

# Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 7 December 1983

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

## HEALTH: MENTAL

### *Accommodation: Petition*

MR HASSELL (Cottesloe—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [2.17 p.m.]: I present a petition in the following terms—

We, the undersigned express our concern that in the proposed changes to the Mental Health Act, consideration is given to increased after-care and provision of more suitably graded accommodation for people suffering from mental illness.

To be included in this, the following facilities:

1. A flying squad consisting of trained personnel, able to deal with crisis situations in the home.
2. Graded hostel accommodation with single rooms, and group homes with supervision instead of therapy.
3. Independent units with subsidised rents, together with frequent visits from Community Care nurses.
4. The availability of some form of domestic help, such as Silver Chain domiciliary help.
5. Grading of accommodation depending on independence and capability of tenant.
6. More frequent and prolonged visits from after-care staff for those living at home.
7. Some form of Community Awareness program to dispel misconceptions about mental illness.
8. The setting up of more 'drop in' centres for people to attend during the day, as an alternative to work shops and therapy centres.

The petition bears 10 signatures and I certify that it conforms to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

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

(See petition No. 65.)

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

### *Job Security Test Case: Petition*

MR WILLIAMS (Clontarf) [2.19 p.m.]: I present a petition couched in the following terms—

TO:

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

We, the undersigned residents of Western Australia, wish to make it known that we do not support the application known as the Job Security Test Case, which the ACTU has brought before the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission.

We believe that if implemented, the provisions of the application would have devastating ramifications on the free enterprise system, including an increase in unemployment.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Western Australian Government reject any similar application in Western Australia and that you will give this matter earnest consideration and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

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

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

(See petition No. 66.)

## TOBACCO (PROMOTION AND SALE) BILL

### *Conference Managers' Report*

MR HODGE (Melville—Minister for Health) [2.20 p.m.]: I wish to report on the outcome of the conference of managers called to discuss the Bill.

The Conference failed to reach agreement in respect of the Bill.

Opposition members suggested that to succeed, the Bill should be divided into two sections, namely—

- (1) Advertising, and
- (2) Assisting prevention of smoking by young people.

They then suggested that—

- (a) Part (2) be agreed to; and
- (b) Part (1), referring to advertising, should be rejected.

The Government would then have the opportunity of resubmitting the "ban on advertising" Bill at a later session and, in the meantime, education programmes at school and home could be proceeded with, as could the application of effective penalties against suppliers of tobacco or cigarettes to children.

The Government was prepared to make concessions in the areas of the timing of the implementation of the legislation and in connection with penalties. However, it was not prepared to agree to the separation of the Bill into two sections.

The Government regards the advertising prohibitions as essential and essential to the antismoking programme. I move—

That the report be adopted.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## HOSPITALS AMENDMENT BILL

### *Returned*

Bill returned from the Council with amendments.

### *Council's Amendments: In Committee*

The Chairman of Committees (Mr Barnett) in the Chair; Mr Hodge (Minister for Health) in charge of the Bill.

The amendments made by the Council were as follows—

#### No. 1.

Clause 8, page 12, lines 17-30—Delete paragraph (c) and substitute the following paragraph—

- (c) there is in force between the private practitioner and the board of the recognized hospital an approved agreement providing for the rendering by the private practitioner of a professional service of the kind in question; and.

#### No. 2.

Clause 8, page 13, lines 22-35—Delete paragraph (c) and substitute the following paragraph—

- (c) there is in force between the medical practitioner and the board of the recognized hospital an approved agreement providing for the rendering by the medical practitioner of a professional service of the kind in question; and.

#### No. 3.

Clause 8, page 14, lines 5-19—Delete subsection (8) and substitute the following subsection—

- (8) The Minister may, if Commonwealth guidelines have been formulated, formulate guidelines by notice published in the *Gazette* for the purpose of giving effect to the Commonwealth guidelines and may by notice published in the *Gazette* vary or revoke any guidelines formulated under this subsection.

#### No. 4.

Clause 8, page 15, line 20—Delete "subsection (8)(a)" and substitute the following—

subsection (8).

Mr HODGE: I move—

That the amendments made by the Council be agreed to.

The amendments made by the Legislative Council were moved in that Chamber by the Minister for Mines on my behalf, and the Government is prepared to accept those amendments. They were discussed in lengthy negotiations between the Commissioner for Hospital and Allied Services and representatives of the Australian Medical Association.

The amendments were checked with Parliamentary Counsel and the health authorities. It was agreed that the amendments could be made without jeopardising the introduction of Medicare, or without in any way inhibiting the State's ability to efficiently and effectively manage Medicare.

In addition to the amendments being discussed, other matters were negotiated and will be the subject of an exchange of letters between me, on behalf of the Government, and the AMA. I am pleased the Government and the medical profession have been able to reach agreement on this matter. The negotiations were successful from the point of view of both sides. The way is now open for the State Government to introduce Medicare and to exercise that enhanced degree of managerial control over the State's hospital system about which I spoke when I introduced the Bill.

We have given a number of assurances to the AMA about our intentions in the introduction of Medicare, and this matter will be the subject of further negotiations between the Government and the AMA.

I express my thanks to Dr Roberts, the Commissioner for Hospital and Allied Services, for the excellent way in which on behalf of the Government, he conducted the negotiations. I express my

appreciation also to Dr Lew Blake, the President of the AMA, and to Mr Bill Coleman, the Secretary of the AMA, who represented their organisation very well and conducted the negotiations in a proper way.

With those few remarks, I urge the Committee to accept the amendments.

Mr GRAYDEN: The amendments will give effect to the agreement of State Cabinet to proposals put forward by the Australian Medical Association in respect of the Bill. In agreeing to the proposals the Government committed itself to making it clear, through the legislation, that the State Minister's powers will extend no further than the powers of the Commonwealth Minister in delineating the scope of prescribed items. In addition, the State Government gave an undertaking to implement the establishment of appointment committees, boards of reference, medical advisory committees, and the hospital advisory committee.

Some major aspects of the agreement between the AMA and the Government will be implemented by by-laws or regulations; therefore, provisions in relation to those matters are not necessary. The most important point is that various bodies will be established to provide safeguards essential for this legislation, because it gives sweeping ministerial control over private medical practitioners operating in the public hospital system. The concessions made by the Government meet the requirements of the AMA and the Opposition. For that reason the Opposition did not proceed with its foreshadowed amendments.

The Opposition wanted proposed new section 33A amended to ensure that the power of the State Minister would not extend beyond the requirements necessary to implement Medicare. This objective will be achieved by the amendments written into the Bill in another place, and as a consequence of the Government's additional assurances.

The Opposition was prepared to accept additional ministerial control over private practitioners operating in our public hospital system provided that adequate safeguards were given, and the various bodies the Government has undertaken to establish will provide those safeguards. In addition, the Government has given certain assurances.

The agreement between the Government and the Australian Medical Association is very comprehensive indeed. It has been ratified by State Cabinet and confirmed in writing. The Opposition

is, therefore, prepared to accept the Bill in its present form.

Mr O'CONNOR: I support the motion moved by the Minister for Health to agree to the amendments. The need for these amendments to be returned to the Legislative Assembly indicates very clearly the haste with which this Government has tried to press legislation through this Parliament. Had the Government properly considered this legislation, it would have known that the amendments were required. Thank God for the Legislative Council! These amendments which were passed by the Legislative Council were necessary because of the haste in which the Government introduced the legislation.

Mr Hodge: You do not know what you are talking about.

Mr O'CONNOR: The Minister cannot help himself.

Mr Hodge: You are telling untruths and I am not going to listen to that.

Several members interjected.

Mr Williams interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Clontarf will come to order!

Mr O'CONNOR: The Bill was passed through this Chamber without these amendments and it has been returned in its amended form from the Legislative Council. That indicates clearly the need for a buffer zone in the form of the Legislative Council to stop legislation being hurriedly raced through the Parliament by this Government.

Mr Tonkin: Why was there not one when you were in Government? You did not need one, so why do we need it?

Mr Williams interjected.

Several members interjected.

#### *Withdrawal of Remark*

The CHAIRMAN: Order! In respect of the remarks just made by the member for Clontarf, I would like to explain firstly that it should be clear to him and to every other member in the Chamber that I accept, from one side or the other, interjections directed to the person on his feet. Since my first day in the Chair, I have not accepted cross-Chamber interjections. I take exception to the remark the member for Clontarf just made implying that I do not deal fairly with each side and I ask for a withdrawal of that remark.

Mr WILLIAMS: I withdraw that remark.

*Committee Resumed*

Mr O'CONNOR: The Leader of the House referred to the situation when we were in Government. During that period many of the Bills that we introduced were amended as a result of the efforts of members of the Legislative Council. Many more were amended than have been amended by the Legislative Council during this Government's term in office.

Mr Terry Burke: None was rejected in nine years.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Perth shall not interject while he is out of his seat.

Mr O'CONNOR: Although Bills were not rejected in Parliament, they certainly were rejected in the party room.

Mr Tonkin: You talk about the Legislative Council, but you had the party room. The Council goes to sleep when you are in Government. If you have a House of Review for one side, there should be one for the other.

Mr O'CONNOR: Members opposite are upset because they know what I am saying is fact; they know that if it had not been for the Legislative Council these amendments would not now be before the Chamber.

The Government has indicated the need for a House of Review that will, when the Government tries to rush through legislation, send reasonable amendments back to this Chamber.

Mr Davies: What absolute rubbish.

Mr O'CONNOR: I make this point—

Mr Hodge: You are point scoring—that is all you are indulging in.

Mr O'CONNOR: Does the Minister not do that?

Several members interjected.

Mr Hodge: Your shadow Minister does not agree with you.

Mr O'CONNOR: The Opposition agrees with the amendments put forward and I pay tribute to the shadow Minister who did a great deal of work in getting the Government to accept these amendments. The amendments were suggested by him in this place.

Mr Hodge: That is not true. They are different amendments.

Mr O'CONNOR: Is the Minister saying that the amendments were not suggested by the shadow Minister?

Mr Hodge: No, none of these amendments was suggested by the member for South Perth. I suggest you look at the Notice Paper.

Mr O'CONNOR: The shadow Minister made suggestions along these lines when debating this Bill in this Chamber. The Government would have rushed this legislation through without proper consideration had it not been for the Legislative Council. The amendments before us will make for a much better Bill.

Mr RUSHTON: Having debated this Bill at length, it seems passing strange that the Government has changed its mind in this regard.

Mr Hodge: Don't you believe in conciliation?

Mr RUSHTON: The intention of the shadow Minister for Health's amendments was to achieve what will be achieved by these amendments.

Mr Hodge: That is not right.

Mr RUSHTON: The Minister for Health should have learned that he must listen. He was sure that he would have wider powers as a result of this legislation.

Several members interjected.

Mr RUSHTON: This last week has been a bad week for the Government. It has shown itself up on this Bill in such a way that it was taking unto itself powers that it should not have.

Mr Hodge: The powers that I asked for I have got.

Mr RUSHTON: As far as the Opposition is concerned, it supports the Federal Opposition in that it will remove Medicare when it takes office again. We do not have that ability at present because of the presentation of the Federal Government's Bill. The State would lose funds if we did not proceed with the legislation.

I support my leader's remarks about the House of Review. The ladies and gentlemen of the media should note the fact that we have had a demonstration of the benefits of the House of Review.

Mr Burkett: What about your friend Malcolm and the health schemes he introduced that did not work?

Mr RUSHTON: When the proprietors of school buses were being put through the sieve financially, the Government backed off on that issue also. This Government turns to water quite readily.

Mr Hodge: It is a Government of consensus and conciliation.

Mr RUSHTON: About 100 reviews are being conducted by the Government at the present time and we will see an amazing number of somersaults. The Government does not have the ability to judge what is right and what is wrong. I say sincerely that we are fortunate to have a House of

Review which has a steadying influence on this Government.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendments agreed to.

### *Report*

Resolution reported, the report adopted, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## **TOBACCO (PROMOTION AND SALE) BILL**

### *Council's Further Message*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the conference managers' report.

## **ADOPTION OF CHILDREN AMENDMENT BILL**

### *Second Reading*

Debate resumed from 6 December.

**MR COURT** (Nedlands) [2.41 p.m.]: When this Bill was introduced into this Parliament I became concerned at what I thought was the indecent haste of its introduction following the defeat of the department in the recent court case which was clearly explained last night. I have been closely associated with the couple involved in this case over the last two years. Most of my dealings have been with the previous Minister, who was the member for Mandurah, but I have had some dealings with the present Minister. Both Ministers have been most co-operative in providing details on what is taking place.

The family concerned went through many years of anguish attempting to have their own child, and when all medical assistance failed, they finally decided to try to adopt a child. As we were informed last night, when they went through the adoption process they were told the husband was one year over the age limit because he was 36 years of age and, therefore, the couple could not be considered by the department. They then went through the correct legal channels and tried for a private adoption, only to be thwarted at every turn by the department. I think it is important to remember that they went through all the correct legal channels. After they had been through that process they finished up in court. As was explained in this House last night, the judgment brought down by the court endorsed their position. Unfortunately it was a decision which the department would not accept.

I know that the behaviour of the department throughout this case caused considerable grief to the adopting parents. When it became apparent that the department would not abide by the ruling

given, these people could see no justice. Not only had they gone through the personal anguish of going to court—even though they won the case—but also the whole proceedings had cost them a great deal of money. They went to a great deal of trouble in taking on the department. It was an unbelievably cruel chain of events for this couple to go through and I am sure all members of the House would agree to that, having heard the situation explained last night.

The Government has indicated that this legislation is to be introduced to prevent corruption or the possibility of corruption which could occur in private adoptions such as this case. I believe it is a scare tactic and that is not the case at all. The Government also said this legislation was brought in to fill a loophole in the law. However, such a loophole does not exist. I am sure all members agree that the question of adoption is a delicate one and one which should not be dealt with along party political lines.

The suggested proposal by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to set up a Select Committee to look into this matter and this particular piece of legislation would be a worthwhile option for the Government to take.

**Mr Stephens:** You would get National Party support on that one.

**Mr COURT:** The member would agree it is a delicate area.

The changes outlined in this Bill will give the department even greater control over adoptions. From the way the department handled itself in the example put forward, I do not think that we should give it more power.

Interested parties associated with adoption should have an opportunity to put forward their thoughts in respect of the changes proposed by this Bill. Instead of that, the department was beaten in the court and very soon afterwards a Bill was drafted and presented to this House. That was a month or two after the department had received a bloody nose in the case referred to. I do not think the Minister wants to bulldoze through the changes outlined in this Bill, and certainly I think the department should be reassessing its procedures when handling adoption cases following the judgment brought down.

I conclude my brief remarks by saying that the actions of the department have caused tremendous grief to the people concerned. I do not believe the department acted correctly in that case and I would like the Minister to realise that this Bill requires more input from interested parties before it is considered in the House.

**DR DADOUR (Subiaco)** [2.47 p.m.]: I am acquainted with the case referred to by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and I was rather aghast at the attitude of the department when I read the judge's findings. I query the reason that the Minister has not taken action and looked into the department. This is one of the most bureaucratic, rotten things I have ever heard or read about. It is shocking to think that the department would do such a thing; it is beyond comprehension.

The judge indicated in his findings that he did not trust the director of the department in any way whatsoever—he did not mince his words. Surely the judgment is an indictment of the department and the Minister. As a god-fearing man the Minister should understand that the department has played Solomon with this child, a child who should have gone to the adopting parents who made due application. The child is now with the parents to whom it was allocated by the department against the judgment of a court of law. When the time came for these people to relinquish that child, of course, they could not do so. They felt it was not possible for them to give up the child as they had become so attached to him. To overcome the rumpus the Crown Law Department intervened and offered the first couple—previously not considered as fit and proper persons to adopt children because one of them was a year too old—a choice of five children. They were put on the top of the adopting parents' list.

I cannot understand the reason that the Minister is bringing forward this legislation if he had full knowledge of what happened in that court case. He should have stopped, looked, and listened, because what happened was quite wrong.

The department is playing around with children to be adopted.

I find nothing wrong with private adoptions providing they are approved under the criteria contained in the Act as it stands at the moment. It is not as though many children are being adopted privately—private adoptions represent about 10 per cent of the total number. The inference that some doctors may have been making money out of this situation makes me go colder still. If that has been the case or the inference, has a report been made to the Medical Board? Clearly if that is happening, the Medical Board should be informed. Certainly it would be improper to make money from such a transaction.

I agree with the Opposition on this point. We should stop the legislation at this juncture and move to establish a Select Committee. I strongly advise that we investigate the director and his de-

partment because they have, beyond doubt, done nothing but the worst possible things we could imagine to this couple who wanted to adopt a child. It is beyond my comprehension that the department has not been taken to task for that. There should be a complete inquiry, as this is not the first time we have seen the high-handed attitude of the department in a very delicate situation.

This couple tried and persevered for so long to have a live child of their own by natural means. They sought all the help available to them. When they did apply for adoption, they found that the husband was one year too old. I understand that that sort of thing happens; but there are extenuating circumstances. They qualified by the mere fact that they had tried and done so much. They probably enjoyed themselves at the same time; but they tried very hard to have a child by natural means.

In my opinion, they were severely dealt with. They were approved as fit and proper persons to adopt a child from overseas; yet when the child had been allocated to them, they were not told this by the department.

The department has been wrong in many areas; it has made omissions. Members cannot tell me that the omissions were made by personal error; it goes further than that.

A young woman who wishes to have her child adopted should be able to say, "I want my child to go to a Christian family", "I want my child to go to a Catholic family", or "I want my child to go to an Anglican family". Surely that sort of request must be of paramount importance; but it was not the case in the past. No guarantee has been given to the adopting mother.

As we all know, the emotional attitude adopted by most people in relation to adoption is that the woman who has given up her child wants to know how it is faring. We have come to accept that. Before, adoptions were conducted in total secrecy, but now they are open. I see no reason that there should not be more private adoptions rather than fewer, because if the mother can nominate that she wants this or that for her child, what is wrong with that?

If the department needs more babies, it should look at contraception and easy abortion as problems. However, it should not turn around and crucify this couple who did everything right, according to the law, and as the judge stated.

I am very disappointed in the Minister. In his second reading speech he said that specific problems need to be attended to as a matter of urgency. The amendments he proposes are a matter of urgency; but in the past Ministers have seen

fit to leave in the provisions to permit private adoptions. We need private adoptions, for the reason that more and more young women want to know how their children are faring, what they are doing, and how they are getting along. We do not need total secrecy, so I ask the Minister to adjourn this Bill and initiate an inquiry in his department.

The Government must conduct this inquiry. As the judge stated, this sort of thing should not be allowed to continue or to be blessed by the Parliament. An inquiry must be held. I do not know what type of inquiry it should be, but I would not ask for an internal inquiry. It should be conducted from outside, preferably by the Public Service Board or some body of equal standing. In addition, we must have a Select Committee so we can consider all aspects of adoption before we make the blunder of opposing this legislation.

**MR WILSON** (Nollamara—Minister for Youth and Community Services) [2.56 p.m.]: I thank the members of the Opposition who have spoken to this measure. It is a very serious issue, and the members who have spoken indicated their concern about that issue which has arisen through a concern about administrative arrangements that have been challenged by a decision of the Family Court.

I might say that in introducing the legislation I had my doubts about taking such action to resolve the issue. It has been pointed out in the course of the debate that the measures proposed in this Bill can be regarded as an overreaction to the administrative difficulties that have been anticipated as a result of the court decision. I accept the expressions of concern during the debate about the mode proposed to deal with the serious problems raised in the current situation.

The situation has arisen through historical circumstances. It is characterised, as in all other States of Australia and in many other parts of the western world, by the number of parents who, for one reason or another, wish to adopt children. That number is growing at a much greater pace than is the supply of children available for adoption.

In the face of that growing problem, administrative arrangements have been made, and they have been tied to the development of criteria for people to be judged to be proper persons for the adoption of a child. I do not deny that these means have a great degree of artificiality about them in an attempt to cope with that problem and that the question for instance, of an age barrier, can easily be seen to be an unjust criterion for making such a judgment.

The Premier made it clear at the beginning of his Government's term of office that the Government would not fly in the face of good sense, when it had sensible measures proposed to it by the Opposition. We are not concerned to trample insensitively over the rights of people, or to ignore the good sense and intelligent offerings that might come from time to time from the Opposition. We are unlike our predecessors in Government in that respect.

**Mr Hassell:** Don't spoil the first bit.

**Mr WILSON:** The member cannot expect me not to point out the difference—a difference which I see to be very marked—between the former Government and the present Government in this respect. Having suffered, as a member of the Opposition, for six years under the thumb of the previous Government, it is more than temptation will allow me not to make this point; but I will not labour it in an act of mercy towards members of the Opposition. However, I do believe we have that difference, and the Premier did make that point, so I think it is very pertinent that in this area and in this ministerial responsibility I should be particularly concerned about that aspect of Government.

Contrary to what the member for Subiaco has said, this Government has shown a concern to come to grips with the development of better welfare services in Western Australia. We are committed by our election statements to an independent review of the Department for Community Welfare and of welfare services. We have instituted that review and we have come under some criticism from the Opposition for the way we have carried out that review. Nevertheless, we will persevere.

I appreciate the comments made last night, especially those made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I thought his comments were very pertinent and I listened with care to what he had to say. I found a lot of truth in what he had to say in respect of this particular case and the fact that we really need to look at the issue of adoptions separately from a general review of welfare services, including a review of the Department for Community Welfare.

It is therefore my intention, and the Government's intention, to accept the proposition put by the Leader of the Opposition to establish a Select Committee of inquiry of the Legislative Assembly into the whole issue of adoptions policy and of the need for a review of the administration of adoptions policy in Western Australia.

I understand that such a Select Committee would have a majority of Government members,

and I would anticipate three Government members and two Opposition members, with one of the Government members being the chairperson of that committee. I am prepared to accept that, because I think it is a thoroughly proper way to resolve the problems that have been rightly raised by members of the Opposition. I trust that the Opposition will accept the good faith of the Government in the hope that we can work towards a consensus policy to resolve the problems raised in this area so that we can develop a system, a policy and an administrative means which will be based on a bipartisan approach to this issue, an issue which is in no way a party political issue.

Members: Hear, hear!

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### *Reference to Select Committee*

**MR HASSELL** (Cottesloe—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.04 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be referred to a Select Committee.

I thank the Minister for his remarks and his acceptance of the proposition we have put forward for the establishment of a Select Committee. As I said last night, the Opposition has not, during the course of this year, moved for Select Committees on every second Bill that has come before the House. This is the first occasion this year that we have proposed a Select Committee and we proposed it very deliberately in relation to this Bill as we believe it is very properly a Bill to be the subject for discussion by a Select Committee of the House, and because the issues raised are of such importance that there should be further consideration of them.

The Minister has indicated that Government members will support the appointment of a Select Committee, and for that reason I do not intend to go on at length to give the reasons for there to be a Select Committee. The indications from this side of the House have also been in support of that concept, so it would appear the House generally is in support of the idea that we have a Select Committee, and that being so, it seems unnecessary to persist in stating the reasons. I think the reasons for having a Select Committee are obvious and they were revealed by the concrete evidence put before the House last night.

I hope the Select Committee will be able to proceed with its work in a very calm and careful atmosphere. I have not previously been a member of a Select Committee; my only experience of a parliamentary committee was that of the south

coast fisheries study conducted in 1978, a study of which I was the chairman. On that occasion, despite the wide range of party political opinion represented on the committee, we were able to work very effectively to produce a report and recommendations which have had benefits since in many areas. We managed that without at any time dealing with issues on the basis of party affiliations. If we were able to achieve that in relation to the fishery on the south coast, how much more important is it that we should try to adopt the same approach and reach the same sort of outcome on the matter of adoptions? I hope that is the way the committee will work.

The Minister has indicated he expects it to be a committee of this House and to be comprised of three Government members and two Opposition members, with the chairperson—to use the modern phraseology—to come from among the Government members. That is no doubt something on which the Government has made a decision, and I will not quibble with it, although I understand there has been some history of tradition in the House that the mover of a motion for a Select Committee becomes the chairman—but it is certainly not a rule. If it is to be varied, so be it. I can say that with a great deal of comfort because it is not my ambition to be the chairman.

Again I thank the Minister for accepting the idea of a Select Committee as appropriate and wise. I hope it produces the result we need.

As I said yesterday, problems and issues relating to the whole area need to be looked at. It would be wise if the committee could confine itself to this Bill and its proposals. I have specifically moved that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee and the Minister confirms that that is his intention. I am glad to have his confirmation of that because if we stray onto wider areas we will open up a Pandora's box that we will not be able to close. We would not be able to bring to a resolution, to anyone's satisfaction, the problems associated with it. The provisions in this Bill are administrative and their practical application will be very difficult. We do not need to go any further at this stage.

Question put and passed.

#### *Appointment of Select Committee*

**MR HASSELL** (Cottesloe—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.10 p.m.]: I move—

That the following members be appointed to serve on the Select Committee—the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr Bradshaw), the member for Rockingham (Mr Barnett),



the member for Mitchell (Mr D. L. Smith), the member for Whitford (Mrs Beggs), and the mover.

Question put and passed.

**MR HASSELL** (Cottesloe—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.11 p.m.]: I move—

That the Select Committee have power to call for persons and papers, to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned, to move from place to place and to report on 13 March 1984.

Question put and passed.

## **AGRICULTURE: RURAL ADJUSTMENT AUTHORITY**

### *Inquiry: Motion*

**MR CRANE** (Moore) [3.13 p.m.]: I move—

In the opinion of this House as a matter of extreme urgency the Government should initiate a full and independent inquiry with complete industry representation to research into and report on the—

- (1) availability of funding through the Rural Adjustment Authority;
- (2) administration of such funding;
- (3) need for statutory assistance to primary producers and rural businesses through mortgage relief or debt adjustment procedures;
- (4) general need for increased rural finance at realistic interest rates and the methods by which all such funds should be administered including the:
  - (a) desirability and advantages of increasing the role of banks as an alternative to finance and leasing companies; and
  - (b) the establishment of a Rural Finance Commission similar to that which has operated successfully in Victoria since 1962.
- (5) Other related matters affecting the viability of farming generally and grain production in particular including:
  - (a) the present transport policy, in relation to grain and superphosphate handling; and
  - (b) machinery costs including the availability of spare parts.

I have already been warned, although I have unlimited time, that because of the constraints upon the time of the House I must confine my remarks to the pertinent points as quickly as possible. This,

of course, creates a big problem because I have been waiting to speak to this motion for about three weeks and I have undertaken a lot of research.

As a practising primary producer, I suppose I would be as well versed as anyone else in this place now or who has been here before me in matters concerning the industry. I feel a little concerned at the moment because I just do not know where to start. I am a little bit like a mosquito in a nudist camp; I just do not know where to sting first, because the matters are so complex and numerous.

Perhaps I should start by drawing attention to some Press releases which exposed this problem a few weeks ago. It was reported in the *Western Farmer and Grazier* that a group of farmers had formed a finance group called COFF—I believe it is short for Consolidated Organisation of Farm Financiers. As a result of the formation of this organisation the farmers requested an audience with the Premier. While that was very difficult at the time, the Premier being a very busy person, it was finally arranged. I was with the farmers on that occasion to hear them put their problems to the Premier at first hand. Also, earlier this week a similar meeting was held in the Mukinbudin area. I believe the meeting was called by the local Primary Industry Association. The same sorts of stories were told at both meetings. The farmers talked about the decline in profitability in the rural industries, particularly in grain-growing areas. It must be accepted that wheat farmers are continuing to provide cheap food and at the same time they are paying even higher prices for the materials to provide that food.

Only today I was reminded of this fact by the PIA economic adviser (Mr Groves). He summed up the situation very easily and succinctly. Between 1980 and 1983 farm costs have increased by 10.9 per cent and at the same time farm income has increased by 4.7 per cent, leaving a difference of six per cent. That is the reason that people are getting into trouble. His statement was supported by figures from the Department of Agriculture comparing 1977-78 costs with those for 1982-83. Those figures showed that whereas a farmer could expect a return of \$8 from one hectare of land in 1977-78, he is now faced with a loss of \$10.90 per hectare in 1982-83, using the same increments. We can see the figures confirm what I have said; the problem is a very serious one indeed.

I will just highlight what most of us concede are the basic causes of these cost pressures today. The push began in the 1950s and 1960s, and it was really brought about by the improper and

inept tariff protection scheme for secondary industries in Australia. This protection scheme developed over that period and it has created an environment which has led all Australians to expect unrealistic standards of living and profits from investments. We are now saddled with that environment.

The rural industry cannot stand this burden any longer. I instance sea fishing, mining, and agricultural industries as the real rural industries which are suffering and feeling the greatest effects from this cost pressure.

