.

Second Reading

HON. J. M. BERINSON (North Central Metropolitan—Attorney General) [7.50 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

This legislation is the first step in a comprehensive campaign to be implemented by the Government to try to reduce the appalling human and financial cost of smoking. The Government is determined to do all it can to discourage people from smoking, to help them quit, and to encour-

age people—especially young people—not to take up what has been shown beyond doubt to be a deadly habit.

The tobacco-caused carnage is appalling. More than 1 200 Western Australians die every year because of tobacco-related illness. Thousands more are treated in hospitals.

Health officials estimate the annual cost to the State's hospital system of treating tobacco-related illness to be more than \$65 million; about four times the amount raised by tobacco licence fees last financial year, and still more than double the amount expected to be raised if this measure is passed. Therefore it should be apparent to members why the Government has accorded such a high public health priority to reducing the incidence of smoking in the community.

We propose a four and possibly five-pronged attack on the problem. The first is contained in this Bill: Raising the price of tobacco products.

During the lobbying that surrounded last year's legislation to outlaw the advertising and promotion of tobacco products, representatives of the tobacco and advertising industries indicated that the most effective means of encouraging people to give up smoking was to raise the price of cigarettes. This legislation will have the effect of raising the price of a packet of cigarettes by about 25c.

The second measure we propose is legislation—to be presented later this year—to tighten up the law relating to the sale of tobacco products to juveniles.

Thirdly, we intend to provide assistance to smokers who wish to give up the habit by the establishment of so-called "quit centres".

Fourthly, we intend to implement a public education programme on a scale never before seen in this State. The aims of this will be to remind people of the dangers of smoking, to encourage them to give up, or to discourage them from starting. Particular emphasis will be placed on young people.

Finally, there is the possibility of introducing legislation to eliminate the advertising and promotion of tobacco products. The Government has this matter under consideration.

The implementation of the third and fourth prongs of the package—assisting smokers to give up and educating people about the dangers of smoking—are to a considerable extent dependent on the passage of this Bill.

Expenditure of some millions of dollars annually on these measures is anticipated and will be

financed from the increased revenue raised by this legislation.

The Minister for Health and health officials have been working on these campaigns for some time. The passage of this legislation will enable the commencement of full-scale campaigns later this year. Preliminary campaigns have already been commenced in the local media.

Plans for the full-scale campaign include—

- a shop-front office in a central city location to act as an advisory and counselling centre;
- stop-smoking clinics;
- touring clinics for country areas;
- assistance for general practitioners to encourage smoking patients to stop;
- a hard-hitting media campaign to promote antismoking programmes and a non-smoking lifestyle as the norm; and
- measures aimed specifically at school children.

The antismoking message will be developed as part of a broad programme to promote healthy lifestyles.

The Cabinet has approved minimum funding of \$2 million a year for three years; but it is stressed that this figure is for planning purposes and could be increased when more detailed plans are presented to the Government. Nevertheless, this is the most significant boost to the antismoking campaign in this State's history.

Previous State Governments have done virtually nothing to promote the antismoking message. Total expenditure over the last five years is less than \$75 000, compared with revenue from the tobacco licence fee of more than \$57 million. The proportion of revenue devoted to antismoking campaigns over the last five years is a paltry 0.13 per cent. In 1982-83 the O'Connor Government allocated only \$16 200 of tobacco licence fee collections, estimated at \$16.62 million, or 0.09 per cent of revenue.

The minimum expenditure proposed by the Government represents a 120-fold increase on last year's expenditure, and a 26-fold increase on total funding over the last five years.

Turning to the specific proposals of this Bill, provision is made for the present tobacco franchise licence fee to be increased to 35 per cent and to be applied to all tobacco products sold by licence holders on or after 1 July 1983. In accordance with the requirements of the existing legislation, any person in the State who wholesales tobacco products must apply for, and be granted, a licence and pay the prescribed fee. Similarly,

any person in the State retailing tobacco products must either purchase his goods from a licensed wholesaler or apply for, and be granted, a licence in his own right, and pay the prescribed fee. In other words, no person can sell tobacco products within the State unless he either holds a current licence or purchases his supplies from a licensed person.

A licence runs for a period of two months and is based on sales of tobacco made in a preceding two-month period. By the fifteenth day of the second month of a current licence period, the holder is required to apply to have that licence renewed for a further period of two months.

Currently, when applying for the renewal of the licence for the next two months, the holder of a wholesale tobacco licence is required to pay a fee of \$20 together with an amount of 12½ per cent of the value of tobacco products sold in an earlier two-month period; and in the case of the holder of a retail tobaccoist's licence, a fee of 12½ per cent of the value of tobacco sold in an earlier two-month period. Apart from the proposed increase in licence fees to 35 per cent of the value of sales already referred to, there will be no other alteration to the existing procedure.

As the present legislation has a two-monthly licensing provision, this will occur midway through a relevant sales period. Consequently, this will mean that the first payment of fees due from licence holders in August 1983 will be composed of fees based on sales made in June at the old rate and fees payable on sales made in July at the new rate. Thereafter a normal situation will apply.

The Bill also proposes to increase substantially most of the penalties under the Act which have remained unchanged since the legislation was enacted in 1975. These penalties—generally in the order of \$200 to \$1 000—were at that time considered to have been reasonable, having regard to the particular offences and the circumstances then existing. However, apart from the fact that times and values have changed, it is also necessary, on the grounds of equity, to protect genuine taxpayers from anyone who attempts to evade or avoid the lawful payment of taxes or fees. This can be achieved only by having substantial penalties for non-compliance with the legislation.

A substantial increase in penalties should provide a more effective deterrent to anyone who, as a result of avoidance or evasion of the fees, places an unfair burden on other members of the community.

It is also proposed to close a minor loophole that might allow an unlicensed retailer in Western

Australia to purchase tobacco products from a retailer in another State upon which no fee, or a lesser fee, has been paid. Collection of the fees will be monitored closely and further amendments will be made to the legislation should a duty avoidance or evasion situation appear to make this necessary.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. I. G. Medcalf (Leader of the Opposition).

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: THIRD DAY

Motion

Debate resumed from 27 July.

HON. JOHN WILLIAMS (Metropolitan) [8.00 p.m.]: I rise to support the Address-in-Reply and in doing so I am very mindful, Mr President, of your re-election to the position of President of this august Chamber, and I congratulate you on your preferment. Similarly, I congratulate Government members on attaining the Treasury benches. It will do them a lot of good and it will do us a lot of good; let us have no hesitation in saying that. I trust we will see some really worthwhile legislation passing through this House.

During the Address-in-Reply debate many members take us on a walk through their electorates, and I always find this very interesting. A good example of a member's doing this is the Hon. Tom Knight who of recent years has completed this exercise very well. However, my province is not the type where a member can do that so simply; it does not take a long time to walk through my province, but it does have a large number of people contained therein.

It appears to me and to the other seven members who entered this House with me that in this session of Parliament we have possibly heard more talk of reformation in more than one way than we have ever heard before. And yet in my time—and I am very mindful of this—this House has never been a House to close its ears to any suggestion of sensible reform.

I can remember the House agreeing to the formation of Select Committees to inquire into alcohol and drugs and into homosexuality; in other words, to do something constructive. At the moment we have a destructive element among certain people looking at Parliament in this State, and those people are headed by no less a person than the Oliver Cromwell of Morley-Swan, who seeks to come here wishing to throw us all out.

Hon. Tom Stephens: Not all of you, only 12.

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: This will not be allowed. We have far more constructive things to do, and the Leader of the Opposition outlined a few of those this evening.

Mr Deputy President (Hon. D. J. Wordsworth), you would remember that as far back as 1971 I asked for some reform to be carried out. I realised a major reform for the Houses of Parliament would be the election of presiding officers. I have mentioned this before and it has been the subject of a paper I have presented at a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference. The election of presiding officers in both Houses would remove the taint of political patronage.

I believe in the neutrality of presiding officers, and we find no better example in this world than that of the Speaker of the House of Commons. Of course, my idea was thought to be too difficult. I was told we did not have the right personnel and that we were too partisan. In fact what it amounts to is that we in this State are too small minded in our approach to politics.

I have recently travelled around the world and looked at various places and their peoples. In the eight weeks my party was away we read perhaps only nine sentences about Australia, and of those sentences, only two were about Western Australia. A couple of sentences concerned the visit to Washington by our Prime Minister. A couple more were about the Prime Minister's having stated categorically to the London newspapers that under no circumstances did he want the present Queen removed from the throne, although he himself was a republican. The third piece of information which an Australian traveller might have seen was a small piece about the present Government in the State of Western Australia having indicated that it would not continue the appointment of the present Governor.