In the WA wheat industry, costs have increased by about \$8 000 per year for a wheat grower with a medium to large sized farm. This, of course, is a direct result of the tariffs to which I have referred. We must add to that the annual costs of 17 tonnes of rock phosphate which is used as a fertiliser in WA. This additional cost is a direct result of having to use the Australian National Shipping Line instead of being able to take advantage of competitive shipping rates. This amounts to a great deal in dollar terms, and the Australian farmers are subsidising the 220 seamen who are employed in bringing this rock phosphate to Australia to the tune of \$73 000 each per year, which is a ridiculous figure. Those shipping costs are paid for by the farmer.

The Australian National Shipping Line enjoys manning scales and conditions of employment which are regarded as quite unrealistic by other shipping nations. Based on the most competitive freight fixing from Nauru to Australia, the freight differential between the ANL and competitive tonnage is around \$17 per tonne. That is how I arrived at the figure I mentioned earlier.

How long can we continue to bear this burden which is a subsidy paid to ANL and its employees by Australian farmers? Many discussions have taken place with the ACTU and other bodies and individual ship owners to try to encourage a better freight rate by the use of ships from other areas or by the refitting work being done by shipping companies from other countries. According to costs supplied in data given by the ANL to a parliamentary committee last year, which costs were quoted in an article in *The Bulletin* on 12 April, for every \$100 000 spent on shipping repairs in the United Kingdom, the same work in Australia would cost \$240 000; in Germany, \$106 000; in Sweden, \$90 000; and in Korea, \$65 000. We insist on this work being done in Australia, but we can see that if we take the highest and lowest figures, we pay \$240 000 for the same work here which could be done in Korea for \$65 000. This adds to the burden to which I have referred.

How much longer can the rural industry carry on with this type of treatment? I believe the situation over the last few years of increasing costs and the reduction in viability has been described as the dog chasing its tail and going around in circles. The problem now is that the dog has caught his tail. Where do we go from here? He cannot let go; he is like the wobbegong shark—the only way he can let go is when he coughs. If any member has been bitten by one, he will know what I am talking about; it hangs on like grim death.

We are faced with the problem of increasing costs and I have given an example. I turn now to other areas of increased costs such as machinery and I refer to grain harvesters and headers or combines as they are called in America. A grain harvester imported from the US in July 1983—I give an example of one particular model—cost about \$80 000, which, with a 15 per cent tariff of about \$12 000, made a total cost of \$92 000. If no tariff were applied and one assumed a mark-up of 20 per cent from the dealer, the cost would rise from \$80 000 to \$96 000. With the tariff, however, the same harvester costs the grain producer \$110 400. That is an additional burden he cannot carry any longer.

It has often been claimed that food is too dear and for that reason we must have higher wages. Let us look at this myth, because that is what it is. Let us look at it in terms of the minutes it takes to earn the basic commodities. We said in a prayer a little while ago "Give us this day our daily bread", so let us look at that commodity first. In 1946, a worker took 9.55 minutes to earn his daily bread. The word "worker" amuses me because some people categorise themselves as such; I have worked all my life so I consider myself to be a worker also. In 1983, a worker took 5.8 minutes to earn the bread. In 1946, it took 13.92 minutes to earn the price of flour; in 1983, it took 5.31 minutes.

In 1946, it took 12.74 minutes to earn the price of milk; in 1983, it was 5.54 minutes. I suggest that relatively speaking, wages are well ahead of the price of food. If we turn those figures into a percentage of average weekly earnings, we see that in 1946, bread was 0.40 per cent of weekly earnings, and in 1983, 0.24 per cent. The figures for flour are 0.58 per cent in 1946 and 0.22 per cent in 1983; for butter they were 1.53 per cent in 1946 and 0.43 per cent in 1983.

Let us look at luxuries such as roast pork and apple sauce on a Sunday. In 1946, a leg of pork cost 1.10 per cent of average weekly earnings compared with 0.71 per cent in 1983. Where is the myth about food being too expensive and the

reason for people needing higher wages? We need higher wages so that people can spend their time down the street at Pinocchio's Nite Club enjoying themselves until 3.00 a.m. How often have we members driven past there after leaving this place to find the streets literally crowded with people who presumably have nothing better to do? That is why they need the money. Those places should be closed at midnight so those people can be at home in bed in order to do an honest day's work the following day. But we would be in trouble if we tried to do that; we would be interfering with young people's enjoyment inside or outside Pinocchio's.

Let us look at other costs in the rural industry. Between 1980 and 1983, the cost of fertiliser increased by 26.1 per cent; fuel and lubricants, by 37.6 per cent; interest by 90 per cent; freight, by 29.9 per cent; rates and taxes, by 94.3 per cent; seed, fodder, and livestock, by 22.5 per cent; equipment and supplies, by 34 per cent; hired labour—and these are the ones who need more money to buy food which is supposedly so expensive and which I pointed out was not—by 31.9 per cent; service and overheads, by 51.1 per cent; and marketing expenses, by 24.7 per cent. All these increases have occurred between 1980-1983. It is no wonder the dog has caught his tail.

This same thing happened to us a few years ago. At that time there was sprung into our midst a body of people which believed it had the solution. They were the farm advisers and the economists. We have all heard of the well-known Dr Schapper. He told us we must become more efficient on our farms, we must make all efforts to ensure that two blades of grass grow where one grew previously.

There is always a note of humour, serious as it may be, in all of these problems. At that time there was a very wise farmer who came perhaps from Pingrup or a little further out. His name is Dixie Sulley. With your permission I would like to say how Dixie Sulley sums up this farmer advisory situation. He has published a book of poems; I hope each member of Parliament will buy a copy. This is what he says about "Only a Broken Down Cockie"—

I'm only a broken down cockie,  
An ordinary sort of bloke,  
I'm really not dumb,  
Well I'm smarter than some,  
But they think I'm a hell of a joke!  
Well "they" include and I'm not being rude,  
Politicians, stock firms and the banks,  
Those economist B's  
With their big flash degrees,  
To name them in order of rank.

It is fairly fitting when we consider the advice we have been given by the economists and farm advisers. Not that I am decrying them all. I know some sound advice is given which, if heeded, can be of great help. But we know what Winston Churchill said about economists. I am sure no-one can disprove it, and I would like to remind the House of his comment when he said, "If we were to get all the economists in the world and line them end to end, they would never reach a conclusion." That just about sums them up.

Dr Schapper being one of these economists, Dixie Sulley had this to say about him—

Mr Schapper will say  
In his most charming way,  
There's no room in the business for me,  
He'll call me redundant  
In language abundant,  
And lacking in efficiency.

This is what the advisers said: Get efficient or get out; get bigger or get out. The poem continues—

So come on dear Henry, I've heard it before,  
You're telling me nothing that's new,  
And if I've got to go,  
I'd just like to know,  
How the hell can we justify you?!

I think that sums it up. If these economists are to tell us we must be more efficient or get out, what contribution are they making? They are not making any contribution at all. They have lead us to some of the greatest problems we have today, because unfortunately parliamentarians—many of whom suffer from an over-inflated ego and very little else, and many of whom do not even know enough to know how little really they do know—are the people who have taken notice of the economists and the farm advisers, and we get further and further into the mire.

Let us look at one of the articles in the *Countryman* of 17 November. This article states—

Mr Anthony told the National Farmers' Federation half-yearly conference that Bureau of Agricultural forecasts showed the net real value of rural production this financial year would be below early-1970s levels.

Despite wide expectations that this would be a boom year for farmers, average net farm income this year would be only about \$5 000, Mr Anthony said.

I do not have to remind the House that Mr Anthony was the Deputy Prime Minister of Australia, and this serious situation he is telling us about was brought about largely by his own inep-

titude, his own inability, along with his colleagues, to grasp the problems. Now he is making these sorts of excuses and trying to tell us that we have a gammy leg.

Going back to the farm advisers, I mentioned how much damage they have done to this country. I notice that the member for Mt. Marshall is listening to me most intently. I cannot put it any better than in the words of Dixie Sulley, who sums it up most succinctly in this way in his poem "The Farm Adviser"—

He pulled up at my humpy,  
Introduced himself as "Sid,"

He said I'm a farm adviser,  
Could you use an extra quid.

He said that he was qualified,  
Whatever that may be,  
He had jackerood at Muresq,  
And he had some flash degree.

He warmed up to his subject,  
Caesar's ghost that man could go,  
He talked of banks and overdrafts,  
Concessions and cash flows.

He said that grain was on the wane,  
The world was sick of bread,  
"They don't want wheat they crave for meat,  
And big fat steaks instead."

"The first thing that we'll do says he,  
Is sell those damned great ploughs,  
And then we'll go to Elder Smith,  
And buy five hundred cows."

"You'll have to flog your tractor too,  
We've no more use for that,  
The only things you'll need henceforth,  
Are spurs and wide brimmed hat."

So off I went to auction,  
Bought the finest stock alive,  
But ere I got the beggars home,  
The market took a dive.

I rang the farm adviser up,  
He thought I sounded funny,  
"It's damn bad luck of course he said,  
But still it's only money!"

"But I thought this might happen,  
So I saw your bank last week,  
Will you be home in the morning,  
To receive four thousand sheep.

Well me sheep they all got fly blown,  
I got trampled by the bull,  
The sheep dog shat on me brand new hat,  
And the Japs won't buy me wool.

"Well I can see the problem,"  
Said my man with winsome charm,  
You've too much stock too deep in hock,  
You'll have to sell the farm!"

He went on "See I told you so,"

"Remember what I said,"

"Well I'm heading for the wheat belt,"

" 'Cause the world's run out of bread!"

That sums up most of the advice which has been given to the farmers by the advisers. They came in, told us what to do, and now we are up to our necks in hock. Incidentally, although I do not happen to subscribe to the necessity for farm advisers, that does not mean that I have been wise in not having done so. I receive quite a bit of advice from the Department of Agriculture, from the bank manager, and from anyone who I believe can give advice. I sift it out and make the final decision. But unfortunately many people have not done that. I know many farmers who have walked off their farms having got themselves so deeply into hock. I am sure the member for Mt. Marshall can substantiate that he has heard advisers telling farmers the paddocks in which they should graze their sheep. The other day I received a letter from a very successful farmer who had experienced the depression years of the early 1930s. He related his experiences and said the situation today is reminiscent of the early 1930s. He told me that during that period many farmers and their families committed suicide because of the seriousness of the situation.

He told me about one farm worker who had not been paid for two years, because the farmer could not pay him. This person kept on working for the farmer, because he did not have the money to go back to England, and at least he was provided with his food by the farmer. When the farmer returned from getting some more food at the store, he found this unfortunate farm hand had climbed to the top of the mallee heap and shot himself. That indicates the seriousness of the situation at the time, and I am told it is becoming very serious again, particularly if one reads about what is happening to people in the wheat-belt.

I understood Parliament was to adjourn this week, so I wrote to the Premier on Monday and sent him a copy of some legislation which was enacted in 1931. That legislation was called the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Bill and it prevented mortgages held by owners of land from being foreclosed.

Many people will know a gentleman who wrote to me recently, because he is well known. He will be 81 years of age on Friday, and he said I could use his name, which is Mr Arthur Scotney. He farmed in the Kondut area, and the following is part of the letter he wrote to me—

The following notes are a record of my experience of the 1929/37 Depression.

I started developing a piece of virgin land in the Wongan Hills area in 1924.

Twelve miles west of Kondut Siding. The only transport at that time being by horse-power.

In 1927 I took the opportunity to sell the land to a neighbour and move closer to the railway, purchasing 3 000 acres of virgin land adjoining Kondut townsite.

By 1929 I was cropping 1 000 acres of wheat and I married in March 1930.

At that time wheat was selling at 4s8d a bushel, but within a few short weeks the price fell by 2/3 and did not recover until 1937.

Up to 1930 most new settlers operated on After Harvest credit terms for all their main inputs such as fertilizer, fuel and machinery, but when wheat prices slumped all that went by the board and the oil companies in particular cut out all credit.

New settlers left the land in hundreds over the next five to six years, but because I had a young family and had no place else to go I stayed on and literally lived off the land, doing all farmwork with horses for eight years.

I had a mortgage to a friend who had lent me 500 pounds to buy a tractor with in 1928 at the then high interest rate of eight per cent. The bank O/D rate at that time was 5½ per cent.

About 1932 the W.A. Government enacted an Interest Reduction Act which I think applied to all rates of over 6 per cent. The reduction (compulsory) was 22½ per cent of the 8 per cent I was paying. This brought my payments down to 6¼ per cent.

I have not been able to track this down. Mr Scotney appears to have got some names wrong somewhere, but I understand there was a restriction on interest rates which reduced the interest rate he was charged by 22½ per cent, bringing his interest rate down from 8 per cent to 6¼ per cent. To continue—

About that time the Mortgagees Rights Restriction was also brought into being.

This M.R.R. Act made it necessary for a mortgagee to obtain a court order before being able to exercise his right of possession or of forced sale of property to satisfy a debt.

Court orders were very difficult to obtain and I only know of one farmer having to leave his home against his wishes after that Act was passed.

Mr Scotney explains the problems he faced and how his debt was adjusted by the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act. He goes on to say that because he could not get fuel for his truck he bought some horses from Mr Bill Padbury. When the Act came into operation, 25 per cent of the debt was paid and the creditors were able to apply to receive that 25 per cent. However, Mr Padbury lent Mr Scotney the money to buy the horses after Mr Scotney got into financial trouble. Therefore, he believed he should receive 50 per cent of the debt and that was finally agreed to. As a result, that is what happened.

Those are the experiences of one farmer. I referred briefly to the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act which was introduced into Parliament in 1930 by the Attorney of the day (Mr T. A. L. Davy). In introducing that Act—and although some may speak against it, similar legislation could be necessary now—he said—

The difficulty at present is that creditors are suspicious and jealous of each other, and fear that one or other will get in ahead of the rest and secure an unfair advantage.

It was proved that the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act did not do on its own what it was proposed it would do, and, therefore, the Government introduced the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act, which is the Act to which I referred when I asked the Premier whether he would consider introducing similar legislation now, because we have arrived at the time when, unless we take drastic steps, some farmers will be in serious trouble. We will find hundreds—perhaps thousands—of farmers will be walking off their properties in the next two or three years. I do not have to say why that has been brought about, but the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act—I have a copy of it here—was introduced not only to prevent foreclosures, but also to deal with repossession of land sold under the conditions of mortgage sales.

I hope other members of Parliament will not only look at the Act, but also study the second reading speech made at the time it was introduced.

Many of these problems have resulted from the banking system. I shall just touch briefly on the banking system and, indeed, that is the reason I referred to this aspect of the matter in my motion. A great deal of change is necessary.

As you, Sir, would know, banks have the ability to charge interest on their loans to farmers, but that interest is set by the Reserve Bank of Australia at a rate of 13.8 per cent on amounts under \$100 000.

Unfortunately, the bank has two doors—the front door and the side door. One goes in the front door and borrows some money, but when one cannot borrow any more money from the bank at 13.8 per cent interest, one is then shunted around through the side door which leads to the finance companies, many of which are owned by the various banks, and which do not have any limit on the amount of interest they can charge. I do not know whether members in this Chamber are aware of this, but while bank interest rates are pegged to 13.8 per cent, finance and lending companies can charge 500 per cent interest if one is silly enough to pay it. That is one of the problems.

When the poor, old cocky cannot get the money from the bank and he must have it because he is in dire straits, he is forced into these other avenues of finance.

Mr Old: There are several different rates. That is the base rate.

Mr CRANE: That is right; that is the base rate. I hope the member for Katanning-Roe will say a few words on this motion, because he has had a great deal of experience in the last few years in drought-affected areas and he will be able to make a worthwhile contribution.

If one looks back at the formation of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia before World War I, one learns very quickly that, had that bank not been tampered with and had it been allowed to do the job for which it was established, the position would be far more satisfactory.

I notice the member for Scarborough seems to be very interested in this aspect and I would be happy to give him a great deal more information on it, because I believe this is the key to the future prosperity not only of Australian farming, but also of Australian business.

It was a Labor Government, incidentally, which established the Commonwealth Bank, only to find that progressive Governments most effectively emasculated it. Unfortunately, one of those later Governments was the Chifley Labor Government, but it was the Bruce Page Government which was the real archenemy of the Commonwealth Bank.

A member interjected.

Mr CRANE: The Press probably would not understand it anyway, so I am not worrying about them. They may be listening in their rooms.

But this is very important. Every member of Parliament should bone up on the financial situation, on why this came about, and on why the Commonwealth Bank had its role taken from it. Each should understand how that bank financed Australia in World War I, how it financed the

east-west railway line, and how it could still finance all our needs if we were to steer ourselves away from the international monetary fund.

But I am here to make the suggestion that because of the serious situation in which farmers now find themselves as a result of being forced, in many instances, to go to finance companies for money, they are now paying exorbitant rates of interest. I have a Press article here about a farmer from Salmon Gums, a Mr Murray Turner, who had to sell his farm, not for its real value of \$400 000, but for a mere \$228 000 after the finance company decided it had to be auctioned off. This is after it had raised its interest rate on his loan from 18 per cent to 25 per cent.

Mr Speaker, how ridiculous would it be if you were taking part in an athletics carnival and you had failed to make the four-foot height in the high jump. Imagine if a chap came along and said that you could have another go because he was generous, but on this occasion, having missed the four-foot mark, you would be able to try the 5ft 6in mark. That is the situation in which many farmers find themselves.

This farmer could not meet his commitments, so the finance company rewrote his mortgage arrangements and increased his interest rate. I know of instances where farmers have purchased vehicles through lease agreements or hire-purchase agreements and those agreements have later been rewritten by the finance companies and the interest rates have been increased to 33.3 per cent, making it absolutely impossible for the farmers to meet the repayments. That is why I say there has never been a need for finance companies. We have a plethora of them.

What we need is for the Commonwealth Bank to be allowed to do the job for which it was established, and that brings me to the point about the rural finance corporation. Unfortunately, the member for Vasse is not present, but last year, when we conducted the milk inquiry, he along with the present Minister for Agriculture and me, visited the Victorian Rural Finance Commission, and we saw first hand what it was doing. That commission was formed from two pieces of legislation, one covering the soldiers' settlement commission.

This commission has been able to help the rural industry, and that not only means the farmers themselves, but also means the people who build the dairy factories for the dairy industry. A similar situation could apply here, perhaps in the building of fishing vessels and so on. Such a commission could play a similar role for the whole rural industry in Western Australia.

I hope, as a result of my motion, a committee will be formed which could invite Mr Ian Morton, the chairman of the Victorian commission, to come here to speak with members of the committee. If we were to take Mr Nichols from the Rural Adjustment Authority and perhaps Mr Dennis Whitely from the Rural and Industries Bank of Western Australia, two very capable officers, we could arrange for them to interview Mr Morton. We could establish a similar rural finance commission—perhaps we could call it the rural and industries development bank—here in Western Australia. We should be considering such a move so as to help our rural industry.

I do not have the time to go thoroughly over all the problems which face farmers at present, but I hope the House will accept what I have said as good reason for the establishment of a committee.

I have just been handed a note. Is it not funny that I am one member who does not speak very often in this place, yet whenever I am given unlimited time, everyone wants to take a bit of it. I suppose I will have to do the gentlemanly thing and let other members have a bit of my time, although last night we were told we were in a hurry to go home, yet the Deputy Leader of the Opposition spoke for two bloody hours about something. Now when I am talking about something which is the life blood of this country and this State, I am told to shut up because someone else wants a go. I will shut up when I am good and ready.

These farmers are bobbing around like corks in the ocean, like survivors from a wreck. Mr Speaker, you were in the Navy just after the last war, and perhaps you were fortunate enough not to have to pick up survivors from the sea. Let me assure you that it is not a very pleasant task to have to pick up these unfortunate people floating about in a tempestuous sea, half drowned and half asphyxiated from swallowing fuel oil. What did they say when we threw over a line to them? They did not ask whether we were Labor supporters or conservatives, Catholics or Anglicans. These farmers are in the same position. Mr Speaker, do you know what those people would ask us when we drew alongside? They would ask, "Where's the bloody rope?" The farmers are in exactly the same position.

I am asking this Government and this Parliament to throw these farmers a rope. I leave members with this message, "Never criticise a farmer while your mouths and stomachs are full". Many people have criticised farmers. When Mr Whitlam came to power, he talked about the hicks from the sticks. But farmers are genuine people who supply the life blood of this country,

so it is time something was done for them. I am asking this House, especially those members who represent country areas—I notice very few of them are in the Chamber at the moment, but of course it is afternoon teatime—to support my motion so that a proper investigation can be carried out in order to help these people who are crying out in anguish for our help at this time. I ask every member of the House, especially country members who understand the situation, to give my motion the support it deserves.

**MR OLD (Katanning-Roe)** [3.59 p.m.]: I have much pleasure in seconding the motion, and in doing so I congratulate the member for Moore for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. The member placed his motion on the Notice Paper when things were fairly grim for farmers, but since that time, due to adverse seasonal conditions, things have become much worse. Parts of Western Australia today are suffering the aftermath of up to seven years of drought. Not only that, but this year when we expected some conditions better than those we have been experiencing, we suddenly found that the season collapsed. During the period when we really needed some rain, it did not come, only to arrive when we did not need it and when harvesting should have been undertaken.

We have reached the situation now where people who have been relying on a good season in 1983 to get them out of a very serious problem are now really down on their uppers.

It is incumbent on this Parliament to bring to the attention of both State and Federal Governments the need for some urgent and drastic support. I believe that today three options are available to the farmers who are in this terrible situation. The first and the most unacceptable of those options is to organise farmers off unviable farms. This has been done before. To my mind, this is the most unacceptable option. The fortunes of farmers today have waned to such an extent that possibly if they sold up and walked off their farms they would get only \$100 000. They are amongst the fortunate ones because others will walk off with nothing.

Let us take the case of a man who has an equity of \$100 000 and who is "assisted" to leave his farm and goes off with a certain amount of money which is not enough to buy himself even a house and a motor car, so he immediately becomes one of the poor in this community. That is a very poor reward for the effort that some of these people have put into the industry.

The second, and far more acceptable option is for the Government to boost the Rural Ad-

justment Authority so that that authority may take immediate remedial action to deal speedily with the applications before it and assist these peoples' problems. I know people could easily say, "why did not previous Governments increase the amount of money available to the RAA?"

Mr Evans: I would not have asked that.

Mr OLD: I have often said in this House—I will answer the Minister's interjection in a moment—that the amount of money that has been applied under Governments of all colours, including the current one to rural adjustment is a scandal. The present Minister went to the RAA annual meeting with his begging bowl and came back with the magnificent sum of \$4.8 million or thereabouts.

Mr Evans: \$5.9 million.

Mr OLD: I am terribly sorry.

Mr Evans: That is \$2.9 million over the previous figure.

Mr OLD: What a great contribution to our problem.

Mr Evans: That is more than double the amount you got over five years.

Mr OLD: That is dead right, and the amount we got was totally inadequate; so is \$5.9 million.

Mr Evans: I agree.

Mr OLD: Take the case of people who want to engage in farm build-up, who have reasonable debts, who want to achieve some debt adjustment, and who may want up to \$700 000 or \$800 000. If that amount is to be taken out of \$5.9 million, there would not be many recipients of pieces of that cake. Governments of both colours have been very lax and certainly not generous in their attitude to rural adjustment.

The third option—and this is the one that I favour the most—is to look at an entirely new financing arrangement for the problems we have today. Certainly that is my favourite option and the only way I see by which we may be able to assist people in such dire straits. We need an injection of grant money from the Commonwealth Government into the farming industry. It do not know how much money it would take, but \$100 million would make a bit of a dent in the problem, anyhow, and would certainly assist many people to put a floor in their financial affairs, or to put a bit of clay into the mud into which they are very quickly sinking.

Let us use the \$100 million as a hypothetical figure. It is a lot of money to me and to most members of this House, but it is a very small amount to pay for a reasonably stable rural industry which has supported this State and Australia

since Australia's foundation. If that amount of money or a grant of money to be determined could be allocated by the Commonwealth Government on the basis that it may get it back some day—it may not and it would have to be prepared to take that risk; it should be allocated on a no-interest basis to be paid back when and if viability is achieved—we would have the basis of a system which could work. Without the floor which would be provided by this grant money, commercial finance will have no chance in the world of solving the problems being experienced today. If we could get these farmers back to the situation where they could start to service some commercial finance, not only would they return to viability, but also they would retain the dignity that they value so much.

We seem to get carried away in this decade with proposed investments and encouragement of high technology. Perhaps we should come back to earth and look at the industry which put this nation on the map and which has kept it viable over many generations.

In this regard, I quote an article from *The Australian* of 25 November as follows—

AUSTRALIA must leave high-technology industries to the more industrialised countries and concentrate on primary production, a leading international banker said in Sydney yesterday.

Mr Richard Schait, a senior vice-president (finance) of the Union Bank of Switzerland, who has just completed an assessment of the economy, said: "Australia's strongest point is not industrial production. The country's future is not in what it produces for the local economy but for the international community—that is its natural resources.

"If this is done intelligently, then the welfare of this country is safe.

"Certainly, in the decades to come, your rural industry will play a far bigger role in feeding the world. This, rather than industrial development, is one of the great problems the world community, with its constantly growing population, faces."

Two days later in the same newspaper, in an editorial headed "High tech or back to the farm?" appeared the following—

At last the point that Australia's potential lies through its rich mining and agricultural sectors, rather than in fanciful high technology, has been put into context by a prominent Swiss banker, Mr Richard Schait, senior vice-president of the Union Bank of Switzerland.



He says our future lies with what we do best: food and minerals for the international community.

Agriculture and mining are now responsible for at least 85 per cent of Australia's export income and seem certain to retain that balance as we approach the turn of the century.

For instance, our rural industry will play a far larger role in feeding the world in the decades to come. The primary industry sector, which will produce 50 per cent or more of Australia's export income this year,—

Do not forget that part. It continues—

—is on the verge of a production revolution, which will enable it to retain its status as Australia's single most important industry.

That the Australian farmer is as efficient as any in the world is indisputable. Today, he produces food for 70 people a year—

Mr Burkett: Hear, hear!

Mr OLD: The article continues—

—while the United States farmer produces food for 59 people and a Western European farmer will feed only 19 people.

Mr Bryce: Could I make a point, in all seriousness, about my concern about where people will find jobs? I concede that the productivity is enormous, but the figure which is disturbing is that at the turn of the century 35 per cent of Australians were on the land on growing farms. Today about 4.5 per cent are doing this and are producing umpteen times more food as a result of productivity. Where will the people go when these jobs go?

Mr OLD: I take the Minister's point and that is another problem. I agree it is a definite problem, but the Minister has his bike to ride and I have mine. The first thing we have to do is solve the problem we are debating today; that is, to keep those few people on the farm and make them viable.

One matter that should be looked at seriously—it can be done by both the State and Federal Governments under legislation that has been passed through both Houses in this State—is mortgage insurance. I mentioned this in my Address-in-Reply speech. It is a matter which has been the subject of a letter to the Premier from the Managing Director of the Town and Country WA Building Society. I am not here to promote any financial house, but the Town and Country WA Building Society has broken new ground in finance. It has maintained its basic interest in housing finance, but it has also entered the field

of rural finance. It is pursuing this objective efficiently and providing finance at competitive interest rates, as I will demonstrate shortly.

The problem a building society faces is that while it can obtain mortgage insurance on properties where the owner has an equity of more than 50 per cent, it cannot obtain mortgage insurance on properties where the owner's equity is less. I believe there is room for mortgage insurers to move into this field, in which case almost unlimited finance would be available to the rural industry. All we need is that cover of mortgage insurance. It is a once-only premium that is calculated when the necessary documents are drawn up in the same way as it is in the housing field.

The time is now right for the Premier to make an approach to the Commonwealth Government in this regard. If he is successful there will be a tremendous influx of funds for rural finance.

I make the point that this House and the other place have recently passed a Bill to expand the franchise of the State Government Insurance Office to allow it to move into the general field of insurance. It may well be that the Government sees fit to direct or suggest that the SGIO might like to look at mortgage insurance. I believe it would then be doing something that would justify the broadening of its franchise.

One of the big things about rural finance is the period of the loan and the amount of interest that is paid. The member for Moore mentioned the interest rate of 13.8 per cent and I said at the time that it was one of many rates of interest which are quoted by finance organisations. I will not quote them all; I do not want to delay the House as other members wish to speak in this debate. However, these rates are as follows—

#### Trading Banks

Overdraft-operating expenses	13.5 per cent (Up to \$100 000). Over \$100 000 14.0 per cent negotiable.
Farm development loan	14.5 percent (Up to \$100 000). Over \$100 000 negotiable starting at 15 per cent.
Commercial bills	Varies from day to day.

I do not think they are for the farmer. To continue—

Merchandise/stock purchase account	From 17.25 per cent depending on stock firm, charge on a daily balance.
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With reference to farm machinery finance companies charge interest rates from 16 per cent. The Commonwealth Development Bank charges 9.5 per cent, flat, for hire-purchase. It sounds

interesting until one works out what the word "flat" means.

With regard to term loans, farm purchase, and farm development debt the Commonwealth Development Bank's interest rate is 14 per cent for loans up to \$100 000 and for loans over that amount 16.5 per cent. The term is the shortest term in which the bank thinks the farm can repay the loan. I go back to the subject of the finance and interest rates applicable to building societies which are prepared to make money available to the rural industry; the current rate is 14.5 per cent. The rate is one per cent above a home owner-occupier loan. The building societies have two levels of interest rates. One is for the owner-occupier and the other is for the investor. I think that the interest rate for the investor is 1.5 per cent above that charged for home owner-occupier loans.

Mr Burkett: I appreciate that the building societies are offering what they are. Is their money reducible quarterly, because the bank interest rates to farmers are, whether it be 14 per cent or 14.25 per cent under \$100 000 and half a per cent more for anything over that amount? I feel the private trading banks are really offering quite generous finance.

Mr OLD: I will deal with that. The trading banks offer finance to farmers on the basis that they make two repayments per year and interest is calculated to those periods. The two repayments are normally made about 15 February and 15 August. That is great because harvest time means that the proceeds are available around 15 February; the farmer can make a repayment. However, not everyone shears in spring any more and this is a problem; the banks are not up to date in regard to repayments.

In the society backed schemes, provision is made for two repayments per year, and the date is at the choice of the farmer. He may pay one repayment on 15 February, but because he shears in July it may suit him to pay the other repayment in that month. The institutions are happy to do that, but naturally the interest is calculated on the amounts outstanding between those periods. It is very similar to the way in which banks make finance available. I suggest to the member for Scarborough that he checks on this matter because he may be interested to know exactly what is occurring.

It is an interesting point, and if we can get some grant going for the farming community and have mortgage insurance available, the problem of keeping farmers on their properties will be greatly reduced.

I have heard many things said about cheap money. There is no such thing as cheap money because someone has to pay for it. Interest rates have to be subsidised.

Mr Burkett: The savings banks will still give a housing loan like they did to John Citizen in the city to farmers at 12 per cent reducible interest.

Mr OLD: That is only as a result of the activities of the Opposition when it was in Government.

Mr Burkett: They have been doing it for 20 years.

Mr OLD: With reference to cheap money it is just not available. It is a nice thought and a nice concept, but someone has to subsidise it. I am suggesting that the Government makes a subsidy in the first place by making money available without interest. Then we would have a base on which to work. The affected farmer is then in a situation of having a chance to be viable. If he has no chance of viability he has no chance of receiving money even from the rural adjustment authority or the primary industry bank.

That bank is one of the worst offenders with its interest rates and terms of interest. Our problems stem from a lack of finances which hopefully can be overcome under this scheme, and the inflation rate—and I give credit to the Government for its being down to eight per cent. However, it is still much higher than that of our trading partners, which puts us in a bad position with regard to returns to farmers. We are also faced with rising freight costs and other cost pressures which cannot be passed on. We must give the primary production industry another go.

The total rural indebtedness of Australia at 30 June 1982 was \$4.72 billion of which the primary industry bank accounted for \$429 million, a fairly miserable contribution. It is safe to assume that that debt is now in excess of \$5 000 million.

In conclusion, I refer to a survey which was carried out by the Primary Industry Association of Western Australia and which revealed that the farming indebtedness for the average Western Australian farmer was calculated at 30 June 1982 as \$75 000. At the same time, the average Australian farmer had a debt of \$50 700, which represents a difference of \$25 000 or nearly 50 per cent higher for Western Australian farmers. There are good reasons for this. One of them is that Western Australia is probably the last State, or one of the last States, to release land for new settlers. Another is that development costs in this area are high. We also tend to farm larger holdings with larger plant and inputs.

I implore the Government to not only make every endeavour on behalf of this Parliament and

Western Australia to get some grant money into the State urgently, but also to look at small businesses in country towns which are bleeding just as badly as are the farmers.

I will not reiterate what I said in my Address-in-Reply speech when I called upon the Government to make loan funds available to small businesses in drought-affected areas. That request fell on stony ground. It is unfortunate because the rural communities are facing problems and in many towns businesses are closing down because they cannot keep their doors open. Let us get behind these people and finance the rural industries in this State, together with the allied country businesses, to make sure that we are the same dominant force in agriculture and primary industry in the Australian scene as we have been in the past.

**MR McNEE (Mt. Marshall) [4.23 p.m.]**: I support the motion.

We have a very important decision to make and agriculture is at the crossroads. The direction it takes will be largely determined by the decisions made by Governments—not only this Government, but also the Federal Government. The matter is too big for this Government to handle on its own and I urge it to seek the support of its Federal colleagues.

It is important to remember the magnitude of this industry, which is currently producing approximately 45 per cent of our wealth while using approximately 22 per cent of the labour. The problems faced by the agricultural industry are both long term and short term. The short-term problem is to ensure that those farmers who can be identified as being in desperate need are able to get next year's crop in. It is then necessary to pay attention to the longer-term situation.

I quote from the *Countryman* of 18 August when Mr David Trebeck, addressing a seminar at Wongan Hills, said—

Australian farmers and the organisations that represented them should do everything possible to ensure that the farm inflation rate was brought below the general inflation rate and kept there.

He continued—

The Australian inflation rate (currently 11.0 per cent) was almost three times that of its major trading partners.

It is important to put this industry in its right perspective. I sincerely hope the Government approaches the problems of this industry with the same enthusiasm with which it addressed the Western Australian Development Corporation

Bill, the extension of the SGIO charter, the Argyle diamond project, and many other matters.

Mr Trebeck also said—

Farmers should not slacken in their efforts to have the Australian farm inflation rate lowered, irrespective of what happened to the general inflation rate.

They should remember that every one per cent by which farmers' costs can be reduced, represents a saving over a 12 month period, across the whole farm sector, of around \$100 million.

We are not talking about peanuts. I hope the Minister for Agriculture can convey that impression to the Premier.

Of course, it is necessary for us to look at the cause of the problems. The main one is the continuing poor seasons. This is the first factor to determine the situation, coupled with higher interest rates, lack of longer-term finance, and, as a consequence, a reduction in equity by persons owning property as a result of increased borrowings. That situation has been faced in the past to a lesser degree and it is not new to farmers. However, this time it has gone on for longer than usual. In the past, we have been told to increase our efficiency and that has been done. However, it does not come on a no-cost basis. Naturally, if the farmer increases his efficiency, a cost factor is involved. Not only must he determine which technology to use, but also he must develop that technology for his farm and his way of farming. He must learn through his mistakes.

The assistance offered to agriculture, particularly the wheat industry, pales into insignificance when compared with that offered to other areas. The size of the problem which the motion addresses is by no means clear, although it is not hard to get a general picture of the situation.

When one is discussing the matter with industry leaders and members of the service industries, it is common for them to say that the number of people with severe financial problems probably represents 10 to 15 per cent of the industry, with another 10 to 15 per cent facing a similar situation. It is assumed that the problem is of that proportion, although I am not suggesting the figure is more than a guesstimate. However, we must start somewhere to ascertain where we are going.

The marketplace could not cope with a large number of sales generated as a result of the present position. If nothing is done and farmers are faced with the situation of trying to move out, it will be difficult for them to do so because they will not be able to quit their properties for a

reasonable price. In my opinion the private lending institutions have an excellent record in respect of rural finance. Nonetheless, they have their own level at which they can give assistance, which is only natural. Lending institutions have shareholders and balance sheets to which they must pay attention and this is a part of normal business operations. While I give credit to their abilities, I recognise the problem confronting them. They will need a deal of assistance to help their clients through this difficult period.

It is true that the rural industries can no longer support secondary industries at the level they formerly did. For example, in 1979, the support from tariffs for wheat was minus five per cent. Meanwhile, for transport equipment it was 93 per cent, to take a high example, and for petroleum and coal products it was 14 per cent, to take a low one. Across the board, effective rural assistance for broad groups of manufacturing industries was 24 per cent, when the assistance to the wheat-growing industry was minus five per cent.

The situation facing the farmer today is that the extra header tariff costs Australian wheat growers \$14 million. Further to that, since March 1983, revaluation has cost us \$12 a tonne for wheat, 48c a kilo clean for wool, and 15c a kilo for beef.

The problem is that the buck passing stops with us. As an industry, we can no longer afford that, because we simply do not have the margin of profit left to do so.

Transport affects the rural industries greatly, as the member for Moore mentioned, and the Australian National Line is an important part of that transport.

In my electorate, at Mukinbudin, on Monday there was a meeting of 350 farmers. I am not suggesting that every one of those farmers was on the verge of bankruptcy; but I suggest that they are alert, intelligent farmers, who attended because they were concerned about their industry and the situation facing them. They are paying in the order of \$23 a tonne for freight; and in round figures they are paying \$20 dockage because their wheat is substandard. They are paying a further \$12 to Co-operative Bulk Handling Limited for bulk handling charges. When that is taken out of the \$148 this year, a significant inroad is made into that amount. Members should realise that the \$20 a tonne for dockage is coming out of their profit margin.

The cost of transport is affected by both Governments. It is affected by the Federal Government as a result of the fuel excise, and it is affected by our high wage structure and by the

fact that in the contract there is a component for steel and rails. We all know the story about the subsidisation or the assistance that the steel industry receives in this State. I remind the House that that adds to our burdens.

Prior to the Government's taking office, it said that it would balance the Budget without increasing taxes. However, I find that water rates and petrol taxes have increased. Therefore, I remind the Government that it has made a contribution to the current situation for rural people. We should not forget that I include rural business in that as facing a similar problem. Not only must the rural businessman stock his business to maintain an adequate level of stock, but also he must provide credit for his customers. He must maintain his staff through good times and bad. As a result, he needs all the assistance he can get.

It is interesting to note that since 1975 the farm debt level has increased from \$419 million in Western Australia to a figure of approximately \$1.5 billion.

The rural industries are in a serious situation, but they can and must be assisted. They will not eat boiled rabbit, wheat, or whatever else they should eat; but we are seeking sound economic management and practices to help us through these problems.

Perhaps we should be looking at grant aid and interest subsidies, and certainly we should be looking at mortgage insurance—longer-term finance. I hope the Government will consult with the people who are involved in the industry, and they do not include just the Primary Industry Association and the Pastoralists and Graziers Association. There is a wealth of community help in service industries; for example, the private farm consultants and others have a significant contribution to make, and a worthwhile one. I sincerely hope that the Government will consult with all those people and the leading authorities in an endeavour to solve this problem.

If anyone is concerned that I mentioned that dreadful word, "subsidies", I point out that it was interesting to note that in the paper of 18 August 1983, Mr Trebeck also said—

"In 1983 United States farmers will receive Government subsidies of \$21 billion; an amount which is only marginally less than the expected net value of U.S. farm production.

"The provision of a similar level of assistance to Australian farmers would mean outlays of around \$4 billion, a \$3.5 billion increase over that which is presently provided."

The expected recovery in the rural sector would provide a base for wider economic recovery.

We must not forget that point. I am not suggesting that those billions of dollars should be put in; but I am suggesting that we put these matters into perspective. We must decide whether we need a rural industry, and, having done so, we must decide the range of assistance we will offer, and how we will achieve that.

It appears from the annual report of the Rural Adjustment Authority, which was tabled by the Minister in this House, that a sum of \$15 million is in from the Treasury. Perhaps the Minister can let us know whether that \$15 million is available to be re-lent. What is it for? It would make a significant contribution alongside the \$5.9 million already provided; but of course the problem is that the \$5.9 million, as I see it, has 40 per cent for debt reconstruction only. The first problem is to help the fellows who need it to put in next year's crop. It appears to me that we need a great deal more money to meet the immediate requirements of those people. It is probable that a great deal more for rural reconstruction at the moment ought to be considered for debt reconstruction. The provision of this funding is important, and maybe for the moment it should be given a second run.

I ask the Government to give earnest consideration to this serious problem.

**MR TUBBY** (Greenough) [4.40 p.m.]: When I knew this morning that this motion would come up for discussion, I took the opportunity to have discussions with an agricultural consultant who has more than 20 years' experience in giving advice in the northern agricultural areas. I did so because I considered that a portion of the northern agricultural areas has been the worst hit financially within the State by the adverse seasonal conditions experienced since 1976. Such a long run of unfavourable seasons has been unheard of in the history of this portion of the State. I can speak from experience of these conditions because my family were some of the original settlers in the area.

The farmers in real trouble are those who have overcommitted themselves in property and large machinery purchases with finance obtained at ridiculously high interest rates and, in most cases, obtained from outside the normal avenues of rural finance. I appreciate the position of these farmers, many of whom have gone down financially in a big way during these adverse seasonal conditions. The only way they could see out of their situations was to get bigger, but as a result of the continuing

run of bad seasons, their problems have been compounded. The remainder of the farmers in those areas, farmers who have lived within their means, are not in an irretrievable position, and given a run of reasonable seasons, their properties could return to viability.

It was the opinion of the consultant that present avenues of rural finance are adequate. Perhaps additional funds could be made available for rural finance, but at times concern has been expressed over the slow processing of applications for that finance. It was the consultant's opinion that farmers who do not qualify for this finance within the guidelines laid down are in a dicey situation. Unfortunately, it is a fact of life that when a downturn occurs in rural industries, casualties result. This occurs not only in rural industries, but also in other business ventures. In many cases the industry needs a good dose of realism, as does the Government in its attitude to rural industries.

The Premier in his Budget speech did not mention agriculture, and many farmers saw that as an indication of the attitude of the Government towards agriculture. It was rather unfortunate. The Government has imposed a host of additional charges on rural industries with a complete disregard for farmers' abilities to pay. This money is used by the Government in extravagant expenditure in order to have the Government stay in Government, with a complete disregard for those it hurts along the way. This is unfortunate indeed, because rural industries are low profitability industries, and charges levied on others are eventually passed onto rural industries. Farmers are at the end of the line and cannot pass on costs.

We envisage great problems within the industry with no light at the end of the tunnel. My colleagues have indicated in great detail the problems being experienced in rural industries, and I do not intend to repeat those comments.

The motion concerns the attitude of the Government with regard to the legislation that has been brought before this House. It is quite unrealistic to believe that these items of legislation will not burden rural industries. I refer particularly to the new industrial relations legislation, the Financial Institutions Duty Bill, and the redundancy pay claim. Believe me, these pieces of legislation do not encourage an industry that is in dire circumstances and battling to survive. Farmers are looking down the tunnel to see what is in store for them in the future.

These items are of great concern. The Government in its actions can have a great influence on the viability of rural industries, which are the backbone of the community. They produce food

and fibre, which are the basic necessities of any community. Rural industries deserve more consideration.

When items of legislation are brought before this place, items which are aimed at a section of our community which can afford the costs involved, the Government should consider the wider area of the effect of these items of legislation. I will close on that note, and the comment that I strongly support the motion before the House.

**MR COWAN (Merredin)** [4.46 p.m.]: At the outset I must indicate that my comments should not be construed as criticism of this Government. After all, we are talking about a situation which has been created not just in Western Australia, but also in Australia as a whole over many years.

We must remember that in Canberra we have had the benefit or otherwise of a coalition Government for 24 of the last 28 years; similarly in this State we have had a coalition Government for 21 of the last 25 years. Over these periods the issue which the motion quite adequately addresses has arisen.

There is no question that agricultural areas, which are the most sensitive to pressure from modern farming, are those which have more lately been developed, or which exist in the marginal agricultural regions of the State. Most of those regions are represented by the members who have spoken before me on this motion. Some of my territory comes into that category, and the people in that part of my territory find that the capital intensity of farming their areas is making it more and more difficult for them to remain on the land, purely and simply because of the failure of the banking system in Western Australia, and in Australia as a whole, to cope with the demands that Western Australian agriculture is making upon it. For that reason I would like this Government to give support to this motion. I hope that it can give some impetus to Western Australia's banking system so that it will try to adjust to and be able to accommodate the demands of the farming community.

Earlier the Minister for Agriculture interjected to say that the Rural Adjustment Authority had been allocated something like \$5.9 million for its financing work.

**Mr Evans:** I didn't say I considered it adequate by any means.

**Mr COWAN:** I know the Minister did not. I am sure he would not have said that in any case, and I must confess that although there are only a few members on that side familiar with agriculture, I certainly put the Minister in that

category. I am sure he would agree that the \$5.9 million is nothing when it is borne in mind that, as stated by the member for Mount Marshall, a great part of that funding is taken up with the additional purchase of land in order to make farms viable. Only a portion of the money is made available for debt adjustment or reconstruction.

As has been said by others, farmers seek long-term adjustments of their debts. It is as simple as that. The motion addresses itself to that problem and I think the Government can give it support. After all, it is certainly not a motion which in any way is critical of the Government, it is merely asking it for support for initiatives which will allow farmers and banking institutions to express their points of view. Hopefully, from their recommendations, something can be implemented that will give assistance to farmers.

Part (5) of the motion deals with matters relating to Government policies, policies which must be referred to in any debate of this kind. Part (5) (a) deals with the current transport policy in Western Australia. The best example of the way in which transport policies affect members of the agricultural industry can be seen in the statements made at a meeting of the South Yilgarn Progress Association, a meeting which I, along with other members in this place, attended some three to four weeks ago. At that meeting it was stated that farmers can have fertiliser transported to the South Yilgarn region for about \$15 a tonne. If they use the existing rail system, the cost escalates to \$33 a ton. To the average farmer that means an annual cost of around \$3 000, an additional cost which in anybody's language is to be avoided if possible.

Unfortunately, because of regulation and the transport policy which was, I must confess, formulated by the previous Government, but carried on by this Government, these people are forced to suffer this impost, and so too are other members of the farming community.

Part (5) (b) relates to machinery costs and here again is a classic example of Government intervention which has added to the cost of machinery items which are essential to farming today. Most farming machinery is made of steel and the tariff placed on imported steel to help BHP is passed on to the farmers.

The Government can examine policies and alter them so that the farming community faces lower costs in regard to farming input.

The rest of the motion is really a request that this Government support a move to introduce ways and means to provide for the farming com-

munity a type of banking or lending facility which is needed in a modern farming community.

I support the motion moved by the member for Moore.

**MR EVANS** (Warren—Minister for Agriculture) [4.55 p.m.]: Those members who have spoken have clearly demonstrated that problems with rural finance have reached a critical stage. I might add that the Government is aware of this, and I would like to outline what transpired in the last nine months.

Various speakers have indicated the economic trends and the seasonal stresses on agriculture; these include the increasing costs of all farming inputs, the failure of wheat prices to keep abreast of returns that are necessary without eroding the economy of the farmer—although of course we have no actual control over the export price and that has to be disregarded—the increasing level of farm debt, and the cost of servicing that debt at present interest rates. Farmers are experiencing the effect of measures taken to offset the cost-price squeeze, and that in turn determines farm sizes and the costs of farming. Also the problems of the industry have been exacerbated by unseasonal and drought conditions—it is hard to describe them as drought conditions, but I am referring to the failure of the harvest in the eastern wheat-belt.

I would like to give an indication of what probably can be termed the strategy adopted by this Government with regard to funding. I will make some comment about the broader ranging schemes of finance that have been suggested; but first, I would like to consider the solutions that may be forthcoming. There will not be a quick or easy solution to the whole problem.

Since taking office this Government has been cognisant of the two types of funds available. Firstly, there is the Rural Adjustment Authority and, secondly, the drought relief fund. It is rather regrettable and perhaps ironic that the State was alerted to the difficulties of the rural population, especially in agricultural areas, at the beginning of the year with the late break in the season. When that occurred everybody heaved a sigh of relief, but then the rains cut out dramatically and reduced the harvest significantly, only to be followed up by subsequent rains which damaged the harvest further. There is an element of grim irony about the whole thing.

I will allude to the position of the Rural Adjustment Authority as it is an important source of rural funding. The set up of the authority was examined at the meeting of the Agricultural Council at Port Moresby early in May this year.

It is not easy to change the agreement between the State and Commonwealth Governments if a State cannot act unilaterally with regard to funding.

Secondly, in May 1983, a minute was placed before the State Cabinet and examined on 12 June. It was to set up a committee to examine the future of the Rural Adjustment Authority, its operation, and the way in which it should operate in Western Australia. It was seen that the restrictive terms of the agreement between the State and Commonwealth Governments are not a problem in relation to the wider application of concessional funds. To that extent the committee was set up comprising the Director of Agriculture, the Chairman of the Rural Adjustment Authority, and the Deputy Under Treasurer. The committee had the responsibility of reporting to the Minister for Agriculture on—

- (a) the likely future direction of the authority;
- (b) whether the board of management of the authority was appropriate to guarantee a likely future;
- (c) if so, whether any changes were considered necessary; and
- (d) the committee was to report as soon as possible.

That committee, which was endorsed by the Cabinet minute of 20 June, has met, and among the matters which it is to determine is the extension of the role of the Rural Adjustment Authority and the way in which its funds should be utilised.

I point out to members who may not be aware—and the member for Mt. Marshall touched on this point—that funds are held in Treasury, surplus to current requirements of the Rural Adjustment Authority, amounting to about \$20 million. A total of \$60 million has been received from Commonwealth sources under the two schemes—the original scheme of 1972 and the modified scheme of 1976. Those funds have accumulated because of early repayment by farmers of loans and, secondly, because of the component that the State is not obliged to repay 25 per cent of the original scheme total and 15 per cent subsequently of the amended scheme. This money has become part of the funds in the Treasury from Commonwealth sources.

Finally, there is the interest paid on the short-term money market when those funds are invested. So there is a total of about \$20 million, and that is one of the matters which will be examined by this committee to see in what way it can be utilised in the interests of rural funding. It is not an insignificant amount and it assists the

existing rural adjustment funds. I am not in a position to indicate when the committee will report; suffice it to say the Government has acted and recognised the inadequacies of the present institutions and their capacity to make rural finance available at the best rates, or at rates needed to ensure the viability of so many farmers. I took the opportunity to make that point because it is an important one and we need to know the contents of the report.

As a corollary to that, drought relief terminated at the end of the financial year as the intensity of the disaster of last year abated. I was hopeful at one stage earlier this year that we would not be obliged to call on national disaster relief funds in 1983-84. It has become increasingly evident day by day that that will not be the case as we see the situation unfold and the general economic plight of agricultural areas becomes known. The Agricultural Council, meeting in Port Moresby, examined the question of drought relief and whether the measures and form of relief available in past years had been adequate. It also examined whether the relief had been directed in the right manner and applied to the areas of difficulty where it was most appropriate and effective.

This was referred from the council to the national drought consultative committee which has not yet had the opportunity to report but which is expected to do so when the Agricultural Council meets in Western Australia early next year, probably in the first week in February. With the advent of the difficulties becoming more noticeable in agricultural areas, a minute was put to Cabinet three weeks ago asking that areas be drought declared. I believe applications have been lodged by four shire councils for declaration of drought affected areas. Before a drought declaration can be made it must be put in train with the Commonwealth because the Commonwealth Government's concurrence is essential before the terms of the agreement on natural disaster funds become operative.

That is in the course of being undertaken. In relation to the question of Commonwealth involvement, there is a trigger point of \$3 million after which the State meets the full component of the relief measures. The next \$500 000 is met by the State and the Commonwealth picks up the tab for 75 per cent of additional funds used. There is no question but that the trigger point will be met in this current financial year. I interpolate here that the Government has been aware of the situation and has acted as promptly and expeditiously as possible in the circumstances.

In addition to the two reports to which I have referred, a request has been put to the Depart-

ment of Agriculture for a survey of the eastern wheatbelt. At the meeting at Mukinbudin on Monday to which the member for Mt. Marshall referred, a request was made to the Department of Agriculture, with the appropriate authorities and institutions, to examine whether an economic summit of those institutions that traditionally lend to agricultural producers in this State could be called to review the structure of farm lending, and whether there could be greater co-ordination and cohesion and some form of voluntary guidelines. The Rural Adjustment Authority and the R & I Bank will be involved, but whether independent financial institutions can be prevailed upon is a matter for their determination.

An overall examination of the Rural Adjustment Authority also is being carried out by the Industries Assistance Commission, under the auspices of the Department of Primary Industry in Canberra, and it will be a very comprehensive survey. It has been required to bring down an interim report, which it has done, but I do not think the report is of much assistance or enlightens us to a great extent. I suppose the significant sentence in the report states—

It would be preferable that such assistance be provided as neutrally as possible across activities and classes of business.

That goes back to the point that there should be rural adjustment aid and that it should be extended to business generally in country areas. That is the implication of that sentence.

So we are awaiting this report of the IAC, and it will not be brought down until after reference to the dried fruit industry, which has more than a peripheral association with rural industry. That is expected before April of next year, so it will be April before the IAC is able to give its findings to the rural industry and to the Government.

A number of suggestions were put forward as to whether there could be an extension of the avenues of finance for farmers and agriculturalists. It will be appreciated that when it comes to funding of the order suggested, there is no way that a State Government could pick up that sort of tab. Commonwealth agreement must be obtained before there is any change in the existing structure and whether or not it can be increased, since the funds concerned come from the Commonwealth. So it is fairly important to determine that.

The member for Katanning-Roe suggested that there could be two options. The third option he put forward was to look at the new financing arrangements, and he suggested that \$100 million would not be an excessive amount. He suggested



loans could be made without interest, repayable when it was possible. To suggest that the State Government could undertake a measure of that kind is optimistic in the extreme. The level of operation of a State Government would be more in the range of funding to which I referred as being held by the Treasury.

The rates of interest currently applicable were made abundantly clear, and I do not want to recap that statistical information given by the various speakers. Their contributions were excellent in most cases. There were a few little conflicts in the remarks made, but it is not necessary to dwell upon them. In one instance it was said that rural adjustment funding was inadequate, and another said it was hopelessly inadequate; but that is by the by.

It is important to put into perspective the size of the problem as we know it at the moment. At the present time any figures which have been given come from the Department of Agriculture, from the PIA, or from similar sources. They are certainly not comprehensive and they would probably be inaccurate at this stage. The eastern wheatbelt appears to demonstrate the most urgent problem. Looking to that situation, we are talking in terms of 514 farmers who will be looking for some form of financial assistance to get in next year's crop. That is the immediate problem, and it is one which is to be addressed without any delay. For that reason I feel that the measures which have been taken up to this time by the Government indicate that we recognise the problem, and every endeavour will be made to overcome it.

Turning to the motion moved by the member for Moore, I must say that he has covered a very broad canvas.

A member: He is a big fisherman.

Mr EVANS: To carry out the full requirements of this motion would not only be duplicating the existing actions which have been taken, but also would require fairly extensive facilities and resources. It would also take a good deal of time, and I doubt whether any sort of formal action could be taken in time to assist farmers in the early months of next year.

The motion which he moved is readily available on the Notice Paper. The availability of finance through the Rural Adjustment Authority and the funding of such finance is being looked at by a committee which is going beyond that and examining the type of structure that the Rural Adjustment Authority should aspire to in the future. That matter will go back to Cabinet again early in June.

Mr Crane: Who were the officers conducting that inquiry?

Mr EVANS: The Director of Agriculture, the Chairman of the Rural Adjustment Authority—

Mr Crane: That is Mr Nicholls?

Mr EVANS: No, Mr Whiteley, and the Deputy Assistant Under Treasurer, Mr Boylen. I think members would have difficulty in finding three more experienced and efficient officers.

The member for Moore went on to refer to the legislation initiated in the 1930s, and he spoke firstly of the Farmers' Debt Adjustment Act and the mortgagees restriction Act. While they did play a role at that time, I am a little apprehensive that once restrictions are imposed and funding institutions are left with the field, money could be frozen in some way or other so that farmers would not have adequate access in the normal course of law. Then there would be a drying up of the funds which are there now. That is something which must be looked at very carefully and taken on only as matter of last resort.

I would point out that the Rural Adjustment Act provides for a stay order. If any farmer is in the situation of opposing a mortgagee's sale, he can at least turn to the Rural Adjustment Authority and request a further examination, and a stay of proceedings until that examination is carried out. I am sure that any Minister would ensure that that facility was available to him.

Mr Crane: Does he first have to be encumbent to the Rural Assistance Authority before he can seek assistance?

Mr EVANS: No, he must have an application before them.

Mr Old: You have to be pretty sure before putting a stay on.

Mr EVANS: The authority would have its own criteria and its own set of rules, but that avenue does exist.