That is how much impact Australia has on the rest of the world. If a few more of us understood this, perhaps we could come into this place and understand the measure of how important we really are to the rest of the world. We are relatively unimportant. We can make big noises about mining, about the raw materials we sell overseas, about our place in the world economic order and about defence matters affecting Australia; we can go on and on, but we really do not rate outside our own territory.

That does not absolve us from accepting the fact that we as members have been elected to serve the community under our present set of rules. If we wish to amend those rules we should not seek to replace them with a politically-in-

flicted set of rules set up for political advantage or disadvantage. If anyone opposite is really dinkum about reformation of this Parliament—and I mean the whole Parliament—let him get down to real tin tacks and say that we have the Ministers and that we can carry the Government. Let him say that we do not need to legislate only in emergencies. Let him say that we should sit down for perhaps six or nine months or whatever—

Hon. D. K. Dans: And not come to Parliament.

Hon. Garry Kelly: Rubbish!

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: —and confer with each other in this Chamber and let us take evidence from experts around the world.

Of course, the Hon. Garry Kelly has been here for so long that he can afford to say, "Rubbish!" That is typical of his thinking—shallow. Some of us take these matters pretty much to heart. We do something about them; we do not just sit in our seats and interject.

Hon. Tom Stephens: You did nothing for nine years.

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: That just shows the member's appalling ignorance, something which has been very evident from the time he first came to this Chamber. He knows nothing of our procedures and of the way we go about things. But I am not here to trade insults. I do not play party politics; I have risen above that. The member cannot say that about himself, because he is too small minded.

Hon. D. K. Dans: And you were going well before this.

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: Reformation can take place in a number of ways, and no-one will deny the need for reformation in certain areas. As I said, this evening the Leader of the Opposition pointed out propositions which will bear examination by this House.

Members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association may have read the article on the way the House of Commons, a most staid and conservative place, has started to reform itself. Under Standing Order No. 84 I am not allowed to talk about reformations that have been mooted in another place. Measures are impending, but it would be out of order for me to speak about them.

I suggest that we need no Ministers in this House; I see no reason for us to have Ministers here if we are to be a House of Review.

Hon. H. W. Gayfer: Some people believe there is no need for there to be any members here.

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: It is not unusual in other Parliaments to have an upper Chamber

where there are only spokespersons representing the Government of the day.

Hon. Robert Hetherington: Not under the Westminster system.

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: But why is Westminster the be-all and end-all, the paragon of Parliaments? The world has other Parliaments. Perhaps we should cling to the Westminster system; I do not know. But that is why I am suggesting we should have a general conference to find the best solution. The removal of Ministers from this Chamber would see an entirely different approach taken by members to legislation placed before them. That might satisfy some members.

Do we really need a Legislative Assembly? I do not know that we do. It was formed in 1905.

Hon. H. W. Gayfer: We needed it last year, but not this year.

Hon. Tom Stephens: Because we won Government this year. What an attitude.

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: Obviously the authors of the impending legislation wish to try to reduce the numbers in this House. Being fair minded, perhaps they might reduce the numbers in the Legislative Assembly proportionately, because they would not wish to be politically advantaged. They might proportionately reduce the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly so as to be fair.

Hon. Fred McKenzie: That was not in our policy speech.

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: I am not worried about ALP policy; I am worried about the politics and the fairness of this situation.

Hon. A. A. Lewis: Some railways were to be re-opened that don't look like being re-opened.

Hon. Kay Hallahan: Some have.

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: This House can contribute a great deal more to reformation. After all, it was my predecessor who, in 1965, introduced the only reform that has ever been introduced into this House. That reform dealt with the change from the property vote to the franchise vote. Members opposite may chuckle, but their colleagues supported that move very firmly.

Hon. Tom Stephens: I am chuckling because it was the only reformation introduced. Soon a lot more reforms will be introduced, and if you have any sense you will support them.

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: It is just extraordinary to see how the Johnny-come-latelys think they know it all. One minute they are out grubbing in the bush and the next they are in Par-

liament and experts on parliamentary democracy. Since the time I mentioned, this House has contributed a great deal.

It gave me great satisfaction when the second report of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies was submitted to the House. This has been a bipartisan committee that has worked jolly hard. It has proceeded very carefully and with great caution. I pay tribute to the members who have served on it: The Hon. Norman Baxter, now retired, the Hon. Robert Hetherington, the Hon. Joe Berinson, the Hon. Norman Moore and the Hon. Phillip Pandal. It was terrific to work with such people. The end product of the committee's deliberations proves that this House has a talent and an ability to do the job it is given.

I issue a word of warning: It appears that if we say anything in this House, we can be under threat. But the book of privileges in this House has never yet been fully used, and one of these days a member may well invoke some of those privileges. If at any time in the future an attempt is made by any Minister, of any Government, to pressure staff of a standing committee so that the Minister may gain privileged information, that Minister may well find that privilege will be invoked in this House. The staff of a standing committee are not under the control of a Government of the day; they are under the control of this House. Privileges are with this House. The indecent haste with which the staff were approached about this second report is something that I may take up, if it ever occurs again, with the House as a whole. I regard it as a gross breach of privilege to attempt to suborn the staff of this House.

Hon. Robert Hetherington: It is a fairly serious allegation.

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: It can be substantiated, but I merely wish to say that it occurred. We have proof of it occurring and I am sure that it will not occur again because I do not think it was deliberate. I think it was done in ignorance and not with intent.

Hon. Robert Hetherington: There is a difference between a request and suborning.

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: There may be a difference in the member's mind, but what really happened is that they wanted it and did not get it.

Hon. Robert Hetherington: There was a fair bit of repercussion then.

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: There will not be any repercussions for me, none at all.

Hon. Tom Stephens interjected.

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: The member is in breach of Standing Orders.

Hon. Tom Stephens: You are not the President.

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: I do not care whether I am or am not the President. I am a member of Parliament. I remind the member that I am on my feet and he is not. This is not your playground, sonny; do not treat it like it is.

Hon. Tom Stephens: People on your side of the Chamber have treated it as their playground for too long.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon. D. J. Wordsworth): Order!

Hon. JOHN WILLIAMS: In presenting this second report one or two things could have been said but were not allowed to be said at that time. However, there were considerable indications of this growth of Government agencies because of the neglect of all Governments prior to the date of this report. It was a shameful neglect by Governments and an even more shameful neglect by the Parliament of this State that these QANGOs were allowed to grow and multiply without any let or hindrance.

One of the problems we face in this House and the other place is that of controlling a bureaucracy. To be effective and to do the job we were elected to do, it must of necessity be controlled. The register of the various boards and committees which was provided by the Government and published in the *Government Gazette* about a week ago did not provide a comprehensive coverage of the boards and committees. For example, if one looks at that *Government Gazette* one finds no mention of the Western Australian Government Railways Commission, the R&I Bank or, indeed the East Perenjori soil conservation advisory committee. These were not included because members of the committees listed by the Government did not receive fees for sittings.

That appears to be a bone of contention; if they collect fees, for a start, they are suspect. What about the board of the Royal Perth Hospital? Its members collect no fees whatsoever and they never have. On the whole, they do a very good job. It has been said that we should not consider controlling them, that they should have no accountability, even though they expend \$90 million annually. They are one of our biggest spenders and there are many more.

The astonishing thing to me—it came as a surprise to me—is the size of the total agency field. If all this detail is added to the list of boards set up by Cabinet or ministerial decision, we discover that presently in Western Australia about 700 separate organisations exist.

I was pleased to read as a headline in *The Sunday Times* that the Premier of this State is going to take the axe to some of them. I know that the report we provided will assist him in that work and will assist them to do the work accurately and fairly. The report should reflect to this House the seriousness with which the committee approached the problem. The diligent work put in by my colleagues had to be seen to be appreciated and the proof of the pudding, as it were, is the content of the report. If it does nothing else, it provides members of this House, to whom we report, with a very useful and unique reference document. We do not claim that it is anything else, but the reports to follow will explain and expound other aspects.

The committee did suffer from one thing—prorogation. We could have been much faster had there been some constitutional and legal way of allowing the committee to keep going during the prorogation of Parliament. Perhaps this is a matter that we should consider in this House. If a standing committee is to do its work properly it has to keep on going. We would have had this report in the House after the election, about April, had we been allowed to continue. We did not know at that time which Government would be elected, but it would have saved the Government and its departments a tremendous amount of trouble in chasing up something which was already in the pipeline.

When we think of the amount of paper work which goes across the Table of this House, the mind boggles. For instance, last Thursday alone—there is a reason for my mentioning this—26 annual reports, three six-monthly reports, 59 regulations, by-laws, Statutes and orders, a total of 88 items, were tabled in one day.

Every member who knows what comes across the table would know the content of them, but it is an impossible and ridiculous task to expect any one person to do this. To my knowledge, we have been talking about doing something about this since 1971.