To recap, I will point out to the House what has transpired up to this time. Firstly, with regard to the funding available, it is imperative that that be used to the best advantage and without any delay. By that I mean that we must ensure that when applications come in, staff is available to process them with a minimum of delay. So firstly we are looking at the Rural Adjustment Authority. A review is to be carried out next year, hopefully about April.

Secondly, a review of the operation of the Rural Adjustment Authority in this State is being carried out at this time with specific instructions to look at the expansion of its role and the manner in which the administration should be altered.

Thirdly, there is a submission to Canberra at this moment to see whether there can be some variation of the agreement whereby rural adjustment and other funding can be utilised through one authority, be it a commission or anything else. The Federal Government, of course, needs to be closely involved in that. Also, as I have indicated, a survey of the eastern wheatbelt is being carried out, and an examination of whether it is practical to hold an economic summit.

As far as drought relief is concerned, an approach has been made to Canberra. This approach was made some weeks ago now, and it was anticipated that as soon as the earliest reports came in from the eastern wheatbelt region, something could be finalised.

I do not disagree with the concern expressed by members opposite. The Government recognises the situation which has arisen gradually, probably since the 1950s. In 1972 the first rural adjustment scheme was set up to cater for a situation not dissimilar to that with which we are faced presently.

The Government recognises the position and that recognition has been translated into commendable action since May of this year, because shortly after coming into office the first Cabinet minute was drafted by this Government. However, there is no way that the Government can be accused of irresponsibility, nor has there been any suggestion of that from members opposite.

While I appreciate the motives and the reasons for the motion, I do not think it is the appropriate way in which to deal with that matter.

#### *Amendment to Motion*

I move an amendment—

That all words after the word "House" in line one be deleted and the following substituted—

A Select Committee of this House be appointed to inquire into and report on the nature, location and extent of hardship within the Western Australian rural sector.

I shall foreshadow the next two motions which will be moved if the amendment is passed. I intend to move that the committee comprise the member for Moore and the member for Kalgoorlie, under the chairmanship of the Minister for Agriculture, and that it be required to report to the House by 29 March 1984.

If members look at the original motion and have regard for the inquiries to which I have referred already, they will see that duplication

would occur and time and effort would be wasted if we set up a full and independent inquiry. However, at the same time I want to ensure that the House remains fully informed of what transpires with regard to rural financing, that the Government's activity in this area is under scrutiny, and that the position is reported to the House.

I do not move the amendment because I disagree with the overall principle raised by the member for Moore, but I simply look for the most effective and expeditious manner to achieve our aim.

Mr PEARCE: I second the amendment.

MR CRANE (Moore) [5.24 p.m.]: My dear mother used to tell me, and I agree with her, that beggars cannot be choosers. I was almost begging today when putting my motion to the House requesting that action be taken by the Government. While he did not say that exactly, the Minister has implied there was no criticism from any of the speakers on this side of the House of the Government for the part it has played in the very serious situation facing the rural industry. I thank the Minister for that. In fact, the only criticism I levelled was at the previous Deputy Prime Minister (Mr Anthony).

As the Minister has said, I appreciate the fact that my motion is all-embracing. It spells out in detail many things which should be done, a number of which have been undertaken and which are in train.

Although the Minister's amendment contains few words, it really covers the matters I want to cover without actually spelling them out. The words "the nature, location and extent of hardship within the Western Australian rural sector" would cover a multitude of sins and I believe it would not be beyond my capabilities to include within those words the issues which are of concern to the industry and which are causing great hardship.

For that reason, I am not opposed to the amendment. The Minister will recall that the rural finance corporation began with a loan of \$1 million and, when speaking to Mr Morton by telephone yesterday, he told me it has an equity now of \$60 million after having provided for the rural industry in Victoria.

Even within the comments of the Minister I see a great possibility for Mr Whitely and those who are making the investigation to suggest that a similar set-up could be established here under the Rural and Industries Bank. In fact I make a personal offer on behalf of the rural industry of Western Australia to pay the air fare of Mr Morton so that he can come over here to talk with the rel-

evant people, if the Government cannot afford to meet the costs incurred.

That offer indicates the importance I place upon such a discussion between Mr Whitely, Mr Nichols, of the Rural Adjustment Authority, and Mr Morton. I do not say that lightly. I have made an offer in this House in front of members and it represents my contribution, among others, to the rural industry of this State which is already on its knees.

When I spoke previously I did not have time to deal with all the matters in my motion. Therefore, I indicate transport is of great concern. If one looks at the excise duties which were introduced recently by the Federal Government, one sees they are costing Westrail alone \$4 million in this State. I do not see how Westrail or any other transport organisation can reduce its costs considerably and make a profit in that position.

I see the very real necessity for Westrail to be subsidised so that it can cart grain at a rate that producers can afford to pay. I can feel the truckies coming down on my neck when I say that the only way in which this could be done would be if grain and bulk commodities were regulated onto rail to allow those goods to be carried at a subsidised rate. I can almost hear the truckies driving up to clobber me for what I have said! I know that comment will also upset those who espouse free enterprise, and members should recall that I am in that category, but I am also a survivalist and I am talking about survival at the moment.

Mr Rushton interjected.

Mr CRANE: We must also look at the situation in respect of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. I have often talked about this matter with the member for Dale. Any moves in this respect would have to allow wheat bins to be built in certain areas so that the farmers can transport the wheat to those bins and not to the ports.

In conclusion, I indicate I shall explain all these matters in a letter addressed to the Minister.

Amendment put and passed.

*Motion, as Amended*

Question (motion, as amended) put and passed.

#### *Appointment of Select Committee*

MR EVANS (Warren—Minister for Agriculture) [5.29 p.m.]: I move—

That the following members be appointed to serve on the Select Committee together with the mover—The member for Moore (Mr Crane); the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr I. F. Taylor).

Question put and passed.

MR EVANS (Warren—Minister for Agriculture) [5.30 p.m.]: I move—

That the Committee have power to call for persons and papers, to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned, to move from place to place, and to report on 29 March 1984.

Question put and passed.

### QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.15 p.m.*

### ROAD TRANSPORT: DANGEROUS GOODS

*Substitution of Disallowed Regulations: Motion*

MR GRILL (Esperance-Dundas—Minister for Transport) [7.15 p.m.]: I seek leave to move a motion, without notice, in respect of the dangerous goods (road transport) regulations 1983.

Leave granted.

Mr GRILL: On 17 November 1983, the Legislative Council passed a resolution under section 36 (2) of the Interpretation Act 1918, as amended, disallowing the dangerous goods (road transport) regulations 1983 that were made under the Explosives and Dangerous Goods Act 1961, published in the *Government Gazette* on 20 September 1983, and laid upon the Table of the Legislative Council on 27 September 1983.

The reasons for disallowance of the dangerous goods (road transport) regulations 1983 have been discussed with members of the Opposition, and considerable discussion has taken place with industry which is affected by these regulations in order to determine the areas which have been the cause of disallowance. These areas have now been addressed in the form of amendments to the disallowed regulations to provide—

(1) for the waiver of licence fee—

(i) for any person who is the holder of a licence under the flammable liquids regulations 1967, as amended, in respect of any premises; or,

(ii) where the payment of the fee will cause undue hardship; and

(2) for deletion of the requirement that vehicles conveying packages of dangerous goods be licensed.

Further, I have given an undertaking to industry that a seminar will be arranged towards the middle of next year, after which I will give sympathetic consideration to any alternative wording

which may be regarded by industry to be essential to these regulations.

Accordingly, I move—

That whereas the Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Regulations 1983 that were made under the Explosives and Dangerous Goods Act 1961, as amended, and published in the *Government Gazette* on 20 September 1983 were disallowed by a resolution of the Legislative Council under section 36(2) of the Interpretation Act 1918, as amended, passed on 17 November 1983, it is hereby resolved under section 36(2A)(ii) of the latter Act that regulations that, subject to the amendments set out in the schedule to this resolution, are in the same form as the regulations so published are hereby substituted in place of the regulations so disallowed.

#### SCHEDULE

Provision of the  
Regulations  
published on 20  
September  
1983

Amendment

Reg. 102(1) Delete "the 90th day after the day on which they are published in the *Government Gazette*" and substitute the following—

" 1 January 1984 "

Reg. 103(1) Delete the definition of "prescribed day" and substitute the following definition—

" "prescribed day" means 1 March 1984; "

Reg. 401(2) Insert after "marked" the following—

" or where none of the dangerous goods carried on the vehicle are in a bulk container "

Reg. 403 Delete "Before an application under regulation 402 is granted the applicant shall hold" and substitute the following—

" A vehicle shall not be used in a manner that gives rise to a requirement under Division 3 of Part III of these regulations that the vehicle be marked unless the owner holds "

Provision of the  
Regulations  
published on 20  
September  
1983

Amendment

Insert after "State" the following—

" , and an application under regulation 402 shall not be granted if the applicant does not hold such a contract of insurance "

Reg. 404

Delete subregulation (1) and substitute the following subregulation—

" (1) The Chief Inspector may refuse an application under regulation 402, or may grant the application in whole or in part and issue to the applicant a licence upon payment of a fee of \$65. "

Insert after subregulation (3) the following subregulation—

" (4) Where an application is made for the issue of a licence under regulation 402 by a person who is the holder of a licence under the Flammable Liquids Regulations 1967, as amended, in respect of any premises, or where the Chief Inspector is of the opinion that payment of a fee under this regulation will cause undue hardship, the Chief Inspector may waive in whole or in part the fee payable under this regulation. "

Reg. 406

Insert before "A" the following—

" (1) "

Provision of the  
Regulations  
published on 20  
September  
1983

# Amendment

Insert after the regulation the following subregulation—

“ (2) A vehicle shall not be used in a manner that gives rise to a requirement under Division 3 of Part III of these regulations that the vehicle be marked unless the vehicle has, within 12 months before such use, been found by a person having authority under the Road Traffic Act 1974, as amended, to comply with all the relevant requirements of and under that Act. ”.

Reg. 408

Delete subregulation (1) and substitute the following subregulation—

“ (1) Upon application made within one month before a licence under these regulations in respect of a vehicle is due to expire together with payment of a fee of \$65, the Chief Inspector may renew the licence for a period of 12 months. ”.

Insert after subregulation (2) the following subregulation—

“ (3) Where an application is made under subregulation (1) by a person who is the holder of a licence under the Flammable Liquids Regulations 1967, as amended, in respect of any premises, or where the Chief Inspector is of the opinion that payment of a fee under this regulation will cause undue hardship, the Chief Inspector may waive in whole or in part the fee payable under this regulation. ”.

Provision of the  
Regulations  
published on 20  
September  
1983

# Amendment

Reg. 428(1)

Delete “licensed under these regulations for the transport of dangerous goods” and substitute the following—

“ required by Division 3 of Part III of these regulations to be marked ”.

Reg. 428(2)

Delete “licensed under these regulations” and substitute the following—

“ required by Division 3 of Part III of these regulations to be marked ”.

Reg. 428(2)(a)

Delete “licensed for the transport” and substitute the following—

“ transporting ”.

Reg. 428(4)

Delete “of” where it first occurs.

Delete “licensed under these regulations” and substitute the following—

“ required by Division 3 of Part III of these regulations to be marked ”.

Reg. 428(4)(d)

Delete “licensed for the transport of” and substitute the following—

“ transporting ”.

Reg. 428(5)

Delete “licensed under these regulations” and substitute the following—

“ required by Division 3 of Part III of these regulations to be marked ”.

Reg. 428(5)(a),  
(b), (c) and (d)

Delete “licensed for the transport of” and substitute the following in each case—

“ transporting ”.

**MR MacKINNON** (Murdoch) [7.19 p.m.]: I would like the Minister to pass on to his colleague in another place our thanks for the amendments to which he has agreed. As the Minister would probably be aware, we have had a deal of communication over the last 10 days in an attempt to arrive at some conclusion on this matter. I am pleased that we have been able to do so.

We thank the Government for its consideration in this matter. We hope that the regulations will now achieve what they set out to achieve. We also

appreciate the undertaking to review totally the regulations in the middle of 1984.

I thank the Minister for including in that consideration the issues we have raised with him, including the question of licensing drivers, a review of inspection procedures, and an examination of the regulations as they compare with the national code to ensure that if anything is missed out, our regulations will come into line to ensure the commonality of interest throughout Australia.

We thank the Government for its consideration.

Question put and passed.

### OFFENDERS PROBATION AND PAROLE AMENDMENT BILL

#### *Second Reading*

Debate resumed from 6 December.

**MR HASSELL** (Cottesloe—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [7.21 p.m.]: The Minister gave his second reading speech on this Bill yesterday; and it contains a number of aspects which present some complexity. However, following the research which I have been able to undertake in relation to the Bill, including a discussion with the Minister and a discussion outside the House with another person, I have reached the conclusion that we should not oppose it.

However, I must say that because of the arrangement of the business of the House, I have not been able to seek the concurrence of the Opposition in relation to the position which I am adopting. Because of the circumstances it would have been appropriate for the Minister to have advised me in advance of the detail of the Bill.

While I suppose the Minister has had his difficulties getting the Bill drafted and printed, the fact of the matter is I was not able to advise the joint Opposition parties at their meeting on Tuesday as to what the Bill was about in any respect. Therefore, as I said, I have not been able to obtain the views of the joint Opposition parties to it. In the time allowed since the Bill was introduced yesterday, I have been able to study it in only a cursory manner.

However, having said that—and it is a serious point; there are significant aspects in this Bill related to the operations of the prisons and parole systems—I suggest that in future when we are getting close to the end of the session and Bills are being introduced as late as this, the Ministers concerned should give us a copy of the Bills or of the drafting instructions so that we have some idea what we should prepare for and consider. That is really the way in which legislation should be handled. Although I do not suggest we should op-

pose the Bill, policy issues arise in relation to it and I hope we do not find we have let something go through which we later regret and will come to question.

I put these remarks on the record so that if we have to question seriously something contained in the Bill, it will not be open to the Minister to say to us that we accepted it happily. I accept the Bill—I cannot speak for all my colleagues, because I have not had the opportunity to consult them—on its face value only and with very limited research as to its implications.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### *In Committee, etc.*

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

#### *Third Reading*

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

### EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT: STIMULATION

#### *Government Inaction: Motion*

**MR O'CONNOR** (Mt. Lawley—Leader of the Opposition) [7.27 p.m.]: I move—

This House regrets the failure of the Government to provide adequate stimulation for employment in accordance with its pre-election undertakings and in particular the—

- (1) failure of the Government to support uranium development as a valuable source of investment and employment;
- (2) investment of some \$40 million of taxpayer funds in the Argyle Diamond Venture which investment generates no employment;
- (3) failure of the Government to provide satisfactory guidelines or administration for job-creation programmes which has resulted in unacceptable delays and confusion; and
- (4) condemns the Government for its failure to expend funds made available through the wage pause programme instituted by the previous Government due to its inaptitude and lack of commitment to the unemployed people of this State.

If members go through the items of the motion one by one they will see, firstly, that the Govern-

ment has failed miserably to meet its promises to the people of this State in regard to the employment position. One recalls clearly that, prior to the last election, the present Premier said that he had pinpointed 25 000 jobs, but the Government has failed to provide those jobs to the people of this State.

The Government has abandoned Western Australia in respect of uranium mining. The Premier of South Australia (Mr Bannon) has supported the Roxby Downs operation, but the Premier and the Government of this State have stood by and done nothing to support Western Australia's uranium mining operation. The Government has done nothing to help the Yeelirrie project; it has done nothing to improve the employment position; and it has virtually abandoned the State in this respect.

We have also seen the Government take the same attitude in respect of the establishment of a sugar industry on the Ord. The Government has abandoned the State again on that issue. The Government has indicated it is prepared to stand by and accept whatever the Federal Government imposes on it. When one looks at the Government's investment of \$40 million in the Argyle venture, one asks how many jobs that will generate. The answer is that that expenditure will not generate any jobs. The investment of \$40 million in that venture will not create one extra job for Western Australia, unless it is a job in the Treasury so that someone can keep tabs on the investment.

The third point relates to the failure of the Government to provide satisfactory guidelines or administration for job-creating programmes, a failure which has resulted in unacceptable delays and confusion and is an indication of how far the Government has not gone in this area of creating jobs.

The Minister for Employment and Administrative Services has sat back and allowed to lie idle funds that could have been used to create jobs in this State. The Government has done nothing but criticise the previous Government for job bank and the wages freeze while it has done nothing. The only jobs that have been created in this State were those created by the previous Government through the wages freeze and job bank.

This Government has done nothing to stimulate employment or the economy. The number of people unemployed in this State has increased over the last few months and it will continue to increase over the next few months. We condemn the

Government for its failure to expend appropriate funds to create jobs.

The Labor Party made pre-election promises that it would create jobs, but its performance does not show that it has honoured that promise. The pre-election promise has not been in line with what the Government has done to date. The policy document of the ALP had this to say—

The Labor Government will start providing real jobs immediately we are elected.

This Government has not done that; it has failed miserably in that area. It has not provided the 25 000 jobs it claimed it would provide out of funds from the short-term money market. The Labor Party in its policy document titled "Efficiency in Government" had this to say—

The fundamental theme of Labor's new approach is a reorganisation of existing structures, the maximum commitment of existing resources, both public and private, to the task of securing jobs, and getting our State's unemployed back to work.

In that area the Government has failed miserably as well. The Labor Party went on to say—

This approach does not involve significant new expenditure, deficit spending or the irresponsible use of taxpayers' funds; it involves a comprehensive approach to policy-making and planning, and the use of modern management techniques.

The commitment we make is for a better future for the West and for all its people; a commitment to arrest and reverse the disastrous plunge into massive unemployment in this State. A Labor Government will start providing real jobs immediately we are elected.

I have said previously that the Government should not take responsibility for any reduction or increase in the number of jobs during the months of February, March, and April of this year. No-one could blame a Government immediately after its election for such a reduction. Therefore from the end of May, this Government must accept responsibility for unemployment, which since May has increased in this State. This Government has sat idly by while this has happened; it has done nothing to assist the situation. Its public relations have been first class, but its performance has been third rate.

A fair comparison can be drawn between the unemployment figures for October 1982 and those figures for October this year. In the 15-to-19-year-old age group, 2 600 people were looking for jobs in October 1982, but by October 1983

that figure had doubled to 5 600. The number of young people looking for jobs as a percentage of all young people was 18.4 per cent in October 1982, yet in October this year that percentage had increased to 27.6 per cent. So much for this Government's performance. Those figures are an indication of the way in which this Government has not improved the employment situation. I refer now to 15-to 19-year-olds looking for their first job. In 1982 a total number of 15-to 19-year-olds looking for jobs was 10 300, yet in October 1983—eight months after this Government came to office—the number was 14 700; an increase of almost 50 per cent in that category.

The total number of people unemployed in Western Australia is a relevant figure to quote. In October 1982 it was 50 700, yet in October this year it was 59 100—an increase of almost 9 000, or approximately 18 per cent. The percentage of the population in this State unemployed in October 1982 was 9.1 per cent, yet in October this year it was 10.2 per cent—an increase of 1.1 per cent in 12 months. As I have predicted previously, by the end of March next year the number of people unemployed in this State will reach at least 70 000. I say that sadly because I do not want to see the young, the not so young, and the old in such a position, but this Government has been static or has retreated in that area. It has done nothing to assist the unemployed of this State in the period it has been in office.

A great gulf exists between the Government's rhetoric and its activities. I wonder how it can vindicate its commitment to arrest and reverse unemployment in this State. The Treasury and Federal statistics indicate that there will be a worsening of the unemployment situation, despite the economic recovery that has been shown in other parts of the world, and indicated in this State as well.

What has the department of the Minister for Employment and Administrative Services achieved in the nine months it has existed? It has reversed the situation the previous Government set in train. The employment position in this State has deteriorated. The Government has operated in a number of anti-employment actions. I make that comment sincerely because this Government has done things which have created unemployment rather than the reverse.

One needs only to consider the 30 per cent increase in some taxes and charges in a full year, an increase which has put businesses in the position where they must reduce their work forces.

The FID proposals are again something that will hamper the creation of jobs. We have wit-

nessed massive increases in licence fees, about which even today I received letters. We have witnessed increases in charges of Government utilities and the abandonment of the wages pause which, if proceeded with, would have created employment. The Government did not even try to persuade the other States to continue the wages pause.

We intended to spread the wages pause money so that it would create employment for people presently unemployed and, therefore, reduce the amount of taxation people employed are required to pay towards social security. In Australia something like one out of every four people receives social benefits such as unemployment relief or sickness benefits. The way this Government is going that ratio will increase, and the people already in employment will have a greater burden on their back by way of heavier taxation. The level of benefits and the heavier taxation give no incentive to people working to continue to work. Today we see some people with a number of children who are receiving unemployment benefits which are more than the amount some who are employed receive in wages.

We have witnessed this Government enter the traditional private enterprise fields through the SGIO and the establishment of the Western Australian development corporation. The Government's impotence in handling industrial relations, as indicated by statistics, shows clearly this Government's lack of performance. During the last six months there has been a substantial increase in the number of man days lost through strikes, despite the fact that this Government is paying a substantial sum of money to a large band of advisers to help it to overcome such problems. In that six months we have had the Pilbara strike, the ETU dispute, and the Perth City Council garbage workers' dispute, all of which were handled poorly by this Government, a Government which indicated that it knew how to handle industrial relations.

We saw how it dropped job bank, and therefore increased the number of unemployed by 30 June this year.

The Government has failed miserably to explain the reason that it spent only \$200 000 of the \$8 million provided by way of the wages pause. The Commonwealth withdrew the funds until such time as the Government decided to get on with that activity.

Mr Pearce: You are talking about the Commonwealth wages pause funds, are you?

Mr O'CONNOR: Yes, I am. Does the Minister disagree with what I am saying?



Mr Pearce: I certainly will in a moment when I give you the benefit of my advice.

Mr O'CONNOR: Does the Minister disagree that the Government did not expend those funds?

Mr Pearce: I will make my speech shortly, and then you will have the benefit of my advice.

Mr O'CONNOR: We wish we had the benefit of the jobs which this Government has not provided. I hope the Minister will tell us about the 25 000 jobs the Labor Party said it would provide when in Government. The people opposite made a promise they had no chance of keeping—a miserable promise by a miserable Government. Members opposite knew when they made that promise that they had no chance of keeping it, and probably they had no thought of keeping it.

All that members opposite wanted to do was to mislead the public at the public's expense. The Minister knows very well that is true.

The Government has reduced spending in the community by taking out of the community \$359 million in a full year by way of increases in taxation and Government charges, despite its promise that it would not increase taxes and charges while the wages pause was in force.

The reopening of the Perth-Fremantle railway line represents another blunder by this Government, a blunder which will cost this State a lot of money and many jobs. The Government has employed a further 138 people in the railways area to maintain the Perth-Fremantle railway line, and that means that the losses of the State will be increased. The cost of that must be borne by the community as a whole.

I refer to uranium development. The Yeelirrie operation is something which could have employed a large number of people. Western Mining Corporation Ltd. spent \$38 million in that area together with its colleagues, but what has happened? This Government has sat back and let the Roxby Downs and the Ranger projects continue in their respective States to export uranium. Those States not only will earn export income and royalties, but also jobs will be created for their people. This has happened while the Government of this State has sat behind the pillar to evade the issue. The Government did not get up and fight for this State.

The Premier and his Ministers sat back while those other States secured these advantages. This Government did not put up a fight—not one blow—for the people of Western Australia. All that the Premier has done is say that the Federal Government will decide what happens in this area.

Mr Evans: What rubbish! The feasibility study has not been completed as yet.

Mr O'CONNOR: The Federal Government has said it will not agree to an operation in the uranium field in this State, and the Minister for Agriculture sat idly by and did not fight for this State. He did nothing. He is a poor Minister. He did not even turn up tonight to open the show he should have opened, but that is normal for him.

Mr Evans: What was I doing?

Mr O'CONNOR: He was sitting on his tail, I suppose.

Mr Evans: Why don't you find out before opening your big mouth?

Mr O'CONNOR: At 5.30 p.m. question time was in progress, and the Minister could have attended the opening of that show, but as normal, he sent someone else. This has happened time and time again.

Mr Evans: You complain when we are not here to answer questions.

Mr O'CONNOR: Why could not the Minister who represented the Minister for Agriculture have been here? What a weak argument the Minister for Agriculture has put up.

Mr Evans: No wonder you are in Opposition.

Mr O'CONNOR: The missing Minister who failed to do his duty! He promised he would open that show, and when he decided not to be there, he did not tell anyone.

Mr Evans: At 5.00 p.m. the former Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife did the job.

Mr O'CONNOR: He did not. The Minister for Agriculture had better make sure of what happened.

Mr Evans: A former Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife.

Mr O'CONNOR: This missing Minister does not know what he is talking about.

If I may get on with the details of the Bill—

Mr Evans: You need to get on—what a leader!

Mr O'CONNOR: Let me quietly ask the Minister whether he committed himself to open a show tonight and whether he sent someone in his place without informing the people involved.

Mr Evans: I sent a former Minister.

Mr O'CONNOR: Without informing the people involved.

Mr Evans: Without the opportunity of doing that.

Mr O'CONNOR: The Minister is weaker than I thought he was.

Mr Blaikie: That is not possible.

Mr O'CONNOR: The Minister talked about who would answer the questions in the House if he were missing. If he had done the job he should have done, the other Minister concerned would have answered the questions.

Mr Blaikie: Maybe there is a change in the Ministry.

Mr O'CONNOR: I will get back to the uranium issue.

Mr Evans: What a poor effort.

Mr O'CONNOR: The Yeelirrie project could have employed a large number of people in this State. I refer to the 25 000 jobs that this Government pinpointed. The amount of money it had available would have resulted in about \$60 a week being paid to those individuals—it is less than the dole.

I refer to an article which appeared in *The Sunday Times* of 27 November 1983 and which reads as follows—

This week the Federal Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Mr Willis, gave details of a \$40 000 grant to the City of Melville.

He said it could result in 1 200 short-term jobs for unemployed young people.

Several members interjected.

Mr O'CONNOR: The article continues—

That's quite commendable.

But, it averages out to only \$33.33 for each job.

This is the sort of thing that this Government comes up with. Its public relations is fantastic and its performance is deplorable. The sum mentioned amounts to about half a day's work for those people. As I mentioned, the Government was going to provide 25 000 new jobs. However, the people who would have been employed would receive less than the dole. That is the sort of cock story the Government comes up with.

Mr Gordon Hill: What sort of story?

Mr Barnett: It is absolutely disgusting, you should not use language like that in the Parliament.

Mr O'CONNOR: We have a man who tries to run the Chair and control the Parliament and he performs in the manner he has just displayed.

Several members interjected.

Mr O'CONNOR: Members of this Government should be travelling the world—

Mr Barnett: Next time you do something illegal I will treat you impartially.

Mr O'CONNOR: I have seen how the member for Rockingham has treated me impartially and it has been noticed by other members.

Mr Thompson: I would not be so smug about that.

Mr O'CONNOR: I would not be either.

Several members interjected.

Mr O'CONNOR: The impartiality with which the member for Rockingham has treated me has been noticed by other members.

Members of this Government should be travelling around the world encouraging development in Western Australia. It should be looking to South-East Asia for investments in this State and not limiting development to the technology field, the only area in which it has been involved.

I have given an undertaking to the Minister that I will keep my remarks short. I do not intend to continue but I will add that this Government has failed miserably in its promise to the people of this State. The promise of 25 000 jobs to be provided from funds from the short-term money market is another broken promise. Those jobs have not been provided and this Government has no idea how to go about it. The Government has failed the State miserably.

I commend the motion to members.

MR HASSELL (Cottesloe—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [7.50 p.m.]: I second the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. There has been some public comment in recent days as the result of an issue which I raised concerning the distribution of the wages pause moneys which should have been used for the purpose of job creation, but which we have seen directed in some peculiar ways. Those ways are peculiar, not of themselves, but because they do not represent a proper expenditure of wages pause moneys. However, I do not want to canvass old ground except to point out one of the things that was said very recently in a public debate—and it occurred on the night before last—when "Nationwide" ran a programme concerning the grant of nearly \$80 000 of taxpayers' money to the Workers Information and Research Centre Inc. at Fremantle. During the course of the interview the interviewer asked a man named Howard Smith, who is in charge of the Workers Information and Research Centre, the following question—

W.I.R.C. is quick to point out that it's by no means alone in receiving Government funds. Similar groups with similar political ideologies have been set up in other States.

That is more to condemn those States than to justify the grant in this State.