Government by bureaucracy is not good government. Regulations which slip in and pass this House after the requisite number of sitting days should not be allowed, but unfortunately we are stuck with the present system. I would like to see perhaps an amendment to the system whereby in recesses when we are not here the various departments can present their reports to the presiding officers and the presiding officers could deal with them and table them cumulatively when we return. At least we would have a chance to keep the workload down if we did that. My leader has

suggested another method by which this House could accomplish that task.

One of the questions I asked without notice brings me to another point which only slightly touches on Parliament: the separation of the judiciary and the Legislature. Perhaps the Attorney-General was surprised that I asked the question without notice, but he gave a very satisfactory answer. I now wish to explain my reasons for asking the question. My question was: Had the Attorney-General been approached by the judiciary to provide accommodation when they were out in the bush doing their work? He said that he would look at the matter as and when it came to his attention. I draw to his attention the fact that I have not been petitioned in any way although I believe some members of the judiciary live in my electorate. I have not been approached by any member of the judiciary, but it seems to me that in this day and age it behoves us to provide accommodation for justices when they are on circuit.

I say that because many of us who used to travel the length and breadth of the State know how soul destroying it is to do one's work during the daytime and then retire to a hotel or motel room at night. How much more difficult must it be for a member of the judiciary who must at all times maintain a total neutrality and separation from the people? It could happen that perhaps one of Her Majesty's justices is sitting in a motel at night ordering his meal in the dining room and is being served by a waitress, neither of them knowing who the other is, and the next day perhaps that waitress will play a prominent part in the case upon which the justice is to adjudicate the following day. There may be nothing wrong in that situation, but things could go wrong.

We should adopt the practice used in the United Kingdom of judges being supplied with their lodgings where they can have some comforts; people around them to whom they can talk, etc. I imagine it is the loneliest job in the world to be a judge of the Supreme Court out on circuit to the many courts of this State. The accommodation provided would not go to waste because other civil servants have to travel the State; indeed, Ministers have to travel the State. While Ministers might not need that sort of shielding, it is essential that we look at certain people who would like to retain that form of independence and perhaps anonymity when they travel. It is perhaps not economically the right time to be asking for this accommodation, perhaps it should be remembered for future reference.

It is not and never has been my wont to go on for too long. I sum up by saying that we have the

propensity for reformation. We have an entirely new set of circumstances. I am not talking about the change of Government but about the changing world. If people are keen enough to read they will see how this world is changing.

Once upon a time there was the judiciary, the State, and the Church; but now, of course, the third estate has become the media: Press, television, and radio. Communications are so important that the whole world has shrunk considerably. It behoves us—and I will not denigrate anybody—to try for genuine reformation. It behoves us to pay attention to those things which occur within our own political system. We need assistance from all parties, particularly from the media. It would be great to see the members of the media reporting in a journalistic fashion, even if it is what is called investigative journalism; it would be a change, rather than their doing, as they so often do in this State, diarising a collection of happenings. They have the talent, they have the chance to explain and inform the public without bias and without cover.

We stand on the edge of possibly a quite thrilling reformation, something that we can pass on to posterity. We do not have just one or two years, or three weeks, to do it in. If we do a good and decent job it may take us in excess of five or 10 years; it cannot be done overnight. Changes that come overnight bring with them mistakes, mistakes which cannot be afforded when we are in charge and are the Government of a country or a State. My plea is: At all times let us have reformation, at all times let us go to it with a will; but let us make absolutely sure that it is done by consultation, not by threat, and this and the other House could be better for it, and the members who serve this House would get perhaps a greater deal of satisfaction working under the new system.

I support the Address-in-Reply.

HON. W. N. STRETCH (Lower Central) [8.30 p.m.]: I thank members for the opportunity to address this Chamber for the first time. I am deeply aware of the honour of doing so and the responsibility that I owe to the people who worked so hard during my election campaign in February. I am also grateful to the parliamentarians on both sides of the Chamber who have made me feel welcome, and I assure them that I will do my best to conduct myself for the dignity and betterment of this Chamber, the people of my electorate, and the people of Western Australia generally.

I agree with the previous speaker about the crying need for unity, thought, and purpose throughout the community. I find extremely disturbing

the current sport of knocking off tall poppies, not only for their wage packets but also in other ways. It is so easy to forget that the prominent people who are expertly trained in so many fields are the ones who are going to lead us out of our present difficulties.

It is a great honour to represent Lower Central Province which, over the years, and dating back to the establishment of the Swan River colony, has sent people of great distinction to this Parliament. I could give a travelogue of my electorate but it would not be as long or as distinguished as that legendary one given by the Hon. Tom Knight. However, I will introduce the area to members and make some comments on it, and I suggest to members that they study the implications of what is happening in that area. My electorate takes in three lower House seats: Collie, Narrogin, and Warren. I have put them in alphabetical order to avoid any accusations of favouritism.

Members will be well aware of Collie for the contribution it makes as the powerhouse of the State. Over the years the Collie coalfield has supplied a major part of the energy for Western Australia and it is my belief that with approximately 200 years' supply of proven resources of coal, it will continue to play a large part in the future. We must also pay tribute to the people of Collie. Members may not realise that the Collie coalfield is one of the wettest yet safest coalfields in the world. Approximately five million gallons of water are discharged from the deep mines each day and they are not the most pleasant of places in which to work. If my memory serves me correctly, since 1930 there have been only 33 fatal accidents on the field, which gives it one of the best safety records of any coalfield in the world. In realising that, one must pay tribute to the people who work the mines and the men who manage them.

In reply to a question earlier today, reference was made to the coal tribunal. For the sake of the people of Collie it is most important that the present good industrial relations are maintained on the coalfields.

Another point that concerns the people of Collie is the ramifications of the extension of North-West Shelf gas supplies to the south-west of Western Australia. I feel that with sensitivity, and with the application of common sense to this problem, these two very valuable sources of energy can be combined and thus used to the enormous benefit of the State. Members must bear in mind that compared with the estimated life of the coalfields, natural gas is a transitory source of energy. Therefore, in future deliberations I would urge all Governments to take very

careful stock of the industrial situation in the region and make sure that any short-term gains do not lead to any major attrition within the skilled and dedicated work force that has built up over the years. It is a delicate situation which should be handled with the realisation of the environment in which those people work every day of their lives.

The third worry on the coalfields which leads on from the last item I have mentioned, concerns of course, the Government contracts with the Western Collieries Ltd. deep mines. Western Collieries is the biggest employer on the fields. It employs approximately 800 men out of the 1 100 who work on the Collie coalfields. The implications of any delay in the signing of that vital contract by the Government is a very real cause of concern to those people and I hope the leader of the Government will express this concern to his leaders. The town is worried and a lot hinges on the contract; the signing of it cannot be too soon for the people of Collie.

The seat of Collie also includes a very diverse agricultural area which spreads from Donnybrook to Boyup Brook and surrounds Collie. All agricultural electorates have certain problems, but the agricultural industries in the mixed farming areas are, thank God, facing a better season than the last few. The farmers are looking forward optimistically to a better year.

The second area that I represent is the seat of Narrogin. It would be one of the safest, best known, and most attractive areas of the great southern region. The biggest problem, is rising water and soil salinity, that scourge of all agricultural areas. It is causing great concern, and as a farmer who felt the effects of the clearing restrictions imposed previously, I am most aware of the implications of the encroachment of salt into some of the best farming areas in Australia. The approach to date has been somewhat piecemeal and this worries me. Many worthy people have been working on various schemes of their own and there is a desperate need for people to work in harmony in order that they are all moving in the same direction. A lot of work has been carried out but it has not been co-ordinated. Some people are working on their own particular hobby horses and they have a lot to contribute.

It will be my interest, while representing those people in this House, to do my utmost to ensure that this scourge—and it is a scourge—is arrested by the concerted application of effort by the best brains available. After all, the agricultural land of Western Australia is like capital in the bank. It is there for management; no-one really owns it, but it requires the best efforts and skills of people to

work it and nothing is too good in the treatment of the land. It is most important to our heritage. It is, after all, the basis of our wealth. Virtually everything is derived from the land and it determines the standard of living which we have come to enjoy. I warn members that we neglect the land at our peril.

The third section of the province which I represent includes the seat of Warren. I would imagine that most members have toured the area at some time and have admired the magnificence of its forests, the countryside, and the climate. It contains some of the tourist highlights of the south-west. Sadly, it is a somewhat unhappy region at present because the timber industry, as members know, has a number of problems. It has also a special limitation in that less than 20 per cent of the land area is ratable and this places restrictions and limitations on local governing authorities in that area, which are facing severe financial problems. However, it is in the timber industry that our greatest problems are now occurring.

It is understandable that the people in the area view with great concern any moves to further alienate private land. Any alienation automatically puts a greater rating burden on existing ratepayers and residents of the area. In this context we have to look at the entire forestry management of the south-west. Members know and I know that we could move into a controversial area in relation to this matter, and I am aware that this is neither the time nor the place to do so, but I hope I will be given the opportunity to raise it at a later stage.

It is important to realise that the forests are not static—they are living entities and they cannot be managed on a *laissez faire* basis. Good management will not just happen. The science of forestry is highly researched and documented.

The Forests Department of Western Australia is seriously regarded as one of the best, perhaps the best, in the world. We tamper with this organisation at our peril and I agree with what the Hon. John Williams said earlier, that no department or organisation is by any means sacrosanct. However when we are looking at such a delicate ecosystem, we must be careful that we consider the matter thoroughly and obtain advice from people who have expertise in this area. The problem of the forest areas being available for the cutting of hardwood timber is not the only problem in the south-west. We have experienced also a downturn in the building industry which, of course, has had a marked effect on the demand for mill timber. This was exacerbated by the effect of the disastrous fires in South Australia

where virtually 10 years' supply of timber for milling was damaged to the extent that it had to be milled immediately; while much of it is now being stored under water; it has still caused a build up of timber products throughout Australia, and this includes Western Australia.

The fires in the Eastern States served to underline the efficiency and great dedication of the people involved in the fire services in my area. We learned our lesson during the Dwellingup fires—a time of great tragedy. However, from that time the Forests Department has learned how to minimise the risk of major fires by breaking up areas into buffer zones in order that fires should not cause the disastrous damage they caused in the Eastern States. It is easy to look in from the outside and make alterations without understanding the severe impact that meddling in an existing system can have. I speak with some experience because I have lived in the forest areas of the south-west for 30 years. I would urge the Government to tread not warily, but carefully and with considerable sensitivity in the south-west. We have our problems and no-one denies them; but we must listen to our experts and administer with our heads and not with our hearts and, for that matter, not always with our ears. We must make sure we listen to the right people—the people who do know.

Finally, I would like to offer my congratulations on your re-election Mr President, and I look forward to an extension of the help you have given me as a new member—and which you have no doubt given to other new members—in my introduction to the House. I look forward to your guidance over the years and I pledge myself to work very hard for the benefit of all and for the State of Western Australia, and to do what small things I can to help retain the dignity and effectiveness of the Chamber.

I support the motion.

Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. Fred McKenzie.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

HON. D. K. DANS (South Metropolitan—Leader of the House) [8.45 p.m.]: I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Rottnest Island Board: Membership

HON. D. J. WORDSWORTH (South) [8.46 p.m.]: I would like to use this adjournment motion to voice concern about the changes that have taken place in regard to the composition of the

Rottnest Island Board. In answer to questions today we heard two important facts. Firstly, that it was the Minister for Lands and Surveys who made recommendations to fill the positions on the board and, secondly, that the Hon. Don Taylor has been replaced on the board by Mr Mike Barnett, the member for Rockingham.

I would like to explain to the House that, as Minister for Lands, I nominated the Hon. Don Taylor to this position on the board and I was very pleased to work with him. The Rottnest Island Board is quite unique in that a Minister of the Crown actually chairs the meeting and this puts this body in a different position altogether from that of the QANGOS of which we hear so much. With a Minister chairing the meetings of the board, it cannot be said that the Parliament set up a committee and the matter is then out of the Government's hands. Responsibility for decisions rests with the chairman and members of the board.

Undoubtedly the membership of Mr Don Taylor on that board was proof against any complaint that could possibly have arisen that politics entered into the decisions of the board. We all realise that Rottnest Island is a very important heritage and a very important recreation reserve.

I would like to point out also to members that the Rottnest Island Board is really like a local government. People live on the island and some have businesses there, and these people do not have the benefits of a third tier of government. The Rottnest Island Board is their local government, and members of the board have always endeavoured to get to know those who live on the island and to understand their problems. This is because they have appreciated the significance of the board in its relationship to local government.

Unfortunately we have now seen a complete about-face. One could almost say there are now two political heavyweights on this very small board. That is very unfortunate. I would like to remind the House that it was a Labor Government—the Wise Government—which instigated the idea of having an Opposition member on the board. This was put into effect by the then Minister for Lands (Mr Kelly) and the system has been carried on with good effect.

This is a very serious thing that has happened. No doubt from time to time during the term of this Government we will hear the Leader of the House tell us that the membership of Select Committees and similar bodies should be balanced and yet here we find the Labor Party moving away from that principle. When the chairman is away the tradition has always been that a senior mem-

ber of the board—in other words, the longest serving member on the board—becomes the chairman. It will be very interesting to see whether that system continues.

I support the motion.

HON. D. K. DANS (South Metropolitan—Leader of the House) [8.50 p.m.]: I would like to put a couple of matters into the right perspective. First of all, Mr Wordsworth said that he had appointed Mr Taylor. I think a better term for him to have used would be “reappointed”. Members may recall that when Mr Evans was Minister for Lands in the Tonkin Government, he appointed Mr Taylor to the board. Mr Evans was the Chairman, and Mr Taylor was a member of the board. It is significant Mr Taylor has been reappointed over the years. There have always been two politicians on the board.

As a person who visits Rottneest, and one who has enjoyed Rottneest over a long period of time, I do not intend to say that that situation is right or wrong. All that has happened on this occasion is that Mr Taylor has been replaced by Mr Barnett, and because of the Premier's very special interest in tourism, and in order that he may, as Premier, direct some attention to Rottneest, he has become the chairman of the board. I do not think there is anything untoward in that.

In reply to questions tonight, I read out the expiry dates of the terms of appointment for the members of the Rottneest Island Board. I assure members that over all the years I have been associated with Rottneest, all members of the board have done a good job, irrespective of their political or social backgrounds. I am sure that the present board will do a good job in the future. It is not a unique position; the composition of the board has been this way before.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.52 p.m.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

STATE FINANCE: FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS DUTY

Introduction

29. **Hon. I. G. MEDCALF**, to the Attorney General representing the Treasurer:

- (1) What decision, if any, has been made by the Government in regard to the introduction of a financial institutions duty or a similar type of duty in this State?

- (2) If no decision has been made, is the matter under consideration?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

- (1) and (2) The Government has received a number of submissions on this matter from interested parties, some supporting such a duty and others proposing alternatives. These submissions are currently being studied with a view to a decision being made in the context of the forthcoming Budget.

WAGES: PAUSE

Government Policy

30. **Hon. G. E. MASTERS**, to the Minister for Industrial Relations:

- (1) Does the Government still support and adhere to the salaries and wages freeze?
- (2) What steps have been taken under section 16 of the Salaries and Wages Freeze Act to review the operation of the Act?
- (3) Will the Minister table or supply details of the review to the House?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) The Government supports a return to a centralised system of wage fixation based on national wage decisions but which excludes sectional claims.
- (2) The operation of the Salaries and Wages Freeze Act was reviewed in accordance with section 16.
- (3) After considering the requirements in accordance with section 16(1) a decision was made to maintain the Salaries and Wages Freeze Act.

DEFENCE: NAVY

Junior Recruits: Age

31. **Hon. TOM McNEIL**, to the Minister for Inter-Governmental Relations and Defence Liaison:

As the junior recruitment age for the Navy is between the ages of 15½ and 16 years, would the Minister seek the advice of the Federal Minister for Defence of the likelihood of junior naval recruits who have been deferred from the April and October recruiting intake being given an age latitude in order to qualify when recruiting is resumed?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

Members should please note that, as Minister for Inter-governmental Relations and Defence Liaison, I am concerned solely with matters of liaison in respect of specific Western Australian defence interests. Questions on more general aspects of defence should be directed to the appropriate Commonwealth Minister.

However, in this case I am advised that junior recruits for the Navy enter the service in four intakes—January, April, July and October each year. In 1983 recruits were accepted for the first three intakes, but the October recruitment was cancelled. No decision has yet been made regarding 1984.

Unsuccessful applicants are advised at interview to apply for male general entry to the service, and it is not anticipated that any latitude regarding age requirement will be allowed to those who applied for the October 1983 junior recruit intake for subsequent groups.

PUBLIC SERVICE: PUBLIC SERVANTS

Salary: Cuts

32. Hon. V. J. FERRY, to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

- (1) Is it a fact that the State Government proposes to discriminate against the top echelon of public servants, and others, by reducing their remuneration?
- (2) If so, would the Premier advise any other discriminatory measures he intends to impose on other sections of the community?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) and (2) In the difficult budgetary position the Government inherited the temporary salary reduction of senior public servants was one measure the Government was forced to take to improve the State's financial position. At no time was it or is it intended to discriminate against these public servants affected and others. It is a fact of life that the private sector has suffered substantially from the previous Government's economic policies and hard decisions have had to be made by my Government.