The reply given by Mr Howard Smith, bearing in mind that this man and his organisation have received nearly \$80 000 out of the wages pause moneys—moneys that would have otherwise gone to thousands upon thousands of Australian public servants in the form of a wage increase, but who were denied increases in the national interest so as to support the wages freeze—is as follows—

We're not an isolated group that has some peculiar interests in overthrowing the system in Western Australia. We have a genuine interest in overthrowing the system in Australia.

Out of their own mouths these people stand condemned as members of a political activist group, as I said it was.

Mr Peter Jones: I do not think the Government is very interested in that.

Mr HASSELL: It does not seem to have impacted on the Government at all. It has been reported to the Government repeatedly, not just by me, but by other people in the community, that these kinds of grants should not have been made. They were an inappropriate and improper use of taxpayers' funds.

It is important to place on record in this Parliament this statement of revelation by Mr Howard Smith that, "We have a genuine interest in overthrowing the system in Australia". The only people who speak about overthrowing systems are people who have sinister objectives, who are not prepared to operate within the system, and who are, in fact, of the nature I previously described in this House.

In reply to a question yesterday the Minister tried to justify the grants by saying that the money would be used for research projects. Whereas, in the Minister's own answer to a question I raised—I will not quote it again—he said that two of the grants were to people who were to run the office of the Workers Information and Research Centre and to organise research. They were not research grants at all.

In the brief time in which it is appropriate to speak tonight, I want to refer to the broad issue of where the Government is going on employment generation.

It seems to me, and the motion expresses our position, that the Government is not going anywhere very clearly or very distinctly. The Government's commitment, as the Leader of the Opposition said, was to find a significant number of jobs. It promised to provide 25 000 jobs within its first term in office. Let us be very precise about the commitment the Labor Party made when it was in Opposition and when it was seeking votes

from the public. The Labor Party's commitment was to establish a State employment task force.

Mr Pearce: That has been established.

Mr HASSELL: The task force was, and I quote—

Assigned to primarily attract 25 000 new jobs in the private and public sectors in Western Australia during Labor's first term in office.

Let us be very clear about it. The commitment was to provide 25 000 new jobs—not 25 000 jobs—because, of course 25 000 jobs will arise from the natural course of the growth in the economy; from the natural course of an expanded population; and from the natural course of the demands of that population.

Mr Jamieson: That is how you explained the 100 000 jobs in 1977.

Mr HASSELL: Those 25 000 jobs were promised to be new jobs and that means they were to be additional; clearly that is what the Labor Party meant. It came into office in a situation of approximately 60 000 unemployed people in Western Australia. I cannot imagine that the party would have been so silly as to suggest that its policy was simply aimed at ensuring that that level of unemployment would not increase. In the absence of doing something new and something special, all that would be likely to happen in the natural course of events—if the Government did not do anything—would be that employment would rise and the economy would grow and that in some way in wide parameters, not precisely of course, the level of unemployment would go on in the same way. That is very clearly shown by the Premier's claim—not my claim—in his document entitled, "The Western Australian Economy 1982-83", where he included in his statement the labour force and employment trends in Western Australia from 1978 to 1983.

This was shown on a graph which appears on page 8. It shows that there is a continuing relationship between the labour force and the level of employment. In fact, there was a deterioration in recent times, a deterioration which the Labor Party sought to beat around our heads on more than one occasion. Clearly what the Labor Party meant by its promise to create 25 000 new jobs—not 25 000 jobs, but 25 000 new jobs—was that its intervention would have the effect of altering the direction of that graph and altering the gap between the labour force level and the employment level. Instead of these lines diverging or staying parallel, they would, in fact, come much closer together.

Mr I. F. Taylor: Why not read paragraph 3?

Mr HASSELL: If the member for Kalgoorlie wants to start talking about bits of this document, let me refer him to the first paragraph of the document where it states—

Economic activity in Western Australia declined during 1982-83 under the continuing influence of international recession, increases in labour costs and high interest rates.

Let us talk about that.

Mr I. F. Taylor: Read out paragraph 3 of that introduction.

Mr HASSELL: I am reading part of the document and clearly the member does not want me to read the whole document because it would take a long time.

Several members interjected.

Mr HASSELL: The member for Kalgoorlie is wasting time because he is interjecting about something which is not relevant to what I am saying. I am making the point that the Government promised to create 25 000 new jobs and we have yet to see any of them created. We have seen the continuation of the growth—

Mr Jamieson: You promised 100 000 new jobs in 1977.

Mr HASSELL: The year 1977 is a long way behind us, and we are no longer in Government. It is the present Government's promises which have to be tested. The Government got to power on the basis of its promises and it must measure up. I am deliberately making clear and putting on the record the basis of the Government's promise, which was for 25 000 new jobs.

Mr Jamieson: Let us assume you are right. It is not as extravagant as your claim.

Mr I. F. Taylor: You do not need to remind us.

Mr HASSELL: I do, and I will tell the member the reason for that. It is because his own Minister does not understand.

Mr I. F. Taylor: He is an excellent Minister and has a great understanding of the situation.

Mr HASSELL: I am sure he is and he has a pretty good understanding of some things, but he does not understand the Government's promise about jobs. I am trying to explain it so that the member can explain the situation to the electorate when talking about the Government's performance on new jobs.

A couple of days ago I asked the Minister question 2372, part of which reads as follows—

In relation to the State Government's pre-election commitment to assign to its State employment task force, "the primary target

of 25 000 new jobs in the private and public sectors in Western Australia during Labor's first term in office...", are the new jobs referred to additional to those which would be expected to occur as a result of the natural growth of the economy?

The Minister's reply was revealing. He indicated that since the present Government took office, almost 15 000 jobs have been created, a situation which represents more than significant progress towards creating 25 000 jobs.

Not "new" jobs any more. Mysteriously the "new" has disappeared; it has gone down the drain. The answer continued—

... during Labor's first three years of office.

In fairness to the House and to the arrangements, my time is up and I will finish my speech. I set out to clearly establish and to give the Government due notice that it will be tested on the basis of its promise to create 25 000 new jobs. The only record of creation of new jobs to date is not 15 000 jobs, but the 1 200 jobs which the Minister for Employment and Administrative Services indicated had been created as a result of the expenditure of the wages pause moneys. The Government will be tested on its promise because this was the issue on which it received votes at the last election.

MR LAURANCE (Gascoyne) [8.11 p.m.]: I support this motion.

Employment creation was central to the election campaign earlier this year. Prior to the election the Premier and his colleagues were very critical of the efforts of the previous Government and made many promises about their own performances should they be given the opportunity. However, by comparison their performance pales into insignificance. We have seen a pathetic performance over the last nine months. The Government should have tackled this problem urgently because it required urgent treatment. Both sides of the House acknowledge the fact that it was most important to the future of the State to create employment, and it was central to the Government's campaign.

This Premier has done more to provide jobs in other States than in WA. It is an indictment of any Premier. He has supported uranium projects in South Australia, but has done nothing to support similar projects in Western Australia. He has sold this State out.

During this session we have seen the development of a new tactic. By careful manipulation of question time with Dorothy Dix questions put up from his own members, he has indulged in a long tirade of Opposition bashing.

Mr I. F. Taylor: He has given you very good advice.

Mr LAURANCE: In what form? How does that help the unemployment situation?

Several members interjected.

Mr LAURANCE: The most positive move of this Premier has been to support resource development projects in South Australia, but what good does that do for the unemployment situation of this State? His advisers and departmental heads work on the preparation of these questions, the backbenchers ask them, and the Premier responds. The whole effort becomes a political point scoring exercise over the Opposition.

Several members interjected.

Mr LAURANCE: Such actions hurt every unemployed person because it directs the Government's resources to Opposition bashing while the unemployed wait in the streets for jobs month after month. The Premier performs here by tirading around the Parliament trying to put down the Opposition. Self-congratulation is no praise, and where does it get the Government or the unemployed in this State? It is not the job of the Premier to criticise the Opposition.

I recall that on 22 March, when Parliament was convened for urgent business, he said the jobs of the members had been changed and that the Opposition must remember it is now in opposition and its job is to criticise the Government. It is the Premier's job to run the State and the Opposition members will make the criticisms. There is certainly plenty to criticise; unemployment is still rising and these jobs have not been provided. For the Premier to criticise the Opposition is terribly negative and it is a waste of his time. He should be positive and take positive steps. He should forget about Opposition members because we are not yapping at his heels. He should get on with running the State, creating jobs, and worrying about Western Australia rather than South Australia.

The Premier should use his own skills and those of his Administration on behalf of those in Western Australia who require jobs. Those skills should not be used to put the Opposition down during debates in this House. His actions prove that the Premier is running scared because he is anxious to keep one step in front of the Opposition. It indicates that he is worried about his performance and his future. However, there is much to be done in our great State. He has the tremendous privilege and opportunity—

A Government member interjected.

Mr LAURANCE: Belt up. He has the privilege of having his hand at the tiller and the opportunity to run this State, to do something for the unemployed, and to take actions to bring about economic recovery. It is not his privilege to sit in this House and keep one jump ahead of the Opposition. It is small-minded and that does no good for the rest of the State or for the unemployed. His behaviour is petty. We had an opportunity for a Premier to show the way to get out of the economic recession and yet we have a very petty Premier.

I refer to part (3) of the motion, and this part refers to something that not only the Premier should have directed his efforts towards but also every Minister should have been tackling. That part of the motion criticises the Government for its failure to provide satisfactory guidelines or administration for job creation programmes. People want to take up the Government on its proposals. These job programmes have been advertised and local authorities particularly want to start work on the programmes.

Prior to the last election we gave millions of dollars to such programmes because the authorities had completed the planning and design stages and were waiting to go ahead with the projects. They want to do the same thing on this occasion. They have the projects and the designs and they want the money. However they are finding it impossible to get their hands on the funds. It is more frustrating for them with each day that passes. The Government does not know how to deliver the goods. It criticised the previous Government for its actions over a matter of weeks and yet it has had months and produced nothing.

I have criticised the Minister for Employment and Administrative Services for one aspect of the job creation scheme. One plank of the Labor Party platform, and it is a very shaky plank, related to a road programme. Before one can obtain any money from the Government for schemes they must be announced several times. The job creation programme on roads was announced in May but it was not launched until August. What is the difference? An unemployed person would not care if the scheme were announced or launched, he just wants a job. In May the job creation programme on local roads was announced and subsequently a media publicity campaign was launched. However, no guidelines were provided for several more weeks.

When the guidelines were announced, local authorities found that they had to provide 30 per cent of the funds to match the programme. This qualification made the scheme difficult for some and impossible for others. Also, a 50 per cent

labour component was required. Local authorities told the Government that no-one could comply with these guidelines and during the last few days the Government has produced further guidelines. I make the point that it is not April or May, we are now in December and almost into another year. It is nearly two years since this Government made promises about providing jobs and creating employment in 1982. The year 1983 is almost finished. If local authorities do not send their applications to the Government by tomorrow they will find their applications will not be dealt with until 1984. They have been told that the Government will be going into recess over the Christmas period and that it will look at these job creation programmes in January.

The Government has had nine months in which to take action and nothing has happened. It will now be mid January before further guidelines are produced.

We find that this jobs on local roads programme will now give a base grant. The Government said, "We are sorry. Just put in your application. We will give your a base grant, and you must apply on a needs basis". That arrived in the hands of the local authorities on Monday of this week—5 December. Nine months after the State and Federal Governments were elected, suddenly we find that this particular programme will be divided into two components; but what are the rules? The Government will not set firm guidelines. It will not give out the application forms. It has not started any jobs. The local authorities want to perform, and for that to happen the Government must perform. The local authorities do not need to stand by.

The Minister stood behind his leader and tried to play down the position. How many people did the Government employ in the half hour the Minister stood there trying to put the Opposition down? Not a single person. Week after week, month after month, we have got absolutely nowhere. It is a pathetic record. No one can get the money.

This scheme is only one example, and in relation to it the Government cannot perform. It can perform in the media and it can perform in the Parliament in trying to score a political point off the Opposition; but what does it do for the unemployed people of this State? The Government stands condemned on its employment record.

**MR PEARCE** (Armadale—Minister for Education) [8.17 p.m.]: The Opposition should think out its attitude to increasing employment in Western Australia because there is a very considerable discrepancy in the approaches which respective

speakers have taken. To a casual observer, that demonstrates the peccadilloes of the Opposition. I am fascinated to see the way members stand up and speak when no-one on the Opposition side can tell us in advance who is going to do so.

This motion has been on the Notice Paper for some time in the name of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. However, when the debate was called on, the Leader of the Opposition moved it—

**Mr Hassell**: We put a lot of motions on notice on the same day; and they were to be moved by different people, for obvious reasons.

**Mr PEARCE**: Then the Deputy Leader of the Opposition spoke, and then the last runner of the contenders for the leadership—

**Mr Old**: Don't be petulant.

**Mr PEARCE**: It is interesting to see the way in which each of the speakers took approaches to employment which cut across each other.

**Mr Laurance**: Are you happy with the administration of this scheme?

**Mr PEARCE**: I will explain later the administration of this scheme.

The difficulty of trying to buy into an argument like this in which one senses political advantage, but of which one has no personal knowledge, is that one is led into making stupid mistakes. The way the member for Gascoyne denounced the guidelines of the scheme is an indictment of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, because the guidelines for the Commonwealth wages pause programme were worked out at a meeting in January of this year in Canberra, which meeting was attended by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in his then new capacity as the Minister for Employment. If there is a problem in the way the guidelines work, one can point directly at the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr Laurance**: Did you say that before the election?

**Mr PEARCE**: The member for Gascoyne should have taken note that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition did not raise the matter, because he knew more about it than did the member.

**Mr Laurance**: Did you tell the people of Western Australia that the guidelines were not right?

**Mr PEARCE**: Let me deal with the attitude of the Government and the Opposition to the vital question of increasing employment in Western Australia.

**Mr Blaikie**: Particularly for pre-primary teachers?

Mr PEARCE: This Government has a consistent and strong commitment to increasing employment in the State in both the private sector and the Government sector.

Mr I. F. Taylor: Unlike the Opposition, we do not take any glee in the fact that unemployment is a problem in this State.

Mr PEARCE: The main problem that the Opposition must face is in its attitude to some of the Government's moves to strengthen the economy and improve employment. At the same time as the member for Gascoyne is calling for many Government programmes to provide Government-paid employment, he has been an opponent of the re-opening of the Fremantle railway, which created 138 jobs. At the same time as he is saying that the Government should do something about providing jobs, he is saying that we should not waste the taxpayers' money on providing employment in the Government sector.

Mr Hassell: There are jobs and jobs in the Government sector.

Mr PEARCE: Yes, there are jobs and jobs. It must be said that there are ongoing jobs like those on the Fremantle railway line. They are also short-term jobs, like those in the community employment programme.

Mr Laurance: That is your idea, anyway.

Mr PEARCE: The Government is trying to bridge the gap in unemployment created by the nine years of the conservative Government which created this unemployment, and it is time that we were able to get the economy moving so that full employment will be available again.

In the time it takes to get the economy moving in that way, it is necessary to do something for the people who are currently unemployed. That is why the CEP programme is in force. The member supports short-term programmes; but one should in fact support long-term programmes to provide employment to the Government sector.

Even more fundamentally, the weakness in the Opposition's attitude is reflected in the way it handled the Western Australian Development Corporation Bill. The Opposition made much criticism of attempts by the Western Australian Government to get more development going in Western Australia, leading to more jobs here.

Mr Peter Jones: Tell us how that will create jobs?

Mr PEARCE: If the development corporation can assemble funds, that will improve the economy. As the Deputy Premier has already indicated, he is on the way to putting money into establishing high technology industries.

Mr Court: You do not want a corporation to assemble funds.

Mr PEARCE: It is the Government's effort to get new industries in this State. Various people object to that. The Opposition's rhetoric and philosophy is along the line that there is no case for Government intervention in the economy. That does not square with the promises that we heard during election after election. In 1974, the claim was that inflation and unemployment would be cured in six months. That was the 1974 promise. In 1977, the promise was—

Mr Thompson: The promise was made mid-way between 1971 and 1974.

Mr PEARCE: It was made for the 1974 election. In 1977, the election promise was 100 000 jobs; in 1980, a promise of \$800 million worth of investment; and in 1983, it was a job bank hoax.

If it were the case that our promise of 25 000 jobs over three years was an unreal election promise—I certainly do not consider that for a second—it was a very minor, and, indeed, cautious sort of promise compared with the ratbagery that had been indulged in by the Liberal Government in the time leading up to the 1983 election.

The fact is that there have already been created in Western Australia about 6 000 or 7 000 jobs since we came into office. It is all very well for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to try to make a distinction between "jobs" and "new jobs". The fact is that Governments create employment by expanding the economy—by getting the economy moving, or getting the economy expanding, thus having more consumption in the economy.

Mr Peter Jones: How will you do that?

Mr PEARCE: The Western Australian development corporation will help to do that, along with a range of other things. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition appears to believe that there is a different way of getting jobs, apart from an expansion of the economy.

Economic expansion leads to efforts to increase jobs. The Minister for Employment and Administrative Services is not unaware of any strange distinction. He understands, and the Government understands, that the way to create jobs is to expand the economy; and it is to that end that the Government is operating. It is turning its full attention to stimulating the economy and offering involvement in the economy by Government participation. That is the difference between what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition believes—standing back and hoping that something will happen—and Government intervention. We have nine years of experience of the previous Govern-

ment to demonstrate that it does not work like that.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is becoming widely known around the place as the knocker. His stand on Condo the Clown was seen widely throughout the community. It is strangely discrepant from the stand taken by the stripper advocate, the Hon. Philip Lockyer in the upper House. It seems to me that a party that can encompass anti-Condo the Clown attitudes on the one hand, and hotel strippers on the other hand, is a very broadly-based party indeed.

That shows the frivolous attitude of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, because the Government takes the view that employment is a very serious issue. However, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition spent half of his speech talking about a grant made under the CEP to one group.

Mr Hassell: Are you defending that grant?

Mr PEARCE: As the Minister has already told him, the decision was not made by the Minister for Employment and Administrative Services.

Mr Hassell: What absolute nonsense. Even the Minister did not say that.

Mr PEARCE: The Minister has an advisory committee.

Mr Hassell: Do not mislead the House. The Minister is responsible for his decisions and you know it.

Mr PEARCE: The Minister was advised on a range of grants, and that was one of them.

Mr Hassell: And the Minister did not tell the committee the basis on which they were to be made?

Mr PEARCE: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition wasted half of his speech in relation to that topic.

Mr Hassell: Are you supporting that grant? It is an easy answer to give.

Mr PEARCE: Who is being trivial? That is what I need to know.

Mr Hassell: Are you supporting the grant?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has asked the question four times. That is sufficient.

Mr Hassell: He started getting stuck into me, and he would not answer a simple question.

Mr PEARCE: Who is being trivial in this matter? If I were to descend to the level of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, we would not care for employment. The Government has much more concern for the broad problem of getting as many people into jobs as possible.

With regard to the few points made by the member for Gascoyne, the fact of the matter is that he is unaware of the way in which the wages pause programme has got going in the Commonwealth sense. It was put together in January; and the present Deputy Leader of the Opposition was the one who helped set it up. If there are problems, they should go back to him. Indeed, there appeared to be problems with the guidelines, but the Government moved quickly to resolve them. For example one of the reasons the former Government could not get Commonwealth money for Western Australia was that it could not get proper approval for the way in which it wanted the money to be spent. The Government wanted to spend it on pork barrelling in marginal electorates and capital works instead of using it in job creation programmes, as the Commonwealth Government hoped. The Commonwealth Government was not even prepared to agree that the Western Australian proposal fitted the guidelines.

It was only when we became the Government that we were able to bring up the \$19 million that was to come to Western Australia.

Mr Hassell: That is completely untrue.

Mr PEARCE: I will finish this quickly, so the House will not be kept too long.

Mr Hassell: Why don't you speak the truth?

Mr PEARCE: It is amazing that the Opposition has the gall to move this motion, considering its efforts with the job bank hoax. If it took an interest in employment, it would not have created the worst employment record in the history of the State. The previous Government announced that it was appointing a new Minister for Employment with a new department, which employed three people a week before the election. The only reason for that was so that the then Government could electioneer on the employment issue. Job bank was supposed to take wages freeze money and use it on large projects but I found out the truth about job bank three days after I became the Minister for Education.

I wanted to find out where the job bank money to fund the Perth Technical College had gone. A big sign on the Perth Technical College site indicated that it was a job bank project with \$14 million-worth of work. I advise the House that the only job-bank money which was ever spent or ever will be spent on the Perth Technical College was to erect that sign, which cost about \$68. That sign cost about \$68 and that is all of the employment-creating money that went into that project. It was a hoax.



The Opposition has done nothing about this employment issue except to hope to use it for political reasons at election time.

Mr O'Connor: What about the Derby Hotel?

Mr PEARCE: We could have discussions about who funded that and who got the benefit.

In contradistinction to that, the Government has a firm commitment to increasing employment in Western Australia through an expansion of the economy. In the nine months in which we have been in Government, we have produced almost 7 000 new jobs in WA. We will easily achieve the 25 000 jobs promised before our term expires in 1986.

Question put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes 17	
Mr Blaikie	Mr McNee
Mr Bradshaw	Mr O'Connor
Mr Court	Mr Old
Mr Cowan	Mr Spriggs
Mr Crane	Mr Stephens
Mr Hassell	Mr Thompson
Mr Peter Jones	Mr Tubby
Mr Laurance	Mr Williams
Mr MacKinnon	
Noes 24	
Mr Barnett	Mr Tom Jones
Mr Bateman	Mr McIver
Mr Bertram	Mr Pearce
Mr Bridge	Mr Read
Mrs Buchanan	Mr D. L. Smith
Mr Carr	Mr A. D. Taylor
Mr Davies	Mr I. F. Taylor
Mr Evans	Mr Tonkin
Mr Grill	Mr Troy
Mrs Henderson	Mrs Watkins
Mr Hodge	Mr Wilson
Mr Jamieson	Mr Gordon Hill

(Teller)

(Teller)

Ayes	Noes
Mr Mensaros	Mr P. J. Smith
Mr Clarko	Mrs Beggs
Mr Coyne	Mr Burkett
Mr Watt	Mr Parker
Mr Rushton	Mr Bryce
Mr Grayden	Mr Brian Burke
Mr Trethowan	Mr Terry Burke

Question thus negatived.

Motion defeated.

## FIRES: BUSHFIRES

### Select Committee: Motion

Debate resumed from 26 October.

MR COWAN (Merredin) [8.35 p.m.]: This motion was moved some time ago by the member for Kalamunda, I think to coincide with the anniversary of the bushfires in the Eastern States. Despite the fact that it does tend to deal with what happened in Victoria and South Australia, it does

have some merit inasmuch as the last two or three lines contain a request for this House to form a Select Committee to investigate areas in Western Australia which may be subject to a similar type of conflagration which could cause death and injury, and damage to property in Western Australia.

In most country areas of Western Australia we have volunteer bushfire brigades manned by people who have the responsibility for the control of any bushfires which occur in country areas. I am quite certain that in the areas about which the member for Kalamunda was thinking the brigades are well organised and co-ordinate with the Forests Department and other bodies.

However, in the areas I represent the bushfire brigades do not have the benefit of a close liaison with the department, mainly because of the lack of forests in the area. Nevertheless, the broad issue involved in the motion, which the mover related directly to his own area, deserves to be expanded so that we examine all those areas which come under the control of the Bush Fires Board and the operation of the fire brigades.

Members of the bushfire brigades operate outside the area mentioned in the motion. For that reason, we in the National Party believe the motion should be amended to incorporate an investigation into the activities of the board over the whole of Western Australia and not confine it in area to that which the member for Kalamunda was referring when he introduced his motion. I am sure he was talking mainly about the peripheral areas of Perth which are residential areas adjacent to forest areas around Perth.

Any member who can recall the Dwellingup and Margaret River fires which occurred in the past would be aware of the enormous damage done to property in those areas. Nevertheless, I do not think the House should confine itself to proposing a committee to investigate just one or two areas of the State which are confronted by these bushfire problems. For that reason I will be moving an amendment to the member for Kalamunda's motion so as to broaden it. I will move to delete all words after the word "investigate" with a view to inserting the words "and review all aspects of bushfire control in Western Australia, and if necessary make recommendations which will improve control and fire prevention measures".

I will be moving the amendment purely to broaden the motion. The motion is rather narrow in that it certainly does not affect the areas my colleague and I represent. For example, in the member for Stirling's electorate, certain areas en-

circle a national park and those areas have a specific fire danger, a danger which worries the people living adjacent to the national park. A committee formed under the original motion would violate its terms of reference if it were to consider the problems of these people.

#### *Amendments to Motion*

For that reason, I move an amendment—

That everything after the word "investigate" in line 2 be deleted with a view to substituting other words.

Mr STEPHENS: I second the amendment.

MR THOMPSON (Kalamunda) [8.42 p.m.]: I thank the member for Merredin for his contribution. Members of the House will recall that a similar amendment was put to the House by the member's colleague, the member for Stirling, when the motion was previously before members. That member attempted to move an amendment, but the amendment lapsed because he had no seconder.

Mr Stephens: The member for Merredin was delayed by a technicality.

Mr THOMPSON: That is one of the hazards one faces when one has so few friends. I want to recommend that the amendment be defeated, not because I do not believe in the sentiments expressed by the member for Merredin; however, he may not be aware of another move that will be made later.

Mr Cowan: You are not the only man with a source of information.

Mr THOMPSON: I am just explaining the reasons for my asking members to reject the amendment. The member may know of what is to happen, but other members may not know that it is the intention of the Government to move to broaden the scope of my motion calling for a Select Committee so that the committee will be able to inquire into those things concerning the members for Merredin and Stirling. I am not recommending defeat of the amendment for the sake of defeat; it is just that it is expedient that I should do so.

Mr Stephens: Are you saying the Government's amendment is better?

Mr THOMPSON: Yes, and for that reason I urge members to defeat the amendment.

MR CARR (Geraldton—Minister for Local Government) [8.43 p.m.]: We are confronted with an interesting little technical manoeuvre here in the sense that an amendment is before the House moved by the member for Merredin and, as has been indicated by the member for Kalamunda, it

is the intention of the Government also to move an amendment to the original motion. What we will be doing initially is supporting the amendment moved by the member for Merredin to delete certain words which he has outlined. After that has been done, the member for Merredin will be moving to insert the words he wants inserted. At that stage the Government will oppose the insertion of those words and then itself will move to insert words which we believe to be the proper words to be inserted.

The Government is very much receptive of the concern expressed by different members in the context of their different motions and amendments dealing with the Ash Wednesday fires in the Eastern States. There is no doubt that those fires have heightened the consciousness of people throughout this State and the country itself of the dangers which prevail in bushfire situations.

It is a responsibility of the Parliament and the Government to see that appropriate preventive action is taken to ensure that that type of disaster does not occur in WA; to attempt to minimise the risk of such an occurrence, and to maximise our preparedness to handle such a situation should it commence to arise. It is also important that we do not overreact. One reason the amendment moved by the member for Merredin might not be appropriate is that it does try to broaden the whole subject to look at the entire bushfire situation in WA. It could well be argued that the Bush Fires Board in WA has got the general bushfire situation pretty well under control. There is very little argument or dispute over that point.

Mr Stephens: You are doing a good job for a change.

Mr CARR: In general terms, the good job is being done by the Bush Fires Board throughout this State. Notwithstanding that, particular concern is felt by many people who live in the heavily wooded and fairly densely populated areas on the outskirts of the metropolitan area I think it is appropriate that we approach this matter strictly in so far as that group of people is concerned.

I should point out to the House that a lot of action has already been taken by many Government agencies. We should not be looking at the motion before the House as being the one initiative taken in this State in response to the Ash Wednesday situation. It is important to point out that many Government agencies and local authorities in WA have been very active since Ash Wednesday in assessing our situation and looking for ways to try to improve the situation.

The State Energy Commission, for example, has been involved in discussions with its South

Australian and Victorian counterparts on all aspects associated with the Ash Wednesday fires and has taken steps towards hazard reduction, in particular, by clearing under powerlines and by ordering supplies of spreaders to fit to powerlines in various areas.

The SEC has been involved in discussions with local authorities. My office, on behalf of the Minister for Fuel and Energy, circulated a letter to all local authorities in this State seeking their co-operation in clearing trees under powerlines and replacing tall trees under powerlines with small trees. The SEC has been very aware of the problems caused in Victoria and South Australia by such matters and has been extremely keen to act in this State.

Recently a biennial national conference of the electricity supply association of Australia decided to set up an *ad hoc* meeting to the end that Ash Wednesday experiences in Victoria and South Australia could be used to assist other States. Western Australia expects to be represented on that committee.