ROTTNEST ISLAND: BOARD

Membership: Expiry Dates

33. Hon. P. G. PENDAL, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Tourism:

- (1) What are the expiry dates of the terms of the members of the Rottnest Island Board?
- (2) Is it the Government's intention to replace the Hon. A. D. Taylor, MLA?
- (3) If so, by whom?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) Mrs P. M. Bartlett—September 1983
Mr E. P. O'Callaghan—October 1983
Mr D. Dempster—July 1985
Mr A. Ednie-Brown—July 1985
Mr M. A. Lewis—July 1985
- (2) Yes.
- (3) Mr M. Barnett, MLA.

LAND

Western Australia

34. Hon. N. F. MOORE, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Lands and Surveys:

- (1) What area, in hectares, of Western Australia, and what percentage of the total area of Western Australia, is covered by—
 - (a) Aboriginal reserves;
 - (b) unoccupied Crown land;
 - (c) pastoral leases;
 - (d) freehold land; and
 - (e) other reserves?
- (2) What is the total area, in hectares, of Western Australia?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) (a) to (e) The information sought by the member is not recorded in the specific categories nominated and to provide accurate figures would entail considerable research.

Endeavours will be made to obtain approximate areas within these categories and the Minister for Lands and Surveys will convey the information to the member in writing.

- (2) About 252.55 million hectares.

AGRICULTURE: RESEARCH STATION

Denmark: Closure

35. Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Does the Government agree with the closure of the Denmark Research Station?
- (2) If so, what research capacity is proposed for Denmark?
- (3) Will any of the current land held by the Department of Agriculture in Denmark for research be maintained for this purpose?
- (4) What land will be disposed of, and in what manner?
- (5) Will it be subdivided, and if so, what prices are contemplated?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) Yes, given that the dairy and the Drysdale sheep will be retained on portion of the research station that is to be leased to the Denmark Agricultural District High School and that the leased portions will be available for continued research which the original proposal of the previous Government did not envisage.
- (2) Agricultural research in the Denmark area will be undertaken as part of the Albany regional research programme. The portion of Denmark Research Station leased to the school will be available for trial work.
- (3) Yes. Negotiations are continuing with the Education Department to exchange areas of land with the Department of Agriculture. Lease arrangements are included in these negotiations. It is likely that approximately 92 hectares will be leased with the dairy. This area plus approximately 30 hectares of new land will be available for research.
- (4) Subject to the negotiations land west of the river (location 781) and areas east of the Denmark-Mt. Barker road will be sold. Disposal of land will be arranged by the Land and Property Branch of PWD.
- (5) Land currently held by the Department of Agriculture will not be subdivided. Prices contemplated are in line with valuations of the Valuer General's Office.

RECREATION: FOOTBALL

Instant Lotteries: Distribution

36. Hon. TOM McNEIL, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Employment and Administrative Services:

- (1) Would the Minister advise me of the composition of the committee responsible for the control of money distributed to football from instant lotteries?
- (2) How much money has been granted to football from the lottery?
- (3) What plans are proposed for the distribution of those funds?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) The eight-person sports instant lottery distribution advisory committee established by the previous Government is under the chairmanship of Mr J. Howson.

Four committee members were nominated by the Western Australian Sports Federation; namely: Senator J. Evans, Messrs B. Durston, J. MacAulay, and F. Semini.

Other members are: Messrs V. Yovich, B. Prindiville and J. Graham.

- (2) \$80 700 has been granted to the WA Football League in the first two allocations.
- (3) The WA Football League has established a committee with representation from other metropolitan leagues and country associations to develop football utilising those funds.

FUEL AND ENERGY: ELECTRICITY

Roebourne: Caravan Parks

37. Hon. P. G. PENDAL, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

- (1) Is he aware of complaints made to him by the Roebourne District Tourist Association Inc. about the high cost of electricity to people living in air-conditioned caravans during the summer months in the north-west?
- (2) Is it correct that the problem arises because all caravan parks are rated as commercial property?
- (3) In view of the fact that some of the caravaners are permanent residents, will the Minister consider similar rating as applying to domestic consumers?

- (4) Does he accept the claim that some people, unable to afford a home, are paying up to \$60 a week for their electricity?
- (5) Would he take up with his colleague, the Minister for Tourism, the high cost of power as it affects the tourism industry in the north-west?

Hon. PETER DOWDING replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No.
- (3) No.
- (4) I am advised that this figure is incorrect if it is intended to reflect an average cost over the year, but that in some particular circumstances with the use of one or more airconditioners and other appliances there may be a period during the hot season in which costs could reach this figure.
- (5) Electricity is already supplied to consumers in the north-west at subsidised rates through the operation of the uniform tariff policy.

SOIL: EROSION

Drought Areas and Pastoral Leases

38. Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Following the severe drought in the Great Southern of this State, what estimates have been made by the Department of Agriculture as to the proportion of each shire affected by soil erosion through wind?
- (2) How many farmers have utilised the transport subsidies available to agist livestock off their farms?
- (3) What form have such subsidies taken?
- (4) Will all stock which was subsidised to be transported off an individual farm receive a similar subsidy to return?
- (5) In the pastoral area is there a limit to the amount an individual stockowner receives to transport his stock to a less prone area in time of likely soil erosion?
- (6) Is his transport returning stock to his station subsidised under similar terms as those applicable to agricultural areas?
- (7) What proportion of the transport subsidy in the case of—

- (a) a pastoralist; and
 - (b) a farmer;
- is paid by the Federal Government?

- (8) Who lays down the guidelines for such assistance?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) No formalised surveys have been carried out but observations indicate that severe damage has only occurred in restricted areas. Some soil loss has occurred on approximately half of the areas that were declared.
- (2) 284 farmers have received subsidies on freight for stock moving to agistment. This is expected to rise to about 320 when all claims are finalised.
- (3) Farmers transporting stock to agistment receive a subsidy of 75 per cent of the road or rail freight actually incurred. Where the farmer's own truck is used, then the subsidy is paid on the rail freight that would apply to the distance carted.

The rate of subsidy drops to 50 per cent at amounts claimed above \$10 000.

- (4) Yes.
- (5) The same freight subsidies to and from agistment apply to the pastoral areas.
- (6) Yes.
- (7) (a) and (b) Transport subsidies are funded under disaster relief measures. The State pays the first \$3 million annually and then the Commonwealth pays 75 per cent of anything above \$3 million.
- (8) Guidelines are decided by the Minister for Agriculture in accordance with the terms of the Commonwealth-State natural disaster agreement.

HOUSING: CONSTRUCTION

Election Promise

39. Hon. N. F. MOORE, to the Minister for Mines representing the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Did the Minister make an election undertaking with regard to housing construction in the public sector to boost the total construction programme to 5 000 units during his first term of office?
- (2) Did the Minister undertake to achieve construction of 1 500 units per year as a base figure?

- (3) Will the Minister advise the House of the number of units which have been constructed since his taking office, or are under construction in order to meet this undertaking?

Hon. PETER DOWDING replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) 335 units have been constructed since taking office. A further 220 are under construction.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS: INSTANT LOTTERY

Distribution

40. Hon. P. H. WELLS, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Employment and Administrative Services:

- (1) How much money has been received for distribution to art and culture since the introduction of the instant lottery?
- (2) How much money was allocated to art and culture—
 - (a) prior to the Government's taking office; and
 - (b) since the Government has taken office?
- (3) What amount of instant lottery money is currently available for allocation to art and culture?
- (4) What is the estimated amount of instant lottery revenue that will be available for distribution to art and culture during the 1983-84 financial year?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) \$3.55 million received by Lotteries Commission.
- (2) (a) \$1.5 million;
(b) \$1.35 million.
Forwarded to Treasury by Lotteries Commission.
- (3) \$700 000 held by Lotteries Commission.
- (4) \$3.5 million.

The information provided relates only to moneys collected by the Lotteries Commission and in part forwarded to Treasury, as above.

Further information relating to money currently available for allocation to art and culture would need to be directed to the Minister for the Arts, who is responsible for allocation of these funds.

MINING: GOLD

Dry Blower Operations

41. Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH, to the Minister for Mines:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of the damage being done to the environment by the use of dry blower mining for gold?
- (2) Has he received any complaints from pastoralists or local governments?
- (3) What is the scope of such activities?
- (4) What action has he taken to control this form of exploitation?
- (5) What restoration is taking place to damaged areas?

Hon. PETER DOWDING replied:

- (1) I am aware that persons seeking alluvial gold by various methods are causing some surface damage to pastoral leases.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) Strip mining using bulldozers and other earth moving equipment, the use of metal detectors and dry blowers.
- (4) The Mining Act 1978-82 clearly defines what is authorised and unauthorised mining. Any person carrying out unauthorised mining commits an offence under the Act and is liable for prosecution. Any party including pastoralists or a local government authority may prosecute such persons.

Press statements to this effect have been issued warning persons carrying out unauthorised mining that they are liable for prosecution and in addition, my department is currently examining the situation with a view to establishing all practicable methods to remedy the situation.

- (5) Where the activity is on a mining tenement one of the conditions of that tenement is that all top soil is to be removed ahead of mining for replacement in accordance with the directions of the Mining Engineer/District Inspector of Mines.

SALARIES AND WAGES FREEZE ACT

Section 13(2): Exercise of Authority

42. Hon. G. E. MASTERS, to the Minister for Industrial Relations:

- (1) On how many occasions since he has been Minister for Industrial Relations

has he exercised his authority under section 13(2) of the Salaries and Wages Freeze Act?

(2) Would the Minister please supply the following details:

- (a) the Government departments directly affected by the increased remuneration (section 4 of the Act), as a result of his decision;
- (b) the number of persons benefiting in each department;
- (c) the exact details of the increased rates, remuneration, etc.?

(3) What is the additional cost to each department affected by the Minister's decision:

- (a) for the balance of the 1982-83 financial year;
- (b) for the financial year 1983-84?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

(1) to (3) The information requested by the member is not readily available and will take some considerable time to collate and provide in the form requested.

I shall provide the information to the member when it becomes available.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS: FILM

"Midnight Express": Morawa District High School

43. Hon. TOM McNEIL, to the Attorney General representing the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is the Minister aware that an "R" certificate film "Midnight Express" was shown to Year 12 students of Morawa District High School?
- (2) If "Yes", before the screening of the film was permission sought by the teacher from—
 - (a) the Education Department; and
 - (b) the parents?
- (3) If "No" to (1), would the Minister investigate the reasons for the screening of this film, and what action he proposes to take?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

- (1) Yes. An edited video-tape version of this film was shown to year 12 students after consultation with parents.
- (2) (a) No;
- (b) yes.

(3) The canisters do not carry an indication of the rating of the contents. Procedures have been established in the school to ensure that film censorship ratings are known and acted upon in future. All other schools have been advised to ensure that a film has an appropriate rating.

ROTTNEST ISLAND: BOARD

Visitors to Island

44. Hon. P. G. PENDAL, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Tourism:

- (1) Does the Rottnest Island Board have an optimum figure for the number of visitors on Rottnest Island at any one time?
- (2) If so, what is that optimum figure?
- (3) If not, do the conditions on the island, both in natural resources and facilities provided, warrant consideration of such an optimum?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Answered by (1).
- (3) This issue will be considered at the appropriate time.

FUEL AND ENERGY: ELECTRICITY

Power Station: Bunbury

45. Hon. V. J. FERRY, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

- (1) Does the Government intend to proceed with the establishment of a new power station at Bunbury?
- (2) If not, is a new power station to be established at some other location in the south-west?
- (3) If so—
 - (a) where;
 - (b) when;
 - (c) what will be its generating capacity;
 - (d) when will it be ready for operation; and
 - (e) from what source will water be drawn to service the station?

Hon. PETER DOWDING replied:

- (1) The matter is under consideration.
- (2) See (1).
- (3) (a) to (e) Not applicable.

HOUSING: LAND

Bunbury

46. Hon. N. F. MOORE, to the Minister for Mines representing the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Did the Minister give a pre-election undertaking to raise funds by selling to local and private developers selected portions of the 1 100 hectares of State Housing Commission land in Bunbury?
- (2) Will the Minister advise how much money has so far been raised from the sale of such land?

Hon. PETER DOWDING replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) This matter is currently being considered by the consultant appointed by the Government to prepare a sales strategy for the disposal of excess holdings of SHC land.

SALARIES AND WAGES FREEZE ACT

Section 13(1): Exercise of Authority

47. Hon. G. E. MASTERS, to the Minister for Industrial Relations:

- (1) On how many occasions since he has been Minister for Industrial Relations has he exercised his authority under section 13(1) of the Salaries and Wages Freeze Act?
- (2) Would the Minister please supply the following details:
 - (a) the Government departments directly affected by the increased remuneration (section 4 of the Act) as a result of his decision;
 - (b) the number of persons benefiting in each department;
 - (c) the exact details of the increased rates, remuneration, etc.?
- (3) What is the additional cost to each department affected by the Minister's decision—
 - (a) for the balance of the 1982-83 financial year;
 - (b) for the financial year 1983-84?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) to (3) The information requested by the member is not readily available and will take some considerable time to collate and provide in the form requested.

I shall provide the information to the member when it becomes available.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS: LIBRARY

Mirrabooka

48. Hon. P. H. WELLS, to the Attorney General representing the Minister for the Arts:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of the City of Stirling's action to cancel its plan to open a library at Mirrabooka, despite the fact that an agreement had already been signed and approximately 6 000 of a 12 000 book allocation been delivered to the library?
- (2) What was the basis of the agreement signed?
- (3) What will be the cost of the cancellation of the agreement to—
 - (a) the Library Board; and
 - (b) the council?
- (4) Will the council's action jeopardize future requests by the shire for books, should funds become available for a Mirrabooka library?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

- (1) A letter was received by the Library Board on 27 July advising "that the Mirrabooka interim library not be proceeded with and that the 12 000 books be returned to the Library Board".
- (2) The agreement signed on 19 May 1983 was a standard addendum to the current agreement between the Library Board and the Stirling City Council to provide library services in a local authority area. In brief it states "to provide at Mirrabooka interim public library premises of a size and design approved by the board and to install book cases and other fittings as necessary for the management of the library".
- (3) (a) and (b) To date 6 000 books at an approximate cost of \$66 000 have been selected and forwarded to the Stirling City Council. This has involved over 70 man-hours of Library Board staff time and a similar amount of time would be required to return the stock to the maintenance and development collections.

The cost to the council is not known to the Library Board except the council staff have been involved in

the selection of the stock and the council will not be able to make use of 12 000 items worth over \$120 000.

- (4) Once the stock is returned it will be re-allocated to other library services throughout the State, some of which are in urgent need of stock.

If the council should subsequently reverse its decision, it would then be placed at the end of the queue and stock would not be available until at least 1984-85.

TRAFFIC: PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

Albany Highway

49. Hon. P. G. PENDAL, to the Minister for Mines representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Is it correct that the painted crosswalk in Albany Highway, Victoria Park, opposite the Victoria Park post office, is to remain?
- (2) If so, has any consideration been given to the installation of traffic lights at or near this point to facilitate the safe movement of both pedestrians and motorists attempting to enter or leave Albany Highway at this point?
- (3) If not, will the Minister arrange for a study to be made on the benefits or otherwise of having traffic lights installed at or near this point?

Hon. PETER DOWDING replied:

- (1) to (3) The question of the siting of the crosswalk in Albany Highway, Victoria Park, opposite the post office is currently under investigation by officers of the Perth City Council and the Main Roads Department.

Signals are being considered as one possible solution.

JETTY

Poddyshot

50. Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Works:

- (1) What works have been carried out to alleviate siltation at Poddyshot Jetty, Denmark Shire?
- (2) Are these an interim measure?
- (3) If so, what other work is programmed?
- (4) When will it be carried out?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) None.
- (2) Answered by (1).
- (3) Surveys of the approaches to the jetty and launching ramp are to be carried out before the end of 1983 to ascertain navigable depth and if there is a need for dredging.
- (4) Answered by (3).

WORKERS' ASSISTANCE COMMISSION AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD

Funding

51. Hon. G. E. MASTERS, to the Minister for Industrial Relations:

- (1) How are the Workers' Assistance Commission and the Workers' Compensation Boards in WA funded?
- (2) What are the individual budgets for 1983-84 for—
 - (a) the Workers' Assistance Commission; and
 - (b) the Workers' Compensation Boards?
- (3) Did the commission pay for the Minister for Industrial Relations to visit the Workers' Compensation Board of Queensland in May 1983?
- (4) If so, what were the total costs?
- (5) (a) Who accompanied the Minister on the visit to the Workers' Compensation Board of Queensland in May 1983;
 - (b) were the costs in total or in part picked up by the Workers' Assistance Commission; and
 - (c) if so, what were the costs?
- (6) Who was/were the author/s of the publication "A Government of Western Australia Information and Discussion Paper—Worker's Compensation—The Queensland Sole Insurer Model"?
- (7) What were the printing costs?
- (8) What was the full cost of staff involved?
- (9) What were the fully costed distribution costs, including other stationery, postage, etc., charges?
- (10) Did the Workers' Assistance Commission fund the drafting, publication and distribution of the publications?