The State Emergency Service in WA has had considerable liaison with its counterparts in the Eastern States and has commenced assessing reports it has received. It is seeking further reports from the Eastern States as more inquiries are completed.

The Western Australian Fire Brigades Board has also been actively involved in pursuing the question of hazard reduction, public education; training and educating volunteers, and so on, in its attempt to lessen the problem that faces the WA public. Today I had the good fortune to accompany senior officers from the Fire Brigades Board on a fairly well extended helicopter flight over the metropolitan area examining from the air the level of fuel reduction that had been undertaken, the level of fire break preparedness, and so on.

Mr Old: How much did that cost?

Mr CARR: The Bush Fires Board has also been very active in its areas of responsibility in conjunction with other agencies and local authorities in various parts of this State. In fact, over the last 10 years or so it has embarked upon a comprehensive fuel reduction programme to try to minimise the amount of combustible materials in the lower levels of forests. We are confident that the type of strategy adopted by the Fire Brigades Board and the Bush Fires Board is the appropriate strategy.

I will make one point in respect of the fuel reduction that is taking place; a very commonly held view is that the Victorian situation could not

happen in WA because we have so much less fuel on the ground. While that is undoubtedly true and a lot of effort has been put into reducing the fuel on the ground here, I point out that when I visited Macedon only a couple of weeks ago, I was concerned to see the situation. I had been led to understand that the forest areas were more dense compared with the situation here. In fact it was quite an eye opener to see 15 and 20 acre paddocks covered by nothing but low level grass, paddocks which had been completely jumped over by the fire. So people who tend to say that we in WA do not have the same problem because the trees are not so close or the undergrowth is not so lush should keep a wary eye on the fact that bush fires in eucalypt forests, with a big wind behind them, can jump very large spaces.

It is arguable from what I have said that the situation is reasonably well under control in WA. The Government could argue that the situation is sufficiently under control and there is no need for a Select Committee to make any further inquiries. However, I think it is important to use every possible avenue to ensure that we have not overlooked anything and to assure the public, whom we regard as so important, that we have attempted to cover every possible problem area.

It is our intention to move an amendment. Our amendment differs from the original motion moved by the member for Kalamunda principally because we do not see a need for us in WA to be conducting our inquiries in relation to the Eastern States bush fires. A number of inquiries are under way, and in some cases have been completed, in regard to those bush fires; it would be wasteful for us to spend our funds sending our committee to the Eastern States to conduct our own inquiry. It is more appropriate for our committee to view and examine the reports on the situation in the Eastern States and to look at our own situation in terms of our preparedness and capability to respond.

Our amendment is to delete exactly the same words proposed to be deleted in the amendment moved by the member for Merredin. If the appropriate opportunity arises I intend to move to insert some other words.

Mr Thompson: Your amendment will have to be slightly modified.

Mr CARR: I will have to move to delete one word more than has the member for Merredin. Perhaps a slight doubt remains as to the first word of our amendment.

Amendment put and a division called for.

*Point of Order*

Mr THOMPSON: It would appear that I have misunderstood the position. I seek the leave of the House to return to our original situation.

*Speaker's Ruling*

The SPEAKER: It is within the Standing Orders to abort a division. I therefore call off the division.

*Amendments to Motion Resumed*

Amendment put and passed.

MR COWAN (Merredin) [8.57 p.m.]: I will carry on with my amendment. What the House chooses to do with it is its responsibility. I move an amendment—

Substitute the following for the passage deleted—

and review all aspects of bushfire control in Western Australia and if necessary make recommendations which will improve control and fire prevention measures.

MR STEPHENS (Stirling) [8.58 p.m.]: I support the amendment. We have just heard the background of the Government's intentions from the Minister, but I expect that in a verbose way he has set about actually achieving what this amendment will achieve, which is to look at all aspects of bushfire control. That does not mean to say we cannot look at bushfire control in urban areas of the city or urban areas of country towns. These are all aspects of bushfire control. In the first instance the Government is being a little bit pedantic in wanting to encourage its amendment rather than accepting our amendment in the spirit in which it was put forward.

The Minister did not touch on another aspect which may be debated later. In country areas, particularly in the south-west, considerable concern is being expressed that farmers, most of whom rely on bushfire brigades, do not have the ability to move their fire fighting trailers to the scene of the fire. That aspect could be looked at.

For those reasons, I urge the House to accept the amendment in this form. Even though the words are fewer, it does exactly what the Government is aiming to achieve in its amendment.

When I was speaking to the original debate some weeks ago I pointed out—the Minister has done so also—that there is not much point in a committee from WA investigating the bushfire situation in Victoria and South Australia. Those States have conducted their own inquiries and it is quite correct for us to look at their reports. We

have to apply ourselves to the conditions that exist in WA.

I repeat that the amendment, although very simply worded, will enable us to carry out a full review of all bushfire control measures in Western Australia. Certainly, the cities and urban areas may need more attention than farming districts generally. Even in the farming districts, I do not think it would hurt to look at the various bushfire control measures. I refer to one area that causes considerable discussion in farming groups—the requirement that a firebreak be made around properties. Many members would argue that strategic firebreaks placed through properties would be a better idea and less likely to cause problems of erosion, particularly in hilly country. I urge the House to support the amendment moved by the member for Merredin.

MR THOMPSON (Kalamunda) [9.02 p.m.]: I want to first apologise to the House for the inconvenience caused by my misunderstanding of the situation. I had firmly fixed in my mind the idea that it was intended that the member for Merredin's amendment would be defeated and that other words in the original motion would then be removed by a Government amendment for the express purpose of inserting other words. I still believe the member for Merredin's amendment should be defeated in favour of that fore-shadowed by the Government.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result—

Mr Cowan	Ayes 2	
	Mr Stephens	(Teller)
	Noes 41	
Mr Barnett	Mr Tom Jones	
Mr Bateman	Mr Laurance	
Mr Bertram	Mr McIver	
Mr Blaikie	Mr McNee	
Mr Bradshaw	Mr O'Connor	
Mr Bridge	Mr Old	
Mrs Buchanan	Mr Pearce	
Mr Brian Burke	Mr Read	
Mr Burkett	Mr D. L. Smith	
Mr Carr	Mr Spriggs	
Mr Court	Mr A. D. Taylor	
Mr Crane	Mr I. F. Taylor	
Mr Davies	Mr Thompson	
Mr Evans	Mr Tonkin	
Mr Grayden	Mr Troy	
Mr Grill	Mr Tubby	
Mr Hassell	Mrs Watkins	
Mrs Henderson	Mr Williams	
Mr Hodge	Mr Wilson	
Mr Jamieson	Mr Gordon Hill	
Mr Peter Jones		(Teller)

Amendment thus negatived.

MR CARR (Geraldton—Minister for Local Government) [9.06 p.m.]: I move an amendment—

Substitute the following for the passage deleted—

The particular problems associated with fire control in urban fringe and other similarly heavily treed areas and

- (1) examine available reports resulting from enquiries into the devastating bushfires which occurred in Victoria and South Australia this year and any other relevant material applicable to the Western Australian situation with a view to reporting to Parliament on the level of preparedness to meet any fire threat and on ways to minimise the risk of such fires;
- (2) as part of the above brief, review the various fire plans existing and determine the effectiveness of the following aspects of each plan—
  - (a) fire prevention measures with specific reference to preparation and maintenance of fire breaks;
  - (b) manpower and equipment provisioning;
  - (c) public education and media involvement;
  - (d) co-ordination of the various responsible authorities;
  - (e) the compatibility and efficiency of communication networks;
  - (f) personnel training.

**MR TROY** (Mundaring) [9.08 p.m.]: I second the amendment. I share the concern of the member for Kalamunda in regard to the fire threat inherent in the hills environment, particularly when so much of it lies in the Mundaring electorate which I represent.

Every member would be concerned about the possibility of horrific bushfires such as those which occurred in South Australia and Victoria last summer. I noted the comments made by the member for Stirling about the licensing of trailed firefighting units and it is my understanding that subject would be covered by our considerations. I noted also his comments in relation to firebreaks on property boundaries.

The investigation of the Victorian and South Australian fires by a Western Australian parliamentary Select Committee would achieve very little at present because formal inquiries are still proceeding in both States, which inquiries are expected to result in litigation. Fire control personnel would be very cautious about commenting at this stage. A local inquiry has merit. I make that comment with the knowledge that a high standard

of fire control exists in the hills area and has no peer in the State. Active organisations such as the State and local authorities and the volunteer organisations were not idle prior to the Victorian fires, or subsequent to them. They have sought information and responded in the local sense.

We have our own bitter experience of Dwellingup and Jarrahdale of some years ago from which we benefited in terms of fire control in this State. Currently, fire prevention in the metropolitan hills area is based on a number of principles. The first is that of responsibility. In the area we are referring to ranging from Wanneroo to Jarrahdale, there are six shires, four city or town councils, 55 volunteer bushfire and town brigades. The Bush Fires Board has jurisdiction over the whole area. State authorities involved include the Forests Department, the National Parks Authority, and the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, and there are supporting organisations such as the Police Force, Westrail, the SEC, and the Main Roads Department.

The second principle on which fire prevention is based is regional planning. Under the guidance and direction of the Bush Fires Board fire prevention and suppression activities in the area have been pre-planned under what is known as the Swan regional fire control plan, which has four basic objectives; they are the regular basis of planning fire control; the development of "action procedures"; co-ordination of support functions; and the planning of adequate communication processes through the region.

The third principle relates to the fuel reduction programme mentioned by the Minister. This follows the example and guidance of the Forests Department which has developed a fuel reduction programme over the last 15 years. Local authorities and volunteer organisations in the Swan region now ensure that fuel loadings are restricted to six to eight tonnes per hectare. This controlled burning is carried out in what is known as a "mosaic pattern" with not more than 20 per cent of the area carrying the maximum allowable loading. In Victoria, the areas subject to the Ash Wednesday fires had loadings 10 times greater than the maximum level allowed in Western Australia. A careful programme of fuel reduction is undertaken in this State, and takes into account features such as topography, access to the areas, fire history, brigade capability, orientation—that is, whether it is on the north side of urban developments—and the number of gulleys and slopes in those areas.

The fourth principle covers strategic firebreaks. These are carefully selected and an informal process is undertaken between the Bush Fires Board

and town planning authorities whereby firebreaks are established, particularly for rural residential developments, at an early stage. In addition, communications networks are considered and training of staff is carried out at various levels. A significant amount of training is going on at basic level, and some at intermediate level, and the question of public education programmes is being touched on.

The strategies I have outlined form an important part of the success in fire prevention techniques in the hills area. One must acknowledge the high standard of the present services in the region which are dependant on the organisations involved; they are, the Bush Fires Board, the local authorities, the State authorities I have mentioned, and the key group—the volunteers.

I have deliberately left mention of the volunteers to last to make special acknowledgment of the heart of the overall organisation—the volunteer brigades. One cannot deny that the standard of the present service is very high largely due to the tremendous effort of volunteers.

They accept an enormous responsibility on a shoestring budget. They are supported by local authority input but heavily subsidised by their own fundraising efforts. Husbands and wives, and sons and daughters form volunteer groups and pursue with pride the training and practice that makes them highly effective units. By this fact the metropolitan hills fire prevention service is significantly different from the normal country volunteer fire brigades. On weekdays the effectiveness of the service is heavily dependent on the women volunteers, without any indication of efficiency loss. Volunteers and competent administration by the various responsible authorities have placed the metropolitan hills in a good position relative to Victoria and South Australia. However, one cannot rest on one's laurels, when the threat of bushfires is considered.

Before considering what is in need of examination by the proposed Select Committee, I congratulate the Minister for Fuel and Energy on his initiative in arranging meetings between the SEC and local authorities so that common ground could be established between the authorities in terms of fire prevention. Determining the various road verges which are fire hazards is an action which will be complimentary to the work of the Select Committee. It is pleasing to see the service authorities, the local authorities, and their response to local input being co-ordinated in that manner.

One of the matters outstanding and requiring Select Committee consideration is fuel manage-

ment on private property. The Crown land needs are particularly well controlled by the Forests Department, but there is still some desire to improve the position in relation to private properties. We need to examine a broad-scale hazard reduction and improvement of domestic fire safety.

Other work which can be undertaken by the committee would be to ensure that liaison between the responsible authorities is at a peak—there is always difficulty in achieving that. Certainly a need exists for improved volunteer training, and a need for improved public education. Public management under crisis conditions has not been tested in this State for some time. Communication networks still leave something to be desired in terms of compatibility between different organisations, and the vegetation presently growing on firebreaks in difficult terrain needs examination as well. Equipment provision, particularly at key locations, needs consideration, and above all the co-ordination, as I mentioned, between the responsible authorities, is an important matter.

We have a fine fire control service, without any doubt. However, the terms of reference highlighted by the proposed amendment direct attention to those areas which still require improving. I am sure the formation of a Select committee to examine those areas will be welcomed by all people involved in the area of fire protection and will result in a far better fire protection service.

I commend the amendment to the House.

**MR THOMPSON** (Kalamunda) [9.18 p.m.]: I thank the Minister and the Government for agreeing to the appointment of this Select Committee. It shows a degree of maturity on their part that they are prepared to accept a proposition by the Opposition to appoint a Select Committee, and I believe that only good can come from it. Surely this issue which comes before Parliament must be a non-partisan one. Some useful work will be undertaken by this committee.

I would like to comment on a number of aspects raised by the Minister. He was able to report to the House that the State Energy Commission has already embarked upon a programme of hazard reduction. Indeed it has, and that is one of the areas of concern which I have, because in my view, in some areas people are tending to overreact. That is one of the things we could monitor, because this is one of the areas of the State to which people have been attracted because of the environment. It is much easier for the State or the commission and other authorities to operate with a scorched earth policy, because that reduces any risk at all. It is much easier to say,

"Let us remove any possible risk"; but in so doing they will disfigure some beautiful parts of the areas which I represent, and which are represented by the members for Mundaring and Darling Range.

When I moved the motion in the House initially, it was just prior to a meeting convened by the Minister for Fuel and Energy at the Shire of Kalamunda, at which meeting representatives from local authorities throughout the fringe metropolitan region met to try to achieve co-operation among local authorities to undertake a programme of management. The meeting was abortive, because the commission asked local authorities to accept a responsibility which hitherto had been accepted by the State Energy Commission. By the employment of contractors the commission forces have undertaken a hazard reduction programme as far as their transmission systems are concerned in my area. It is unlikely that the SEC will be able to unload that responsibility, particularly onto local government. Local government at that meeting clearly indicated that it wanted no part in doing the job of the State Energy Commission.

Following that meeting, SEC people have been active in the hills area, certainly in the part that I represent. They have been tearing down trees and disfiguring parts of the hills. One of the matters that this Select Committee must take into account is the degree to which hazard reduction is undertaken, because if we allow those in whose interests it is to remove everything beautiful from the area, there will be a political reaction against me, the member for Mundaring, and other members who represent those areas.

It was significant to note that the Minister, and the member for Mundaring who seconded this motion, went to great pains to suggest that it was inappropriate for the Select Committee to go to the Eastern States. I disagree wholeheartedly with that point of view. It is necessary for us to look at the situations in the Eastern States. It is not good enough simply to look at the reports that are available and which may become available in the future. Indeed all the authorities which have an interest in fire control in the metropolitan region have already sent people to the Eastern States to look at the situation there. There is no hesitation in spending taxpayers' money in that way. People, including members of the Public Service down to very low ranks, leave this State in aeroplanes; but any suggestion that a member of Parliament or group of members of Parliament might go to look at something in the Eastern States results in a suggestion that we are wasting taxpayers' money. If this committee is to do its job it must look at

the situations which prevail now in the Eastern States, and, if only informally, talk to the people who live, work, and have an interest in the areas which were devastated.

The member for Mundaring has quite rightly pointed out that because we have a superior system of management in this State, the hazard is much less than was the situation in parts of the areas devastated in the Eastern States. He gave figures of ten times the fuel factor in the areas devastated there as compared with similar areas here. Those things must be taken into account.

I repeat what I said previously. I do not want to see a dangerous situation remaining longer than necessary. On the other hand, SEC linesmen or workers from some other authority may go out and wantonly destroy the areas which I represent in the name of reducing a hazard. In fact, there may be no hard evidence to indicate that cutting or devastation has taken place.

In conclusion, I thank the Government for creating the Select Committee. I disagree with the proposition that the Select Committee should not have a look at the Eastern States. It is imperative that that happens. I will be surprised if the evidence which comes before us in the early part of our deliberations does not point to a requirement for us to travel and look at that situation. How can we make a determination whether the conditions which applied in those areas devastated in the Eastern States are similar to those in this State?

Mr I. F. Taylor: Bring a couple of those people over here and ask them to have a look.

Mr THOMPSON: That is one way. We will do that too.

Mr I. F. Taylor: I mean instead.

Mr THOMPSON: What harm can occur from the Select Committee's going to have a look at the situation?

Mr I. F. Taylor: Just additional expense.

Mr THOMPSON: How do the other authorities justify having sent people over there already? The SEC sent their own people, the bushfire boards sent people, and a number of other authorities sent people.

Mr I. F. Taylor: In that case is it necessary for the committee to go again and talk to these people?

Mr THOMPSON: If it was necessary for those people to go, it may prove necessary for this committee to go. The argument can be turned back. Why did others go when one had already been? It is a silly argument. It may not be necessary to go, but why predetermine it? Why not leave the com-

mittee to determine for itself? I am not saying we should irresponsibly use taxpayers' money, but I do not think we should make a determination now that it would be wasteful for the committee to go and look at it.

One other point I want to cover is with respect to the situation of the chairman of this committee. Precedence in this Parliament indicates that when a motion for a Select Committee is moved, as it was by the former member for Mt. Marshall, who was a member of the Opposition party—could I prevail on some members to stop talking so that I can think? When the member for Mt. Marshall, as a member of the Opposition, successfully moved for a Select Committee to be appointed, the member for Mt. Marshall chaired that committee. I am not suggesting that some member of the Government is not competent to do the job; I believe that we on this side of the House had what I might call the fire in the belly to make this move. The mover of the motion ought to be the person who chairs the committee. Nothing is to be lost by the Government by virtue of the fact that it will have three members to two, so it would be able to get its way in this.

I believe it makes commonsense for the person who has had the interest in moving the motion, in promoting it, and getting it to this point, to chair the committee. It would be a far more effective committee were the mover of the motion to chair it.

Indeed, if members look at the history of this Parliament they will find that in almost every case the mover of the motion to set up a Select Committee has been the chairman. If they look further at the wider parliamentary field, they will see, for instance, the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons is chaired by a member of the Opposition and there appears to be no problem in that situation.

It is a non-partisan issue and quite frankly I believe better work will be done if this Select Committee were to be chaired by the mover of the motion.

In conclusion, I again thank the Minister and the Government for agreeing to set up a Select Committee and I believe it will prove to be a very worthwhile committee.

**MR COWAN (Merredin)** [9.31 p.m.]: May I just suggest to the members of this proposed Select Committee that if they do win a berth to Victoria the most appropriate time for them to leave would be in the first week of November next year!

The amendment before the House is a typical ploy. I have been here long enough to know that, on private members' day, when we have business

brought before the House by private members, the attitude of the Government is usually to invite the Opposition or the mover of the motion to accept an amendment to the motion which has wording different from that contained in the motion, but which in effect says precisely the same thing.

There is no question that this amendment, moved by the Minister, is worded in a similar manner to the motion. The only difference is that it will rely upon the evaluation and investigation that has already been made into the fires in the Eastern States, rather than allow this Select Committee, which I have no doubt will be established, to carry out that investigation itself. With that exception, the wording of the amendment means precisely the same as that of the motion.

We see this occur every time private members' business is dealt with in the House. The Government invites the Opposition to support something which says basically the same thing as the motion, but which is worded differently. Therefore, in other words, the Opposition ends up voting with the Government rather than the Government voting with the Opposition.

The problem with this amendment is that it does not bring into the Select Committee's investigations anything other than the very narrow concept of the areas that are represented by the members for Kalamunda, Darling Range, and Mundaring. Fires are not confined to a particular area of this State. We only have to cast back our minds to the time of cyclone "Alby" to see that the fires were not confined to the constituencies of the people I have just mentioned. They occurred right across the South-West Land Division; so why is it that the motion specifically excluded certain portions of the State which are prone to fires and now the amendment seeks to do precisely the same thing? Why cannot we include the knowledge and expertise of people outside these regions?

**Mr Stephens:** Don't ask difficult questions. You will not get an answer.

**Mr COWAN:** There is no reason that we cannot; that is why there will be no answer. Those people should have been included. The National Party believes they should have been included. Nevertheless, we shall support the amendment. Had the Minister and the member for Kalamunda had a real feeling for this issue, and had they cared for more than just their own particular areas—I understand they have to carry out certain actions to satisfy the members of their constituencies—



Mr Thompson: In what way does this amendment preclude the committee from looking at your electorate?

Mr COWAN: Has the member for Kalamunda been to my constituency?

Mr Thompson: Yes.

Mr COWAN: Well, it is excluded automatically by the first line.

Mr Thompson: In what way?

Mr COWAN: I would not suggest to the member for Kalamunda that Merredin, Narembeen, or Muntadgin happens to be in the urban fringe. I would not suggest to the member for Kalamunda that that area is heavily treed; so automatically it is excluded, and that is the point.

Mr Stephens: No wonder you called "Divide" earlier tonight. You did not know what you were doing.

Mr COWAN: I would like to know why we have to exclude these people who represent a vast number of volunteer fire brigades and who have the responsibility for fire control in their regions. It is no less a responsibility than the responsibility that is experienced by those volunteer fire brigades in the member for Kalamunda's electorate and in those areas which are designated by the Minister's amendment.

We support the amendment which has been moved, but we are very disappointed that the Government has been so small-minded as to exclude people who would have made a good contribution to this Select Committee.

**MR SPRIGGS** (Darling Range) [9.37 p.m.]: I thank the Government for accepting the suggestion to set up a Select Committee. I share some of the thoughts expressed by the member for Merredin in that perhaps the brief does exclude some areas of the State, but certainly, if I am a member of the committee, I shall be interested in all of the State and his area will not be excluded. Indeed, I am certain the terms of reference allow us to extend our inquiries into other areas and I am sure the committee will do that.

I endorse the remarks made by previous speakers as to the efficiency of the bushfires brigades and the officers of the Forests Department throughout the State. The Forests Department in Western Australia is second to none in Australia in terms of fire control and forest management. Unfortunately that department will be weakened in the future as a result of some of the decisions the Government intends to make.

Ever since the devastating fires which occurred in the 1950s in the region of Dwellingup, the Forests Department has been far more particular in

its control of burning off and, indeed, it has a very effective burning-off control system throughout the State. That is proved by the fact that during some of the drought seasons which have been experienced in the last four or five years, a severe fire has not occurred. However, that does not mean that such a fire will not occur in the future. There is a danger of that occurring this year as a result of the heavy rain which was experienced in the winter months in the metropolitan area from Wanneroo to Serpentine and Jarrahdale, rain which has resulted in a tremendous increase in the undergrowth in the areas on the fringe of the built-up metropolitan or urban areas. There could be a severe fire danger this year.

It is important that, as is set out in the motion, the Select Committee be able to investigate and examine the position in order that it may produce the best possible suggestions which will provide solutions for fire control in Western Australia.

Along with the member for Kalamunda, I am not particularly interested in the member for Merredin's suggestion that we go to Melbourne for the football final. I do not think that is really the idea behind the committee. However, there is every chance that, when the committee sits, it will find it necessary to go to the Eastern States, particularly when it has examined the reports which are available in that respect. The committee will probably want to obtain first-hand knowledge of the position from laymen, local authorities, police officers, the guy in the street, and people who were affected by the fires in the Eastern States. In arriving at a fire control system for our State, that sort of information could be far more beneficial than the information contained in the reports which we would be able to examine. I am not saying that the reports will not contain a great deal of information that is well worth examining and implementing. However, those reports will have a certain amount of departmental bias and the only real way in which to examine the problems that have occurred in the Eastern States as a result of those devastating fires is to go there and obtain the information from the people who were involved at ground level.

I thank the Government for accepting the suggestion to establish a Select Committee. If I am appointed a member of that committee I will certainly contribute as much as I am able.

Amendment put and passed.

*Motion, as Amended*

Question (motion, as amended) put and passed.

*Appointment of Select Committee*

**MR THOMPSON** (Kalamunda) [9.41 p.m.]: I move—

That the following members be appointed to serve on the Select Committee, together with the mover—The Member for Canning (Mr Bateman), the Member for Darling Range (Mr Spriggs), the Member for Gosnells (Mrs Henderson), and the Member for Mundaring (Mr Troy).

**MR CARR** (Geraldton—Minister for Local Government) [9.42 p.m.]: I rise to comment briefly on the remarks made earlier by the member for Kalamunda with regard to the chairmanship of the committee. I make it clear that it is the Government's understanding that when the committee meets on the first occasion and elects its chairman, it would be the expectation that the Government would hold the chairmanship of the committee.

**MR STEPHENS** (Stirling) [9.43 p.m.]: The motion which has been carried by this House and the nominations which have been arrived at, obviously by agreement between the Government and the Opposition, indicate clearly the city-orientated nature of both the Labor and Liberal Parties. Indeed, during the course of this debate I have not heard much from the National Country Party.

As mentioned by the member for Merredin, members will be aware that the amendment which has been passed confined the activities of the Select Committee virtually to city areas, urban fringe areas, and heavily treed areas, as opposed to the suggestion that the National Party put before the House for a more wide-ranging approach to the problem. When we put that forward we did not in any way reflect on the work of the Bush Fires Board or the country bushfire brigades. We acknowledged the sterling work they had done.

However, in an inquiry of this sort it would be fit and proper that it be broadened in the hope that, even in the areas where work is being done efficiently, there might be ways and means of further improving that efficiency.

Let us look at the proposed membership of the Select Committee. Members should tell me if there is one bona fide rural representative on the committee. That is why I made my remarks about the city-orientated thinking of the Liberal and Labor Parties.

I will pause for a moment to see whether any member can tell me whether any person to be elected to this Select Committee is a genuine rural-oriented or farmer-involved person.

Several members interjected.

**Mr STEPHENS**: The member for Kalamunda, who as we all know comes from a nominal country area, which is regarded by even the Labor Party as a city area—

**Mr Tonkin**: What do you mean by "even"? You sat behind the Government that made that decision.

**Mr Hassell**: Don't start him on that.

**Mr STEPHENS**: The National Party has indicated that the metropolitan electoral boundary should coincide with the boundary set by the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority.

I have made my point, and none of the interjections has given me a reason to alter my point of view. I am aware the Standing Orders provide for the calling of a ballot on this question, but it is not my intention to take advantage of that provision.

**MR CRANE** (Moore) [9.46 p.m.]: I must make some comments to allay the fears of the member for Stirling. Not necessarily all the brains come from the bush, only most of them. Just north of the Wanneroo townsite in my electorate there is the Caramar Caravan Park, which has caused a great deal of concern.

**The SPEAKER**: Order! The member cannot debate anything other than the motion before the Chair.

**Mr CRANE**: The park is populated by the sorts of people who live in the metropolitan area.

**The SPEAKER**: Order! The member must debate the motion before the Chair.

**Mr CRANE**: The experience of the people who will make up the membership of this Select Committee will ensure that a great amount of experience of people involved with the environment is available. Therefore, the people mentioned are more suitable to be appointed to the inquiry than are people from the wide open spaces.

This matter is of great concern to me. The people to be on this inquiry are concerned about closely settled houses near densely timbered areas, and the park to which I refer is an example of such an area.

I have every confidence in the people to be on the committee to carry out their investigations properly and come down with a sensible report because they are well versed in these matters.

Question put and passed.

**MR THOMPSON** (Kalamunda) [9.47 p.m.]: I move—

That the Committee have power to call for persons and papers, to sit on days over which

the House stands adjourned, to move from place to place, and to report on 15 March 1984.

Question put and passed.

#### **BILLS (4): RETURNED**

1. Electoral Amendment Bill (No. 3).
2. Shark Bay Solar Salt Industry Agreement Bill.
3. Offenders Probation and Parole Amendment Bill.
4. Technology Development Bill.

Bills returned from the Council without amendment.

#### **ROAD TRANSPORT: DANGEROUS GOODS**

##### *Council's Resolution: Assembly's Concurrence*

Message from the Council received and read requesting concurrence in the following resolution—

That whereas the Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Regulations 1983 that were made under the Explosives and Dangerous Goods Act 1961, as amended, and published in the *Government Gazette* on 20 September 1983 were disallowed by a resolution of the Legislative Council under section 36(2) of the Interpretation Act 1918, as amended, passed on 17 November 1983, it is hereby resolved under section 36(2A)(ii) of the latter Act that regulations that, subject to the amendments set out in the schedule to this resolution, are in the same form as the regulations so published are hereby substituted in place of the regulations so disallowed.