- (11) If not, who did, and in what proportions?
- (12) What other expenditure has been incurred by the commission since 1 March 1983 on matters pertaining to the Minister's portfolio of Industrial Relations?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) Section 109 of the Workers' Compensation and Assistance Act provides for insurers and self-insurers to contribute the funds necessary to administer workers' compensation in this State.
- (2) These have not been approved as required under section 107 for 1983-84.
- (3) No.
- (4) See answer to (3) above.
- (5) (a) Manager, Workers' Assistance Commission, private secretary, parliamentary secretary;
- (b) yes; in part;
- (c) \$2 741.51.
- (6) Myself.
- (7) \$5 760.
- (8) The amount was minimal in terms of extraneous staff duties.
- (9) \$2 336 by the Workers' Assistance Commission; the majority by my ministerial office.
- (10) Not in full. See answers (7), (8), and (9) above for portion paid by the Workers' Assistance Commission.
- (11) See answer to (10) above.
- (12) As workers' compensation is part of my portfolio, does this mean total expenditure by the Workers' Assistance Commission since 1 March 1983?

HOUSING: EVICTION

Mr Oscar Little

52. Hon. N. F. MOORE, to the Minister for Mines representing the Minister for Housing:

- (1) (a) Is it correct that in approximately April of this year, a Mr Oscar Little was evicted from his house in Cornish Way, Pinjarra, for non-payment of rent; and
- (b) if so, what was the amount of his arrears?
- (2) (a) What was the amount of money required to repair the house vacated by Mr Little; and

(b) will the Minister advise how much of this money was recovered from Mr Little?

- (3) Did a State Housing Commission officer recommend that in view of Mr Little's tenancy record that he be not allocated another State Housing Commission home?
- (4) (a) Did the Minister direct the State Housing Commission to allow Mr Little renewed occupancy of the house in Cornish Way, Pinjarra; and
- (b) if so, how much of his arrears was he required to pay in order to renew his occupancy of the house?
- (5) (a) Is the Minister aware of any financial assistance being given to Mr Little by a Government department or agency which enabled him to meet all or part of his commitment to the State Housing Commission; and
- (b) if so, will he provide details?

Hon. PETER DOWDING replied:

- (1) to (5) It has been a long-standing practice of the State Housing Commission not to make public its dealings with its tenants or clients.
The information sought will be researched and forwarded by letter at a later date.

RECREATION: FOOTBALL

Instant Lottery: Distribution

53. Hon. TOM McNEIL, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Employment and Administrative Services:

Would the Minister advise whether any instant lottery funds are earmarked for country areas to assist football leagues who have to make heavy payments to local councils for the use of football grounds?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

No instant lottery funds are earmarked for ground rental to local authorities.

STATE FORESTS: CONSERVATOR

Appointment

54. Hon. A. A. LEWIS, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Forests:

When does the Government intend making the appointment of a new Conservator of Forests?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

This matter will be considered when the current review of land resource management has been completed.

EDUCATION: SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Community Access Programme

55. Hon. P. H. WELLS, to the Attorney General representing the Minister for Education:

- (1) When was the community access programme for public use of school libraries introduced?
- (2) Which school libraries have community access programmes and at what hour can these libraries be used by the public?
- (3) What evaluation has been made of the community access programmes?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

- (1) The first dual use school community library at Lesmurdie High School was opened on 14 June 1982.
- (2) The school-community library at Lesmurdie High School can be used by the public during the total opening hours of 8.15 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 8.15 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday, and 9 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturday. Rockingham Technical College Library is open to the community from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Monday to Thursday and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday.
- (3) Formal evaluation has not yet commenced but statistics of public users and loans to the public are being gathered.

FUEL AND ENERGY: GAS

Pipeline: Wattle Grove

56. Hon. G. E. MASTERS, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

- (1) Would the Minister be prepared to re-examine the problem of Mr and Mrs Konowalow of Lot 52, Brentwood Road, Wattle Grove, regarding adequate compensation for the laying of a pipeline through their property?
- (2) Would the Minister be prepared to inspect the property?

- (3) If the answer to (2) is "No", would the Minister be prepared to arrange and meet with Mr and Mrs Konowalow to discuss their problem with a view to having some satisfactory arrangement?

Hon. PETER DOWDING replied:

- (1) to (3) I have examined in detail the steps that have been taken by the State Energy Commission to obtain an easement for the Dampier to Perth natural gas pipeline through the property of Mr and Mrs Konowalow, Lot 52 Brentwood Road, Wattle Grove, and I am satisfied that the procedure has been completely in accordance with the requirements of the State Energy Commission Act 1979-1981. Mr and Mrs Konowalow were paid a sum in June 1982 to relocate out-buildings on their property to suit the current alignment and have been offered compensation for the easement in accordance with the valuation of the easement by the Valuer General.

As a matter of record, the compensation offered by the commission to other property owners in the area has generally been accepted by them.

As I can see no irregularity in the handling by the commission of the matter with Mr and Mrs Konowalow, I am not prepared to intervene.

CREDIT UNIONS

Trustee Status

57. Hon. N. F. MOORE, to the Attorney General representing the Treasurer:

- (1) Is it correct that the Treasury Department is currently re-examining the issue of trustee status for credit unions with a view to giving further advice to the Crown Law Department and the Attorney General in connection with the application of some credit unions for trustee status?
- (2) If so, when did the examination begin?
- (3) When will it be completed?
- (4) When can it be anticipated that the Government will be in a position to advise credit unions in relation to the issue?
- (5) What is the Government's policy in relation to the matter of trustee status for credit unions?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

- (1) The Treasury was asked by the Attorney General to comment on the issue of trustee status for credit unions and has done so.
- (2) and (3) Answered by (1).
- (4) and (5) The Government will make a decision after the report of the WA Law Reform Commission on trustees' powers of investment becomes available.

ROTTNEST ISLAND: BOARD

Jurisdiction

58. Hon. H. W. GAYFER, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Lands and Surveys:

- (1) Is the Rottnest Island Board correctly under the jurisdiction of the Lands Department as per the Parks and Reserves Act?
- (2) If so, did the Premier ask the Hon. K. F. McIver MLA, Minister for Lands and Surveys, to ratify his appointment as chairman of the board as set up by the Lands Department under the Parks and Reserves Act?
- (3) In which *Government Gazette* did the Minister for Lands and Surveys formally make the announcement ratifying that the Premier would be Chairman of the Rottnest Island Board?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) The Rottnest Island Board is constituted under the Parks and Reserves Act, that Act being administered by the Minister for Lands and Surveys.
- (2) Yes. The Minister for Lands and Surveys recommended to His Excellency the Governor, in Executive Council, under the provisions of the "Parks and Reserves Act, 1895", that Brian Thomas Burke, MLA, be appointed as member and Chairman of the Rottnest Island Board.
- (3) A notice, authorised by the Under Secretary for Lands, giving effect to the appointment appeared in the *Government Gazette* on 11 March 1983.

ROAD: BUNBURY-MANDURAH

Four-lane

59. Hon. V. J. FERRY, to the Minister for Mines representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) In accordance with the election promise made by the Government in its

"Bunbury 2000" concept, when will a start be made on a four-lane highway from Mandurah to Bunbury?

- (2) Which sections will be commenced first?
- (3) From what source will funds be provided for this work?
- (4) When will the whole highway be completed?

Hon. PETER DOWDING replied:

- (1) and (2) This financial year with preliminary works in preparation for a bridge across the Peel Inlet.
- (3) Finance will be provided from the Commonwealth, including Australian bicentennial road development programme, and State sources of road funding.
- (4) There are a number of options available. These are currently under review to establish the most suitable means of achieving the Government's objective.

CREDIT UNIONS

Stamp Act: Provisions

60. Hon. N. F. MOORE, to the Minister for Mines representing the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Has the Minister received a submission from the Credit Union Association concerning the possible implications of new anti-avoidance provisions in the Stamp Act for credit unions?
- (2) If so, what action has been taken by the Minister in relation to the submission?

Hon. PETER DOWDING replied:

- (1) and (2) The Credit Union Association is yet to submit a report on the implications of new anti-avoidance provisions in the Stamp Act for credit unions. It is understood that a report is being prepared.

STATE FORESTS: PINE

Manjimup

61. Hon. A. A. LEWIS, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Forests:

- (1) What land does the Government intend using for the planting of pines in the Manjimup area?

- (2) Will these plantings be in addition to or at the expense of the Donnybrook sunklands?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) It is proposed to obtain alienated land for the planting of pines in the Manjimup area.
(2) In addition to replacing the Shannon timber resource these plantings will form part of a relocation of the pine planting program from the Donnybrook sunklands.

EDUCATION: HIGH SCHOOLS AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES

Libraries: Dual Use

62. Hon. P. H. WELLS, to the Attorney General representing the Minister for Education:

What is the policy of the Government and the Education Department on the possible dual use of high school and technical college library facilities by local governments for public library use?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

Where a local government authority is prepared to contribute to the capital and recurrent costs of providing a library facility, the Education Department will consider a proposal for a co-operative development for dual use.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS: WA OPERA COMPANY

Statutory Bodies Status

63. Hon. A. A. LEWIS, to the Attorney General representing the Minister for the Arts:

When does the Government intend to introduce legislation to make the WA Opera Company a statutory body?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

This is an option that is available to the WA Opera Company and would only be considered by the Government at the specific request of the company.