**MR GRILL** (Esperance-Dundas—Minister for Transport) [9.49 p.m.]: It is really with quite some reluctance that I intend to move a motion in regard to this matter because I moved a motion along similar lines only an hour or two ago.

**Mr Peter Jones**: Are we considering this message?

**The SPEAKER**: It is only a procedural matter.

**Mr GRILL**: It is appropriate that, when this House passes a motion along identical lines to that passed by the upper House, the upper House merely notes the motion passed by this House. It is not proper for some motion to come back down the line in this preemptory fashion.

I am told by the clerk that to have our affairs in some sort of order I need to move a motion at this time, which I think is totally improper for us to have to do at this stage. But to ensure this

measure goes through I am prepared to move the motion. I move—

That the Legislative Assembly concur in the resolution of the Legislative Council in respect of the Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Regulations 1983 made under the Explosives and Dangerous Goods Act 1961.

#### *Points of Order*

**Mr PETER JONES**: Can we be advised of the substance of the message and of any alteration to the original motion?

**Mr Tonkin**: You heard it, didn't you?

**Mr Grill**: We have already passed it, you donkey.

**Mr O'CONNOR**: On a further point of order, I indicate that the Minister in his discussion did not give the detail of the Council's message. Bearing in mind the message has just come to us, we have not had the opportunity to ascertain whether it is in the same terms as was originally sent to the Council. I request that we defer this matter until the Opposition can look at the message.

**Mr GRILL**: It is exactly the same motion.

**The SPEAKER**: For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Narrogin, I indicate that this message relates to a motion passed in the Legislative Council and has come to the Legislative Assembly for our concurrence. It is a procedural matter for the Minister to move a motion in response to the message. I pointed that out to him and he subsequently moved the procedural motion.

#### *Motion Resumed*

Question put and passed.

**MR GRILL** (Esperance-Dundas—Minister for Transport) [9.55 p.m.]: Here comes the piece that I really do not appreciate. I move—

That the Legislative Council be acquainted accordingly.

Question put and passed; the Legislative Council acquainted accordingly.

#### **ROAD TRAFFIC AMENDMENT BILL**

##### *Second Reading: Defeated*

Debate resumed from 9 November.

**MR CARR** (Geraldton—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) [9.56 p.m.]: I hope that the 30 minutes to handle this measure as agreed is shorter than the 30 minutes as agreed to handle the last measure with which we dealt.

I well understand the concern of the member for Stirling about this matter. I am sure he would not mind my indicating that he has approached me about it on a number of occasions. He has telephoned me about it, written to me on it, and conducted with me more corridor conferences about it than I have had with all other members in the Parliament over all the issues with which I have been acquainted in the time I have been a Minister.

I can understand his concern, and I can understand the situation of farmers wanting to help in the case of fires by using whatever machinery they have available to them.

As the Minister responsible for emergency services, I have an interest in fire-fighting matters and I appreciate the role played by farmers in fire fighting. I understand their general readiness to be involved in emergency-type situations. I make those comments in spite of my not being in charge of the Bush Fires Board, of which my colleague, the Minister for Lands and Surveys, is in charge.

As the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, I am responsible for traffic safety matters, and in that regard a different response is forthcoming from me and the Government as a whole. The Bill, if implemented, would have two major effects. I am not sure which of these is the main aim of the member for Stirling. It may be that both are his main aims.

The first is that the trailered vehicles referred to should not be subject to licensing provisions so that they could be used on roads without making any contribution to the maintenance of roads. The second is that these vehicles should not be subject to vehicle standards regulations such as those which relate to the provision of lights, mudguards, brakes, safety chains, etc. It is the safety issue on which this Bill should be appropriately considered in this House tonight.

The Bill founders because of the road safety issue. I quite readily acknowledge that there would be some merit in making it possible for farmers to respond readily to a fire situation by using their unlicensed vehicles if it were not for the safety issue. It is upon that issue I will concentrate my comments because it is important to realise that a fire-fighting trailer is a quite different implement from the farm implements referred to in the Act as it presently stands.

The Act refers to harvesters and other machinery which, because of the location of the farm, may need to be moved from one paddock across a road to another paddock. When that is done, the driver proceeds slowly and with caution, and does not cause a great deal of danger at all to

others using the road. That situation is different from the situation of a trailered vehicle driven quite likely at a high speed to a fire situation. Quite understandably, it could be driven by a person who is excited by the need to get as quickly as possible to the fire. Understandably also the vehicle could be proceeding with no lights along a smoke-filled road.

Mr Stephens: You wouldn't need lights in the day.

Mr CARR: If someone were driving a vehicle behind such a trailered, unlicensed vehicle in smoke, it would be handy for the vehicle behind to know that the trailered vehicle had lights or reflectors. This would assist any motorist who might encounter the vehicle in a fire situation. We should also consider the question of third party insurance should another motorist be involved in an accident with a trailer of this type.

Another point that concerns the Government is how big a precedent such a measure would create. We should note the situation with regard to people other than farmers, and also for emergency vehicles and fire fighting trailers, etc. We could reach a stage where the vehicles belonging to fire brigades and bushfire brigades may not be licensed. This could also apply to State Emergency Service vehicles and so on. It concerns me that a precedent would be established.

I was interested to find, when I had a staff member contact the Bush Fires Board concerning the safety aspect, that the board did not agree with this legislation.

Mr Stephens: That is incorrect and you know it.

Mr CARR: I asked one of my officers to approach the Bush Fires Board to seek a response to the Bill. The approach was made by telephone and it was reported to me that Mr Robley did not support the Bill.

Mr Stephens: I will explain it.

Mr CARR: That was the answer received as a result of an inquiry from my office.

Mr Stephens: Your office does not understand what this is about.

Mr CARR: Maybe, the member for Stirling knows better than anyone else.

The main reason the Government rejects this Bill is because of the road safety issue. I make it clear that the Commissioner of Police strongly opposed the Bill and recommended that the Government vigorously oppose it. The Government strongly supports the police in this State, and it supports them strongly in regard to traffic matters as well as other matters. They have a difficult

job and that is probably particularly true in regard to the traffic policemen. They do an excellent job in a difficult circumstance. It is no secret that we have the least bad road toll figures in Australia, and those figures are improving each year. In a situation where the commissioner strongly opposes this Bill and where the Government is committed to safety controls, we find ourselves unable to support the Bill.

The Government is not prepared to compromise on the issue of road safety. The Premier and other members of the Government have made it clear that we believe in consensus and compromise where possible. However, the question of road safety is not an issue upon which we are prepared to compromise, and I regret to advise the member for Stirling that however well-intentioned his motives may be, the Government is unable to support the Bill.

**MR HASSELL** (Cottesloe—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.04 p.m.]: The Opposition is of the view that this Bill represents a genuine attempt to correct an anomaly which should be corrected if a way can be found to do it; however, the Opposition has concluded that it should not support the present Bill because the method adopted does not deal with the issues of safety and third party liability which have been referred to by the Minister.

Just as the member for Stirling made many representations to the present Minister, when I was Minister for Police many representations were made to me on the same subject, particularly by the Hon. Tom Knight, the member for South Province, and by two or three other members. We sought to find a way to do it and I am sorry that in the time I was dealing with this matter we did not find a way to resolve it. Clearly, there is a safety issue and a third party liability issue.

The expectation would be that when the vehicles in question are being used on public roads they would often be heavily laden, and risks could arise for innocent people. It is only on those grounds that we find ourselves unable to support the legislation.

If the member for Stirling comes forward, or if the Government is able to come forward, with a solution to the problem that overcomes the problems of safety and of third party liability, he will find we are the first to give it our support.

**MR STEPHENS** (Stirling) [10.06 p.m.]: To say I am disappointed is an understatement. I emphasise at the outset that I, the National Party, and the people who, as a result of their representations, have brought this matter before the Parliament in the form of a Bill, are equally con-

cerned about road safety. Therefore, this item of safety becomes a subjective assessment.

The Minister referred to farm machinery being taken carefully along roads, and I point out to the House again that a fire trailer of the nature I am talking about is essentially the same as a boom spray which can be towed behind a vehicle as an agricultural implement.

**Mr Hassell**: I agree with that, but there are anomalies that should be looked at; it does not solve the problem you raise.

**Mr STEPHENS**: Yes, it does. The argument has been raised that it is dangerous. I asked the Minister to try to ascertain the accident statistics in relation to farm implements and their involvement in traffic accidents, and I was advised that no such statistics are kept. As a result of that it is a reasonable argument that the incidence of accidents has been so low that it is not necessary to keep them separately from other road traffic accidents. I do not think that farm machinery has been involved in traffic accidents to any great extent.

A boom spray is virtually identical to the unit I am advocating should be regarded as an agricultural implement. The only difference between the two implements is that the boom spray has a rig which can be folded while travelling and moved down to a parallel position for use. The firefighting equipment can be towed behind a vehicle. We are told by the Government and the Opposition that if it is a boom spray, it is safe enough to be taken on the road, but if it is a firefighting trailer it is not safe.

I refer to the point raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition about third party insurance. If a boom spray is attached to a licensed vehicle it is automatically covered by third party insurance. Therefore third party insurance is taken care of; and if we extend the definition of "agricultural implement" to include a trailer firefighting unit, third party insurance will be taken care of.

On the point of agricultural machinery, my understanding is that there is nothing to stop the police from introducing another regulation; and in fact they have introduced a regulation with regard to farm trailers. If they were not so stringent in their regulations most farmers, who are also members of bushfire brigades, to which they usually pay money to belong, would be happy to license firefighting units as farm trailers. Certain concessions are given, and the farmer is not required to install flashing lights and brakes on the unit, but there is a provision that the weight of the trailer cannot exceed a certain ratio to the towing vehicle. The same regulation could apply to firefighting trailer units, and this would overcome the

problem the Minister speaks about of rapid speed along the road. I indicated to the Minister that I understood those types of regulations would be axiomatic and no one with any degree of common sense would want to race vehicles on roads.

I gave the Minister a copy of an explanation put forward by the Plantagenet Shire Council in relation to the requirements for the operation of fire trailers during daylight hours. The Minister was requested to have his advisers look into the matter. The letter reads as follows—

- (1) The right to take a fire trailer unit of 2500 litres of water from property to property under the same ownership while harvesting is in progress.
- (2) Similar authority to apply for purposes of protective burning.
- (3) To have full road access if a fire is out of or threatens to get out of control.
- (4) To have the right to travel across or along a highway or main arterial road in rural areas in circumstances covered by (1) (2) (3).
- (5) The maximum speed limit to be 25 km p.h.
- (6) That personnel be permitted to ride on the trailer provided the above speeds are not exceeded, while fighting a fire or travelling in association with a fire out of control or believed likely to get out of control.
- (7) Riding on a fire trailer not to be permitted when travelling from site to site for fire prevention precautions such as harvesting etc.
- (8) The weight ratio between the towing vehicle and the fire trailer not to exceed the weight of the towing vehicle.
- (9) That when travelling to a fire out of control or believed to be likely to get out of control the distance travelled from the home base be not more than 50 kms.
- (10) The fitting of any special hitch or equipment that would restrict the use of the plant to one specific tractor or towing vehicle be avoided.

They are all sensible measures, and my understanding is, and the Minister may correct me if I am wrong, that the police would have the power to make regulations as they exist now with regard to firefighting units. This would overcome, to a reasonable degree in my opinion, all the aspects of safety. Just as we are concerned about safety, we are concerned about getting sufficient equipment

to a fire at reasonable speed so it can be handled efficiently.

I refer again to the stringent conditions applied to farm trailers. One point that I omitted is that farm trailers are excluded from travelling on main arterial roads, and for that reason many farmers refrain from licensing farm trailers because they cannot be used on arterial roads and their movement is restricted. The Minister mentioned that I had had numerous discussions with him on this subject. If the Police Department was prepared to vary the condition of a farm trailer licence so as to delete the exclusion from main arterial roads, I would have been happy and the people whom I represent would have been reasonably happy. They would not agree to that and that is the reason I moved to broaden the interpretation of an agricultural implement to include a trailer firefighting unit. That would overcome the problem and it would still be possible to make regulations.

The Minister said that one of the officers had telephoned John Robley of the Bush Fires Board to ascertain the board's opinion of this legislation. He had been told that the board was opposed to it. The Minister gave me that information and as it was a ministerial communication I sought his permission before approaching John Robley. I have since done that and spoken with him. My opening remark was that I had been told by the Minister that the board was opposed to the amendment in the Road Traffic Act which I was bringing before the House. He said that this was not so. He read a letter sent to the Commissioner of Police and that letter referred to a motorised firefighting unit, not a trailer firefighting unit. He is talking about something completely different and the adviser has misunderstood.

Mr Carr: My adviser telephoned the board on the specific issue in the Bill.

Mr STEPHENS: I also spoke to John Robley on the issue in the Bill and asked the reason that he had indicated to the Minister's adviser that the Bush Fire Board opposed my amendment. He said he had not. The board was opposed to allowing motorised firefighting units on the road without licences or for them to be regarded as agricultural implements. I am not speaking from secondhand knowledge. I have spoken directly with John Robley. I communicated that to the Minister yesterday and said there had been a misunderstanding. I suggested that his office check it out. I do not know whether it has done so.

I had a further conversation with Laurie Green, the 2IC of the board, and he repeated that John Robley had no objection to the amendment. He

also had no disagreement with it and wished me well. It is most regrettable that this misunderstanding has occurred.

I am not for one moment suggesting that the Minister has deliberately portrayed that, but his adviser has misunderstood the point and they have been at cross purposes. One was dealing with motorised units and the other with trailer firefighting units. I place on record that the Bush Fire Board does not oppose this amendment.

The Government's failure to accept this amendment could cause much damage in country areas, particularly in the South-West Land Division where many farmers are dependent on trailer firefighting units for fire protection. I hope that we do not have any disastrous fires between now and the next session of Parliament, fires which could cause loss of property and life. If that happens and it goes on record that firefighting units were within the vicinity, but could not be moved because of the head-in-the-sand attitude of the Government, supported by the Opposition, it will give no pleasure to the National Party to say, "We told you so". The people will suffer.

I urge the Minister to rethink the matter and look at it in the light of introducing regulations to tighten the controls so that the safety factor is taken care of. We are conscious of the need for safety and our persistence in pressing the Government on this matter indicates the grave concern expressed in the area I represent. I have not taken up this issue because I have a bug in my head. I support it as a farmer because I know the problems faced by local councils, local primary industry associations, and bushfire control officers who all support what I am trying to achieve.

The Premier recently indicated that he would employ a member of the PIA on his advisory staff. I am sorry that he does not already have one. I know this measure has the support of the PIA and perhaps if the Premier had an adviser from that department, this Bill may have had a different reception. I would like to think that the people advising the Minister will perhaps take some time to get into the bush and amongst the farmers to observe what is going on rather than make decisions from their ivory towers in the city. It is time we had more practical commonsense and fewer armchair experts.

I am terribly disappointed that the Government has failed to accept this measure and equally disappointed that the Opposition did not support it.

Question put and a division taken, with the following result—

		Ayes 2	
Mr Stephens		Mr Cowan	(Teller)
		Noes 42	
Mr Barnett	Mr Laurance		
Mr Bateman	Mr McIver		
Mr Bertram	Mr McNee		
Mr Bradshaw	Mr O'Connor		
Mr Bridge	Mr Old		
Mrs Buchanan	Mr Pearce		
Mr Terry Burke	Mr Read		
Mr Burkett	Mr D. L. Smith		
Mr Carr	Mr Spriggs		
Mr Court	Mr A. D. Taylor		
Mr Crane	Mr I. F. Taylor		
Mr Davies	Mr Thompson		
Mr Evans	Mr Tonkin		
Mr Grayden	Mr Trethowan		
Mr Grill	Mr Troy		
Mr Hassell	Mr Tubby		
Mrs Henderson	Mrs Watkins		
Mr Hodge	Mr Watt		
Mr Jamieson	Mr Williams		
Mr Peter Jones	Mr Wilson		
Mr Tom Jones	Mr Gordon Hill		(Teller)

Question thus negatived.

Bill defeated.

## AGRICULTURE: RURAL ADJUSTMENT AUTHORITY

### Select Committee: Standing Orders Suspension

**MR TONKIN** (Morley-Swan—Leader of the House) [10.25 p.m.]: I move without notice—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the following motion to be moved, without notice—

That, further to the resolution of the House agreed to this day appointing a Select Committee of this House to inquire into and report on the nature, location and extent of hardship within the Western Australian rural sector—

- (1) The Minister for Agriculture shall be discharged from service on the Committee; and
- (2) The Member for Mitchell (Mr D. L. Smith), the Member for Scarborough (Mr Burkett) and the Member for Mt. Marshall (Mr McNee) shall be added to the Committee.

The **SPEAKER**: I remind members that this motion requires the concurrence of an absolute majority.

Question put.

The **SPEAKER**: I have counted the House and, there being an absolute majority present with no dissentient voice, I declare the motion carried with the concurrence of an absolute majority.

Question thus passed.

#### *Membership of Committee*

**MR TONKIN** (Morley-Swan—Leader of the House) [10.26 p.m.]: I move—

That, further to the resolution of the House agreed to this day appointing a Select Committee of this House to inquire into and report on the nature, location and extent of hardship within the Western Australian rural sector—

- (1) The Minister for Agriculture shall be discharged from service on the Committee; and
- (2) The Member for Mitchell (Mr D. L. Smith), the Member for Scarborough (Mr Burkett) and the Member for Mt. Marshall (Mr McNee) shall be added to the Committee.

*In moving the motion I make it clear that it is to accommodate the Liberal Party which had no representative on the committee. I was approached by the Leader of the Opposition who pointed this out to me. The Government believes that it is not acceptable for a Select Committee of this House not to have a representative of the major Opposition party.*

The Opposition is very quick to make these requests, yet we recall that in the nine years it was in office, time and time again it refused to accept the idea of Select Committees. Today the Government has accepted three such committees. It is not good enough for the Opposition to say that the Government is starting a new pattern and the Opposition will reciprocate when in a position to do so.

The same situation occurred during 1971-74 when the Labor Party was in Government. I remember the then member for Mt. Marshall moving a motion relating to hire-purchase with respect to farmers. The Government of the day accepted that Select Committee and, in fact, the Tonkin Government accepted several motions

from the Opposition. However, when the conservatives came to power, they refused to have Select Committees.

**Mr Old**: The motion for a Select Committee came from the Minister for Agriculture.

**Mr TONKIN**: Yes, I know. But the Government has agreed to three Select Committees today which indicates that it is not afraid of scrutiny of its actions by the House.

**MR O'CONNOR** (Mt. Lawley—Leader of the Opposition) [10.28 p.m.]: The Select Committee was requested by the Minister for Agriculture and I thank the Leader of the House for his co-operation in including the member for Mt. Marshall. That action was taken at my request and it will not be forgotten.

**MR STEPHENS** (Stirling) [10.29 p.m.] I acknowledge that the Government has been very fair in the way it has dealt with propositions from the Opposition side of the House. I remember the 1971-74 situation when the Tonkin Government accommodated us. In contrast to that, of course, the Liberal Party ignored reasonable requests from the Labor Party when in Opposition and also ignored reasonable suggestions from the National Party.

We could mention the time that a Bill to improve the insurance cover of the people of Western Australia was introduced into the upper House by the National Party member, and the Government of the day said, "It's a good Bill. There is a need for it, and we support it, but we will oppose it because we will introduce it ourselves in 12 months' time." In that House of Review, every Liberal member opposed a measure which they acknowledged was a good one, just because it had not been introduced by the Government. The people of Western Australia were the sufferers because they were denied the added protection for 12 months.

I hope the Government keeps up its present attitude, because this type of consideration will only increase the respect of this Parliament in the eyes of the public. It will also increase the standing of the Labor Party, which will be to our disadvantage. However, I am more concerned about the respect of the Parliament in the eyes of the public.



A Parliament which is prepared to compromise and which is prepared to give consideration to the opposite point of view will definitely improve its image. I congratulate the Government, and I trust it will continue in this vein.

Government members: Hear, hear!

Question put and passed.

#### ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

**MR TONKIN** (Morley-Swan—Leader of the House) [10.30 p.m.]: Before moving the adjournment of the House, I indicate for the information of members that we will sit at 10.45 tomorrow morning and at 10.45 a.m. on 21 December. I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 10.31 p.m.*

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE****MINING: DIAMONDS***Equity Purchase: Taxpayer Liability*

2320. Mr PETER JONES, to the Premier:

- (1) Adverting to his answer to question 2279 of 1983, what were the criteria used by the Government in determining that L. R. Connell and Partners had "superior local knowledge" that set them apart from other financial advisers and institutions in Perth?
- (2) By whom was such an assessment and subsequent recommendation made?
- (3) Were any other consultants considered by the Government for retaining to act on behalf of the Government in the matter of the townsite obligations under the Diamond (Ashton Joint Venture) Agreement Act?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) The acceptability of L. R. Connell and Partners, including its superior local knowledge, was established through reports and other documentation and in early discussions with the firm.

In particular the high standard of advice was evident in the clarity and precision of information on a wide range of matters including aspects relating to the capital savings, infrastructure commitments, production and marketing of diamonds involved with the Argyle project.

The firm also recognised early, the entrepreneurial initiative and direction of the new Government and like any other highly motivated private company, made submissions to the Government in relation to business opportunities that would benefit the State.

Additionally, L. R. Connell and Partners is a Western Australian firm.

- (2) The Ministers and related departments involved with various aspects of the Argyle project.
- (3) The Government considered a number of firms as possible consultants on matters relating to the diamond (Ashton joint venture) agreement and decided to retain only one consultant following the completion of negotiations.

**L. R. CONNELL AND PARTNERS***Consultancy Arrangements: Assessment of Capacity*

2321. Mr PETER JONES, to the Premier:

- (1) Adverting to his answer to question 1945 of 17 November, in seeking to make the appointment referred to in part (1) of his answer, by what method or criteria are the various possible arrangements being assessed?
- (2) As the answer to part (2) advises benefit to the public according to expertise available, who, and by what method, is assessing the benefit to the taxpayer of employing L. R. Connell and Partners, or any other company or financial institution being considered for appointment to a consultancy?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) As indicated in answer to question 2197, the Government has and will continue to engage local and international consultants according to the particular needs of our State in the matter under consideration. In particular, local firms with superior commercial knowledge, expertise, and experience will be engaged by the State where possible. The contractual arrangements and fees involved will be based on prevailing commercial terms and conditions.
- (2) As was the case with the previous Government, the decision is made by the Government on the basis of departmental advice.

**MINING: DIAMONDS***Equity Purchase: Consultants*

2322. Mr PETER JONES, to the Premier:

- (1) On what date did L. R. Connell advise the Government that he would be able to purchase Northern Mining Corporation NL for the Government, following his discussions with Mr Peter Beckwith of Bond Corporation?
- (2) Was it:—
  - (a) before;
  - (b) after;
 15 July 1983?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) The line of inquiry explicit in the member's question is unclear. However, the member should now be aware that the firm L. R. Connell and

Partners was not engaged to act for or on behalf of the Government to negotiate the acquisition of Northern Mining Corporation NL.

- (2) (a) and (b) The Government formally commenced negotiations to acquire Northern Mining Corporation following verbal settlement of the matters relating to the variation to the Diamond (Ashton Joint Venture) Agreement Act on 14 September.

#### L. R. CONNELL AND PARTNERS

##### *Consultancy Arrangements: Recommendations and Fees*

2323. Mr PETER JONES, to the Premier:

- (1) Adverting to his answer to question 2278 of 1983, what was the quantum of fees payable to L. R. Connell and Partners for acting on behalf of the Government, up to the commencement of negotiations to acquire Northern Mining Corporation NL?
- (2) As asked in part (3) of question 2278 of 1983, who specifically recommended the retaining of L. R. Connell and Partners to act for the Government in the townsite waiver negotiations?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) I refer the member to the answer to question 2278 and, in particular, the following part of the reply—

In view of the urgent circumstances involved with progressing an early start to stage 2 of the Argyle project, the firm agreed to accept a consultancy with the Government on the basis that contractual arrangements and fees would be determined at a later date with due regard to their performance.

No fees have been paid or will be paid until detailed contractual arrangements have been finalized.

Nevertheless, it can be expected that the firm will be paid in line with prevailing commercial rates.

Fees payable to L. R. Connell and Partners in this matter ceased with the commencement of negotiations to acquire Northern Mining Corporation NL.

- (2) The retention of the firm L. R. Connell and Partners was decided by the Government on the recommendation of the Premier following the successful out-

come of negotiations in respect of variations to the Diamond (Ashton Joint Venture) Agreement Act.

#### MINING: DIAMONDS

##### *Equity Purchase: "Business Review Weekly"*

2354. Mr PETER JONES, to the Premier:

- (1) In promoting media support for the Governmental purchase of Northern Mining Corporation NL, did he, or any other person on behalf of him, provide information to Miss Jan Mayman, of *Business Review Weekly*?
- (2) If so, what was the substance of any information provided to Miss Mayman?
- (3) Were any documents, reports or similar items relating to the purchase of Northern Mining Corporation NL shown to, or given to, Miss Mayman?
- (4) Were any other persons associated with the media given the opportunity of sighting or perusing any documents, reports or similar items relating to the purchase and estimated income of Northern Mining Corporation NL?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) and (2) Information on the acquisition of Northern Mining was generally provided in response to requests from all members of the media.

In the case of the journalist to which the member refers, the purchase of Northern Mining Corporation was outlined in written answers to a set of questions from Ms Mayman, a copy of which is supplied to the member.

- (3) and (4) Reports, studies, and other documentation were made available on a confidential basis to all interested media representatives on the same basis as that provided to the Leader of the Opposition.

#### EDUCATION: PRE-SCHOOL

##### *Enrolments*

2359. Mr CLARKO, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) It is reported in the *Daily News* of the 25 November 1983 that he has stated: "about 16 500 5-year-olds were expected to enrol next year along with about

3 000 4-year-olds": What are the comparable figures for 1983?

- (2) The same article states: "Any WA child who turns five next year will be assured of a place in a pre-primary or pre-school centre, the State Government pledged today". Which 5-year-olds will be offered a place in 1984 who were denied a place in 1983?
- (3) (a) Will every parent of a 5-year-old child in Western Australia be assured of a place in a pre-primary or pre-school centre in 1984;
- (b) if not, will he specify those who will not?
- (4) Would he separately enumerate the number of 4-year-olds who attended—
  - (a) pre-primary;
  - (b) pre-school; and
  - (c) independent centres, in—
    - (i) 1981;
    - (ii) 1982;
    - (iii) 1983; and
    - (iv) estimated for 1984?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) These figures were in fact preliminary registrations for 1984.

Number of 5-year-olds attending (at 1st March in each year)

	1981	1982	1983	estimated 1984
pre-primary	12 824	13 725	14 791	15 500
pre-school	5 125	4 704	4 052	3 500
independent centres	1 109	1 342	1 667	1 800

- (2) Obviously, five-year-olds denied a place in 1983 will be six-year-olds accommodated in year 1 primary school in 1984.

In all previous years, five-year-olds have been denied places in areas of high population pressure, particularly the northern suburbs.

- (3) (a) and (b) Yes, this undertaking has been given.
- (4) (a) to (c) Number of 4-year-olds attending (at 1st March in each year).

	1981	1982	1983	estimated 1984
pre-primary	1 234	581	572	1 000
pre-school	2 983	2 357	3 104	4 000
independent centres	726	737	918	950

## EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

### *Employed Persons: Change in Numbers*

2372. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister for Employment and Administrative Services:

- (1) What has been the annual change in numbers of employed persons (civilian population 15 years of age and over) in each year from 1975 to 1983?
- (2) In relation to the State Government's pre-election commitment to assign to its State employment task force, "the primary target of 25 000 new jobs in the private and public sectors in Western Australia during Labor's first term of office . . .", are the new jobs referred to additional to those which would be expected to occur as a result of the natural growth of the economy?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) Prior to 1978, labour force employment figures were not available on a monthly basis. Since that time the growth in employment in those 12 months to June of each year are shown below—

Year	% change from June of previous year
1979 .....	— 0.2
1980 .....	+ 4.1
1981 .....	+ 3.3
1982 .....	+ 0.5
To June 1983 .....	— 1.0

- (2) Since the present Government took office almost 15 000 jobs have been created which represents more than significant progress towards creating 25 000 jobs during Labor's first three years of office.