HEALTH: TOBACCO

Smoking: "The Puffability People"

64. Hon. P. H. WELLS, to the Attorney General representing the Treasurer:

- (1) Has the Government received an application for a grant from an antismoking

group known as "The Puffability People"?

- (2) If so, what was the amount of the grant applied for?

- (3) Has the grant been approved, and if so, when will it be paid?

- (4) What was the purpose of the grant?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

- (1) to (4) The matter was raised informally with me, but I have not received a formal application.

RAILWAYS

Bowelling-Wagin: Reopening

65. Hon. A. A. LEWIS, to the Minister for Mines representing the Minister for Transport:

When does the Government intend to open the Bowelling-Wagin railway line in response to the promise it made during the election campaign?

Hon. PETER DOWDING replied:

The Minister has received a report with recommendations for the future of the Bowelling-Wagin railway.

Consideration is being given to the report and the Government will be making a decision in the near future.

EDUCATION: HIGH SCHOOLS AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES

Libraries: Use by Public

66. Hon. P. H. WELLS, to the Attorney General representing the Minister for the Arts:

- (1) Has the Library Board examined the possible use of existing high school and/or technical college libraries by the general public?

- (2) Does a committee on the subject exist?

- (3) If so, what are the names of the committee members?

- (4) What reports have been submitted, and what recommendations have been made?

- (5) Which school libraries are currently used by the public?

- (6) What evaluations of school libraries, currently used by the public, have been made?

- (7) What are the results?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

- (1) Yes. Joint use libraries have been established in association with the Education Department, local authorities and the Library Board and are currently operating at Lesmurdie High School, Rockingham TAFE, Karratha College, and one more is planned for Wickham in conjunction with the construction of the high school library.
- (2) No permanent committee exists. Each proposal is discussed with representatives of the Education Department and the local authority concerned.
- (3) Not applicable.
- (4) Not applicable.
- (5) See (1), but some other arrangements have been entered into by the Education Department to make facilities available to the public. There is no involvement by the Library Board in these arrangements.
- (6) The joint services currently in operation are being monitored to establish their effectiveness before the Library Board considers the development of any further joint use project.
- (7) See (6).

MINING: COAL

Collie Coal Miners Tribunal: Amalgamation

67. Hon. A. A. LEWIS, to the Minister for Industrial Relations:

- (1) Was he correctly quoted in *The West Australian* of 8 June 1983 that the Collie Coal Miners Tribunal would come within proposed amalgamation of tribunals?
- (2) If not, what is the situation?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

- (1) The report in *The West Australian* was necessarily abbreviated and therefore could not contain the full detail of my remarks. It was correct in as much as it reported that the Government's proposal to review the status and function of all industrial tribunals would include the Collie Coal Miners Tribunal.
- (2) The precise situation is that because the Collie Coal Miners Tribunal is presided over by an Industrial Commission member it already comes under the broad umbrella of the WA Industrial Commission under a structure which both enhances the stature and scope of the com-

mission. These factors have subsequently been fully considered by the industrial relations tripartite committee. I advised the secretary of the Collie Miners Union by letter on 17 June 1983, that it was not considered that any action should be taken in any way to alter the operation of the tribunal.

HOSPITAL

Boyup Brook: Repairs

68. Hon. A. A. LEWIS, to the Attorney General representing the Minister for Health:

When does he expect the repairs and renewals to start on the Boyup Brook District Hospital?

Hon. J. M. BERINSON replied:

Calling of tenders is scheduled for Saturday, 13 August 1983 and work should commence early in October 1983.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

MINING: NOONKANBAH STATION

Agreement: Copy to Minister

29. Hon. N. F. MOORE, to the Minister for Mines:

- (1) Is it required under any legislation for the Minister to be provided with the terms and conditions of the agreement entered into between the Noonkanbah Aboriginal community and the company, International Energy Development Corporation?
- (2) If not, does the Minister have a copy anyway?

Hon. PETER DOWDING replied:

The question asks for an interpretation of Statutes, and in those circumstances I would have thought it was out of order.

President's Ruling

The PRESIDENT: I do not think the question is out of order, but it is still within the province of the Minister to decide whether or not to answer it. I rule that the question is in order.

Hon. PETER DOWDING: The reply is as follows—

- (1) To my knowledge, under no Statute am I entitled to demand copies of private agreements made between people exploring and the pastoral

leaseholder on whose lease that exploration is to take place. I have already told the Hon. Norman Moore—and this has been the subject of Press publicity—that I was informed about the nature of negotiations.

- (2) I do not know and I am not in a position to say whether a copy of that agreement is held either by me or by my department.

MINING: NOONKANBAH STATION

Agreement: "Areas of Significance"

30. Hon. N. F. MOORE, to the Minister for Mines:

It has been reported in the Press that the Marra Worra Worra Aborigine Corporation has been appointed under terms of this agreement to liaise between Aboriginal groups and the International Energy Development Corporation and will undertake a survey to identify and protect areas of significance to the Aboriginal people. Can the Minister advise—

- (1) Is this correct?
 (2) If it is correct does this mean that the sacred sites and so-called area of influence documented in the Bindon report need reconfirming?

Hon. PETER DOWDING replied:

- (1) and (2) I have already made two points clear. The first is that this is a private agreement and just as any of the participants in an exploration programme are entitled to seek the assistance of business organisations or undertakings with expertise, I believe the participants in this exploration programme are similarly entitled. Secondly, I have already told the Hon. Norman Moore, and I would have thought by now that he understood it, that the exploration programme, the subject of this year's permit obligations, does not impact in any way on the area of land which the Hon. Norman Moore's party, when in Government, called the area of influence. It is a programme of seismic work some distance from this area, and the Hon. Norman Moore will know that both Noonkanbah and the adjacent pastoral lease—Millajiddee—are very large pastoral stations on which there are con-

siderable areas of land, whereas the so-called area of influence—I believe and speak only from memory—was a relatively small area of about 40 square kilometres not far from the homestead property on Noonkanbah. So to make it clear, the programme the subject of this year's work does not impact on that area. It is some distance from it.

Hon. N. F. Moore: Why did it take all that time to find that out?

Hon. Peter Dowding: You never asked me. I told you in the Press.

AGRICULTURE: MACHINERY

Height: Consultations

31. Hon. A. A. LEWIS, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

Having given notice to him last week of the concern over the heights of power lines, has he or his department ascertained any further information?

Hon. PETER DOWDING replied:

I indicated last time, and I am sorry if I misunderstood the Hon. Sandy Lewis, that if he wanted some information or felt there was a need for some further investigation, he should give me the details so that I could undertake either to obtain the information or to conduct the investigation. I have not had any contact from him, and, as I said, I think he came into my office to discuss other matters but did not raise this matter with me. I repeat to him and to the House that I am happy to assist in seeking information or undertaking an investigation if he would like to identify what information he seeks.

FUEL AND ENERGY: GAS

Charges: Increase

32. Hon. FRED McKENZIE, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

I refer to reported comments that State Energy Commission increases in the price of gas would add \$3.47 million to the operating costs of a Midland brick yard.

Will the Minister investigate this claim and advise the House of the outcome?

Hon. PETER DOWDING replied:

- (1) I thank the member for some notice of this question. The business which made this claim does not purchase gas from the SEC but buys it from WANG.
- (2) The investigations of the SEC have shown that at least one brick manufacturer in WA uses fuel oil and would reduce its fuel bill by half if it converted to natural gas. Two other brick manufacturers using coal have decided to convert to gas, indicating that gas prices are clearly attractive.
- (3) I have given an unequivocal undertaking to have the case of any industry claiming substantial hardship by reason of gas pricing decisions, fully reviewed.

SALARIES AND WAGES FREEZE ACT

Section 13 (1) and (2): Exercise of Authority

33. Hon. G. E. MASTERS, to the Minister for Industrial Relations:

My question is supplementary to questions 42 and 47 on today's notice paper. Is the Minister satisfied, on re-

consideration, that what he said is correct or would he like to review his comment? I asked whether the Minister knew certain things; I asked how many decisions he had made under the Salaries and Wages Freeze Act; I asked what Government departments were affected; I asked how many persons were benefiting; and I asked what effect his decision will have on the financial position of 1982-83 and the financial year 1983-84. The Minister has said that the information would take some considerable time to collate and I ask him again whether he could possibly have made those decisions without the information I am seeking?

Hon. D. K. DANS replied:

I will give my answers in written form to the Hon. Gordon Masters. At the appropriate time—and I shall say when that is—I shall give the member the information that he desires in written form.

Hon G. E. Masters: It must be available by now, Mr Dans.