## ANIMALS

### *Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Inc.): Grant*

2411. Mr HASSELL, to the Premier:

- (1) Did he undertake or indicate to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals that its annual grant would be increased in the current financial year?
- (2) Is it fact that the annual grant has remained as \$7 000?
- (3) Does he recall that urgent representations concerning the plight of the RSPCA were made to him two months ago?
- (4) Is it fact that no action has been taken on that matter since?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) and (4) The RSPCA has raised the question of its financial support from the Government and the matter is under review.

CSHA—2 x 4 br Single Detached Houses  
Aboriginal housing—Nil.

## MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT: OFFICES OF PROFIT

### *Joint Select Committee: Report*

2414. Mr JAMIESON, to the Premier:

- (1) In view of the recommendations made by the joint Select Committee of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly in its report on offices of profit of members of Parliament and members' contracts with the Crown, laid on the Tables of both the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly on Wednesday, 3 November 1982, will he indicate if any action is being taken to implement the report?
- (2) If no action has already been taken, will he have this report examined by the Attorney General with the purpose of making any recommendations as to legislation necessary to improve the present unclear position of members of this Parliament?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) and (2) The report of the joint Select Committee has been examined by the Crown Solicitor.  
The Attorney General is considering both the report and the Crown Solicitor's comments as a matter of priority. Legislation can be expected next year.

## HOUSING

### *Collie: Construction Programme*

2415. Mr TOM JONES, to the Minister for Housing:

Will he outline the State Housing Commission's building programme for Collie for the current year?

Mr WILSON replied:

The State Housing Commission's building programme for Collie for 1983-84 is—

## EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

### *Catchment Areas*

2416. Mr OLD, to the Minister for Employment and Administrative Services:

With reference to project No. 0613 in details of wage pause projects, would he please advise details of the particular rock water supply catchments and the work to be undertaken?

Mr PARKER replied:

With reference to wages pause programme project no. 0613 the work to be undertaken involves the extension of the water supply catchments by the construction of approximately 500 metres of concrete drains at each of the following localities: the Humps, Holt Rock, Purnta Rock, and King Rock.

## CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### *Herdsmen Lake: Argentine Ants*

2417. Mr OLD, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Adverting to question without notice on 1 December 1983 re Argentine ant control at Herdsmen Lake and referring to the Argentine ant control annual report, is he aware that—
  - (a) Herdsmen Lake is the last of the containment areas yet to be sprayed for complete eradication of Argentine ants;
  - (b) according to the report, work is scheduled to continue in the area during the 1983-84 spraying season;
  - (c) potential Argentine ant infestation of agricultural and horticultural products could jeopardise our export trade?
- (2) If "Yes", will he give an undertaking that he will ensure the eradication programme will continue as planned?
- (3) Will he advise the names of the members of the sub committee mentioned in his answer of 1 December?

Mr EVANS replied:

(1) (a) to (c). Yes.

(2) Yes. Subject to the technical working party report not identifying problems of which we are currently unaware.

(3) A technical working party will be composed of officers from—

Department of Agriculture  
World Wildlife Fund  
Metropolitan Region Planning Authority  
Metropolitan Water Authority  
Department of Conservation and Environment

The names of the officers are not yet available.

## HOUSING

### Country Areas

2418. Mr WATT, to the Minister for Housing:

(1) Would he please provide details of the number and the total value of houses and/or units to be built by the State Housing Commission in the 1983-84 Budget in the following towns:

- (a) Albany;
- (b) Bunbury;
- (c) Busselton;
- (d) Collie;
- (e) Geraldton;
- (f) Kalgoorlie?

(2) Would he also provide details of Government Employees' Housing Authority houses to be built this financial year in each of the same areas?

(3) In respect of (1) above, would he provide details of the size and type of houses to be built in Albany?

Mr WILSON replied:

(1)		CSHA		Aboriginal Housing		Total	
		No.	Est. Cost	No.	Est. Cost	No.	Est. Cost
	(a) Albany	Nil	Nil	9	219 460	9	219 460
	(b) Bunbury	54	1 481 780	4	193 406	58	1 675 186
	(c) Busselton	36	1 017 803	2	112 191	38	1 129 994
	(d) Collie	2	55 795	Nil	—	2	55 795
	(e) Geraldton	30	820 338	8	221 560	38	1 041 898
	(f) Kalgoorlie/ Boulder	32	1 181 612	4	177 680	36	1 359 292
(2)		No.		Est. Cost			
	(a) Albany	7	375 000				
	(b) Bunbury	6	295 000				
	(c) Busselton	Nil					
	(d) Collie	Nil					
	(e) Geraldton	13	600 000				
	(f) Kalgoorlie	18	935 000				
(3)	Type	Size					
	Single Detached House	14	bed room				
	Pensioner	81	bed room				

## WATER RESOURCES

### Accounts: Preparation

2419. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

(1) Are country accounts for yearly water rates and subsequently for consumption over a period prepared manually or by computer?

(2) In either case by simple instruction or by programming the computer accordingly, would he be prepared not to send out consumption accounts if the amount charged is obviously too small, compared with the cost of preparing the account, posting it by the Public Works Department, writing a cheque (loaded with Commonwealth tax and State stamp duty) and posting it by the consumer?

- (3) In cases described under (2) above, would he be prepared simply to debit the consumer's account with the charges and send out an account to the consumer when the amount due exceeds, say, \$5 to \$10?

Mr TONKIN replied:

- (1) At present country water accounts are prepared manually.
- (2) It would not be practical. No matter how small the actual consumption, every consumer has the right to object to the meter registration. The only advice of meter registration received by the consumer is as shown on his or her account, therefore, it is necessary to despatch all accounts regardless of their monetary value.
- (3) Where accounts are for amounts below certain levels, the consumer is advised that payment may be withheld until receipt of the next account.

#### STATE FINANCE

##### *Financial Institutions Duty: Local Authorities*

2420. Mr CLARKO, to the Treasurer:

Although an exception from the Financial Institutions Duty tax is specifically provided for local government authorities in the Act, would he advise in which circumstances these authorities will be liable to pay the tax; in particular, will it apply to their investment operations?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

Local government authorities will be eligible for an exempt account into which they may pay receipts other than from business undertakings. Investment of their normal revenues would not be considered to be business undertaking receipts.

#### STATE FINANCE

##### *Financial Institutions Duty: Lotteries Commission*

2421. Mr COURT, to the Treasurer:

Will the Lotteries Commission have to pay financial institutions duty on the funds it earns from investing money in short-term investments?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

The Lotteries Commission will only pay the duty on short-term investments through dealers who have to pay duty on their short-term liabilities and who pass the duty back to the commission. The commission will itself have an exempt account and, accordingly, the money it receives from short-term investments will itself not be dutiable.

#### STATE FINANCE

##### *Financial Institutions Duty: State Housing Commission*

2422. Mr COURT, to the Treasurer:

Will the State Housing Commission have to pay financial institutions duty when it deposits rent money with the Treasury?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

No.

#### STATE FINANCE

##### *Financial Institutions Duty: Telegraphic Transfers*

2423. Mr COURT, to the Treasurer:

When a Perth business uses a telegraphic transfer to pay for stock purchased in New South Wales, is it liable to pay financial institutions duty twice in Western Australia and once in New South Wales?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

I have written to the Premiers of New South Wales and Victoria requesting a double tax agreement which would make interstate telegraph transfers liable on the same basis as intrastate transfers and State taxation officers from New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia have already met to discuss this matter. I am hopeful that an agreement can be reached shortly which will mean that duty is payable only once and not in each State as would apply at present.

# WESTERN AUSTRALIAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

## *Lendings: Need*

2424. Mr COURT, to the Treasurer:

- (1) Do the major trading banks (including the Rural and Industries Bank) in Western Australia, have plenty of balance sheet capacity to increase their lendings to business?
- (2) Have trading banks lowered their security and lending guidelines to enable more loans to be made?
- (3) If "Yes", to (1) and (2), why is there an additional need for the Western Australian development corporation to provide funds for business in this State?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) and (2) These are matters for the banks themselves and the Reserve Bank of Australia.
- (3) I refer the member to the Second Reading Speech on the Western Australian Development Corporation Bill.

## MINING

### *Uranium: Discussions*

2425. Mr COURT, to the Premier:

Has he or the Deputy Premier held discussions with mining companies in the past month for the purpose of trying to establish a uranium mine in this State?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

No.

## WATER RESOURCES

### *Rates: Payment*

2426. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) For the 1983-84 financial year, after issuing the rate notices for Metropolitan Water Authority services (whether the services only included water or extended to sewerage or sewerage and drainage as well), how many consumers (in actual numbers and in percentage of the total number of consumers) choose to—
  - (a) pay for the full amount of the rate notice/assessment;
  - (b) pay one half and defer the other;
  - (c) pay one quarter and pay the balance in instalments;
  - (d) not respond at all?

- (2) What was the aggregate full amount of the rate notices/assessments in categories (a) to (d)?

Mr TONKIN replied:

		No. of Assessments	% of Total Assessments
(1)	(a)	195 112	56.5
	(b)	32 153	9.3
	(c)	23 280	6.7
	(d)	95 106	27.5
(2)	(a)	67 770 621	please see note
	(b)	20 761 304	
	(c)	13 024 490	
	(d)	32 941 132	

Note:—This category either did not respond or they paid an amount not applicable to either options 1, 2, or 3.

There are no statistics available on those customers who did not respond at all.

## WATER RESOURCES

### *Metropolitan Water Authority: Vehicle Fleet*

2427. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Has a vehicle pool yet been established, as was proposed for the second step of considerably reducing the cost of purchasing and maintenance of motor vehicles by the Metropolitan Water Authority?
- (2) If so, how does this pool operate?
- (3) What is the saving achieved or expected to be achieved during a full year by operating such a pool?

Mr TONKIN replied:

- (1) The vehicle pool at the Metropolitan Water Authority commenced operation on 24 October 1983.
- (2) Of 182 car type vehicles based at the Metropolitan Water Centre, approximately half have been placed in the pool. Officers requiring the use of a vehicle book them through the pool manager. The other head office vehicles not in the pool are either in constant use, e.g. meter readers, plumbing inspectors, or fitted with special equipment.
- (3) Because the pool has only been in operation for such a short time, it is not yet possible to quantify any savings. However, the data being recorded will identify surplus vehicles which will be disposed of.



**WATER RESOURCES: CATCHMENT AREAS***Inquiry: Submissions*

2428. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) How many submissions has the Western Australian Water Resources Council received in connection with its investigation into possible wider use of catchment areas?
- (2) Would he please describe the general tenor of these submissions?

Mr TONKIN replied:

- (1) Fourteen submissions have been received and advice has been received of two late submissions.
- (2) A brief summary of the submissions is—  
 two submissions opposed recreational access to domestic supply catchments;  
 two submissions proposed no changes;  
 three submissions discussed the cost, facilities and research requirements of recreational access;  
 one submission requested camping in the back areas of catchments;  
 six submissions requested boating and fishing access to the domestic supply reservoirs.

**WATER RESOURCES***Reservoirs: Aggregate Storage*

2429. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

When was the peak of the aggregate storage in the surface reservoirs servicing the Metropolitan Water Authority reached and what was the total volume of storage water?

Mr TONKIN replied:

The peak storage in the Metropolitan Water Authority's hills reservoirs for 1983 was reached on 18 October and was 306.812 million cubic metres.

**WATER RESOURCES AND SEWERAGE***Connections: New*

2430. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

Could he please show the recent tendency in the number of new water service

and sewerage connections by giving the figures for the first 10 months in 1983?

Mr TONKIN replied:

Metropolitan Area		
	Water Services	Sewerage Services
January	618	757
February	574	852
March	678	924
April	484	762
May	625	862
June	574	842
July	546	778
August	664	983
September	692	1 034
October	699	1 081
Country Area		
	3 222	1 900

**WATER RESOURCES***Plumbing Fittings: Approvals*

2431. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) During the first three months of the current financial year, how many new plumbing fitting items were approved for application in installations connected to Metropolitan Water Authority services?
- (2) During the above period, how many plumbing fittings and fixtures were tested by the Metropolitan Water Authority?
- (3) What were the estimated all-including costs involved by the Metropolitan Water Authority for the approval and testing services under (1) and (2)?
- (4) What was the total of fees and charges collected and/or due for the Metropolitan Water Authority's services under (1) and (2)?

Mr TONKIN replied:

- (1) 125.
- (2) 580 000 fittings were stamped. These were tested at a random frequency according to either the appropriate SAA code or criteria established under a reciprocal arrangement by the major Australian urban water authorities.
- (3) \$84 628.
- (4) \$76 620.

## PUBLIC WORKS: DEPARTMENT

### *Plumbing Fittings: Approvals*

2432. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) During the first three months of the current financial year how many new plumbing fitting items were approved for application in installations connected to Public Works Department services?
- (2) During the above period, how many plumbing fittings and fixtures were tested by the Public Works Department?
- (3) What were the estimated all-including costs involved by the Public Works Department for the approval and testing services under (1) and (2)?
- (4) What was the total of fees and charges collected and/or due for the Public Works Department's services under (1) and (2)?

Mr TONKIN replied:

- (1) Plumbing fittings approved by the Metropolitan Water Authority are automatically accepted for use in Public Works Department schemes and none is approved independently by the Public Works Department. The number approved by the Metropolitan Water Authority for the period in question was 125.

(2) to (4) Nil.

## WATER RESOURCES

### *Metropolitan Water Authority: Interest Credits*

2433. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

Could he please give the total amount of interest credited to the Metropolitan Water Authority's—

- (a) revenue accounts;
  - (b) cash accounts;
  - (c) depreciation accounts;
  - (d) any other accounts,
- during the 1982-83 financial year by the Treasury?

Mr TONKIN replied:

- (a) and (b) \$6 595 964 (separate figures not available);
- (c) \$6 469 202;
- (d) \$148 283.

## WATER RESOURCES

### *Metropolitan Water Authority: Three per cent Levy*

2434. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Is the three per cent levy payable by the Metropolitan Water Authority to the Treasury calculated on the full receipts of the previous financial year?
- (2) How is this levy payable (lump sum or instalments) and at what time(s)?
- (3) If the payments are due in instalments, are they paid as a straight out proportion of the total three per cent calculated under (1) above or are they debited and/or credited with interest rates?

Mr TONKIN replied:

- (1) No, excludes interest earned on capital funds raised in advance of requirements and on sinking funds.
- (2) Payable by lump sum at 30 June.
- (3) Not applicable.

## PUBLIC WORKS: DEPARTMENT

### *Salaries: Reduction*

2435. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Works:

How much is the total amount of saving to the Public Works Department including the whole engineering division and other parts of the Public Works Department caused by the reduction of salaries of higher grade public service officers—

- (a) during the financial year 1983-84;
- (b) for a full year?

Mr McIVER replied:

- (a) \$714 000;
- (b) \$883 200.

## WATER RESOURCES: METROPOLITAN WATER AUTHORITY

### *Salaries: Reduction*

2436. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister for Water Resources:

How much is the amount of saving to the Metropolitan Water Authority caused by the reduction of salaries of higher grade public service officers—

- (a) during the financial year 1983-84;
- (b) for a full year?

Mr TONKIN replied:

- (a) \$247 084;
- (b) \$305 913.

Mr PEARCE replied:

Pre-primary pupils .....	98.
Primary pupils .....	660.

## SHIPPING

### *Australian National Line: Contract*

2437. Mr MENSAROS, to the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

- (1) Have negotiations for a new freight contract between Australian National Line and Japanese steel mills been successfully concluded?
- (2) Has the *Australian Progress* been loaded at any Western Australian port during the last fortnight or is she idling around one of these ports?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) and (2) It is suggested that the member refer the above questions to the appropriate Minister(s).

## FUEL AND ENERGY

### *South Korea: Agreement*

2438. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister representing the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

- (1) Referring to question 2365 of 1 December, have any other States, as a consequence of this agreement, made specific arrangements for the supply of energy resources to South Korea?
- (2) If so, which States, and what energy resources have been so committed?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) I am unaware of any specific arrangements which have been made by other States as a consequence of the agreement with South Korea.
- (2) Not applicable.

## EDUCATION: PRIMARY SCHOOL

### *Bullcreek: Enrolment*

2439. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Education:

What is the anticipated enrolment figure for Bullcreek primary school at the beginning of the 1984 academic year?

## EDUCATION: PRE-SCHOOL

### *Centres: Enrolments*

2440. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Education:

What is the anticipated enrolment figure for each of the following pre-primary centres for the beginning of the 1984 school year—

- (a) Rostrata pre-primary;
- (b) Riverton pre-primary;
- (c) Willetton pre-primary;
- (d) Burrendah pre-primary; and
- (e) Ferndale pre-primary?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (a) 54;
- (b) 50;
- (c) 99;
- (d) 102;
- (e) 54.

## CONSUMER AFFAIRS

### *Collier Constructions Pty. Ltd.: Complaint*

2441. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Consumer Affairs:

When can Mr P. Murphy of 15 Turo Close, Willetton, expect an answer to his letters to him of 15 May/25 September 1983, concerning complaints he made against Collier Constructions Pty. Ltd?

Mr TONKIN replied:

The letter of 15 May 1983 received a reply dated 11 July 1983. The subsequent letter of 25 September 1983 was attended to, with Mr P. Murphy, on 5 December 1983. The matter is a complex one dating back to 1981.

Further advice will now be directed to Mr P. Murphy concerning this matter.

## **MINING: MINES DEPARTMENT**

### *Operations: Review*

2442. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

- (1) Referring to question 1910 of 9 November 1983, has the review of the internal operations of the Mines Department commenced?
- (2) If not, when is it expected that the review will begin?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) and (2) The Minister has nothing to add to the answer to question 1910.

## **LIQUOR: DISTILLERY**

### *Swan Valley: Financial Assistance*

2443. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Economic Development and Technology:

- (1) Have negotiations to determine the final detail concerning the financial assistance for the establishment of a distillery to service the needs of Swan Valley grape growers yet been completed?
- (2) If not, when is it anticipated that this agreement will be completed?
- (3) Has any interim assistance been provided to the Swan Valley grape growers to enable distillation of surplus fruit from the 1984 harvest?
- (4) If so, what is the nature of that assistance?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) and (2) Negotiations are continuing.
- (3) and (4) The Government is considering an appropriate arrangement following representations on behalf of the Swan Valley Grape Growers by the member for Mundaring.

## **MINING: COAL**

### *Griffin Coal Mining Co. Ltd.: Third Shift*

2444. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister representing the Minister for Mines, Fuel and Energy:

- (1) Referring to question 810 of 24 August has any progress been made in discussion between the Griffin Coal Mining Co. Ltd., and the State Energy Commission with respect to the introduction of a third shift in the Griffin coal operations at Collie?

- (2) If "No", when does the Minister expect the matter to be resolved?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) SECWA has sought further detailed information from Griffin.
- (2) Not applicable.

## **FUEL AND ENERGY: COAL**

### *Griffin Coal Mining Co Ltd.: Coleman-Teckman Report*

2445. Mr MacKINNON to the Minister representing the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

- (1) Referring to question 811 of 24 August, has any action to date been taken by the State Energy Commission, or the Government, as a consequence of the Coleman-Teckman engineering report?
- (2) If so, what action has been taken?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) and (2) As the member will know this matter is included amongst issues which are *sub judice*. The Minister does not intend to make comment on such matters.

## **EDUCATION: HIGH SCHOOL**

### *Bentley: Transport Arrangements*

2446. Mr JAMIESON, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is he aware that parents of children being bused at alternative high schools as the result of the close of Bentley high school have been informed that students will be required to pay 60 cents per day as from the beginning of the 1984 school year?
- (2) In view of the assurances to parents in the Wilson and surrounding areas that free transportation would be available for students to attend alternative high schools, will he review this departmental instruction?
- (3) Is he further aware that the number of buses servicing these areas are to be cut from four to two each morning and afternoon?
- (4) As the cost to parents having as many as four children attending high school by bus is likely to be an intolerable burden, if free transport is not able to be provided in 1984, will he have some form of

subsidy provided to families experiencing this form of hardship?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No. The assurance given in 1981 was that free transport would be provided for 1982 and 1983 only, and related to those students attending Bentley Senior High School at the time the senior college was established.
- (3) The allocation of buses to service an area is determined by the Metropolitan Transport Trust.
- (4) No. All children using MTT services are required to pay for bus transport to metropolitan secondary schools.

### INSURANCE

#### *State Government Insurance Office: Bunbury Land*

2447. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) What land and from whose ownership is proposed to be acquired in Bunbury by the State Government Insurance Office for the construction of an office block and an hotel?
- (2) Has agreement been reached?
- (3) If formal agreement has not been reached have negotiations taken place, and if so, between what parties?
- (4) What price has been agreed or proposed?
- (5) When has it been agreed or proposed the price will be paid, and on what terms?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) to (5) There is no such proposal currently before the State Government Insurance Office.

### INSURANCE

#### *State Government Insurance Office: Bunbury Land*

2448. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) In relation to the Government deal to acquire land in Bunbury through the State Government Insurance Office, was the State Government Insurance Office or the Government the initiator of the proposal?

(2) Has the State Government Insurance Office estimated the likely return on its investment?

(3) What is that estimate?

(4) Is the State Government Insurance Office management satisfied that the investment proposed will be economically advantageous to the State Government Insurance Office in its overall insurance and investment operation?

Mr GRILL replied:

(1) to (4) There is no such proposal currently before the State Government Insurance Office.

### MINISTERS OF THE CROWN

#### *Electronic Equipment: Installation*

2449. Mr PETER JONES, to the Premier:

- (1) Has any new computing, word-processing or other electronic equipment been—
  - (a) installed in his ministerial office; or
  - (b) purchased by any department or authority under his control since 19 February 1983?
- (2) If so, what is the nature of the equipment and its cost?
- (3) Was any of that equipment purchased from Mr W. J. Marron, or any company associated with him?
- (4) If so, what was that equipment and its value?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) and (2) The member's question is unclear as to precisely what equipment he refers. The purchase and upgrading of this type of equipment is an ongoing process subject to budgetary constraints.

Because of the time involved in collating such information I am not prepared to assign officers for these purposes. Should the member have something specific in mind he wants to pursue then he should provide me with further details and I will arrange for the necessary information to be supplied.

- (3) Not to my knowledge.
- (4) Not applicable.

## MINISTERS OF THE CROWN

*Electronic Equipment: Installation*

2450. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Employment and Administrative Services:

- (1) Has any new computing, word-processing or other electronic equipment been—
  - (a) installed in his ministerial office; or
  - (b) purchased by any department or authority under his control since 19 February 1983?
- (2) If so, what is the nature of that equipment and its cost?
- (3) Was any of that equipment purchased from Mr W. J. Marron, or any company associated with him?
- (4) If so, what was that equipment and its value?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (1) and (2) The member's question is unclear as to precisely what equipment he refers. The purchase and upgrading of this type of equipment is an ongoing process subject to budgetary constraints. Because of the time involved in collating such information I am not prepared to assign officers for these purposes. Should the member have something specific in mind he wants to pursue, he should provide me with further details and I will arrange for the necessary information to be supplied.
- (3) Not to my knowledge.
- (4) Not applicable.

## MINISTERS OF THE CROWN

*Electronic Equipment: Installation*

2451. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Economic Development and Technology:

- (1) Has any new computing, word-processing, or other electronic equipment been—
  - (a) installed in his ministerial office; or
  - (b) purchased by any department or authority under his control since 19 February 1983?
- (2) If so, what is the nature of that equipment and its cost?
- (3) Was any of that equipment purchased from Mr W. J. Marron, or any company associated with him?
- (4) If so, what was that equipment and its value?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) (a) No.
- (1) (b) and (2) Because of the time involved in collating such information, I am not prepared to assign officers for these purposes. Should the member have something specific in mind he wants to pursue, he should provide me with further details and I will arrange the necessary information to be supplied.
- (3) Not to my knowledge.
- (4) Not applicable.

## MINISTERS OF THE CROWN

*Electronic Equipment: Installation*

2452. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

- (1) Has any new computing, word-processing, or other electronic equipment been—
  - (a) installed in his ministerial office; or
  - (b) purchased by any department or authority under his control since 19 February 1983?
- (2) If so, what is the nature of that equipment and its cost?
- (3) Was any of that equipment purchased from Mr W. J. Marron, or any company associated with him?
- (4) If so, what was that equipment and its value?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) and (2) It is unclear precisely to what equipment the member is referring. As he would be aware the purchase and upgrading of office equipment is an ongoing process subject to the normal financial constraints. In view of the time involved in collating such information I am not prepared to assign officers for these purposes at this stage. However, should the member have something specific in mind he wants to pursue, he should provide this information to the Minister in writing and consideration will be given to providing the information.
- (3) Not to the Minister's knowledge.
- (4) Not applicable.

**FUEL AND ENERGY: GAS***North-West Shelf: Future, and Structure*

2453. Mr PETER JONES, to the Premier:

- (1) What discussions has he, or any of his Ministers, had with the North-West Shelf joint venturers in recent times, regarding the future of the project and its structure?
- (2) When were these discussions held?
- (3) What was the substance of any discussions?
- (4) What timetable has now been suggested as likely for the liquid natural gas stage of the project to commence construction, and possible date of first shipments to overseas customers?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) and (2) A meeting was held with the North-West Shelf joint venturers on 9 November to discuss the future of the LNG phase of the project.
- (3) The joint venturers outlined a modification of the October 1982 concept for restructuring the LNG phase of the project. I understand a Press statement is to be made on this matter by Woodside Petroleum Ltd. today.
- (4) The joint venturers are still aiming for first delivery of LNG by April 1988. No commitments have yet been made as to the date for commencement of construction specifically related to the LNG phase.

**LAND: ABORIGINES***Rights: Present Position*

2454. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister with Special Responsibility for Aboriginal Affairs:

- (1) Do Aboriginal people have undoubted rights to claim land occupied by their ancestors?
- (2) If so, for what reason does he consider this to be an acceptable position?

Mr WILSON replied:

- (1) and (2) The Government has announced a policy commitment to vest land currently reserved for the use and benefit of Aboriginal people and Department for Community Welfare reserves as land rights. Other than that, the whole question of Aboriginal rights to land is at present the subject of an inquiry being conducted by Paul Seaman,

QC. The member opposite should address any thoughts he may have on this issue to Mr Seaman so that the inquiry may have the benefit of the member's wisdom (if any).

**RAILWAYS: WESTRAIL***Bunbury Land: Compensation*

2455. Mr RUSHTON, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Is Westrail to be compensated for giving up 12 hectares of Bunbury inner-city real estate?
- (2) What financial arrangements are proposed for the release of this land and the development on the land?
- (3) Is it proposed that the present Bunbury railway station is to be removed in due course?
- (4) What are the detailed timing and financial arrangements for the release and development of this land?
- (5) When will the various functions of Westrail be transferred?
- (6) Is the western rail link through the port area to be abandoned?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) and (2) In general terms the moneys received from the release of the land will be applied toward the relocation of Westrail facilities at Picton. Exact details have yet to be worked out and are presently being considered by Cabinet.
- (3) No. A new passenger terminal is proposed about 2 km south of the existing site but the present station building will be retained because of its historical significance.
- (4) Details are yet to be finalised.
- (5) Plans are being prepared to make land available as required and timing of the transfer of Westrail functions will depend on the requirement to develop this land.
- (6) No. The existing north shore route will be retained but modified to service the CBH and oil depot rail sidings.

## HOSPITAL

### *Carnarvon Regional: Complaints*

2456. Mr LAURANCE, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Is he aware of complaints from patients of the Carnarvon regional hospital that staff levels are inadequate to cope with the number of patients requiring attention?
- (2) Will he investigate the position to see if staff levels for—
  - (a) doctors;
  - (b) paramedical services, such as physiotherapy;
  - (c) nurses,
 are adequate to cater effectively with the current demand?

Mr HODGE replied:

- (1) I have received no such complaints.
- (2) (a) to (c) Staffing levels have been set for 1983-84 based on the previous year's activity and to date there has been no apparent significant increase in workloads to indicate that staff increases have become mandatory.  
The hospital management team is currently reviewing the staffing needs and any submission made by the hospital will be carefully considered.

## RAILWAYS

### *Bunbury-Perth: Fast Rail Link*

2457. Mr RUSHTON, to the Minister for Transport:

Is the fast rail link announced by the Premier at Bunbury this week the same or similar to the *Prospector* type train committed by the O'Connor Government to be introduced ready to replace the old *Australind* train in 1986?

Mr GRILL replied:

I am not aware what the member means in his question as I understand the O'Connor Government was not tied to a *Prospector* type train but rather to providing an adequate train for the task. In fact, in December 1982 in a media statement the member said "While I have referred to a *Prospector*-type replacement being possible, I have no intention of committing the taxpayers of this State to that exact concept until all of

the options available have been properly evaluated."

Our Government is proposing the introduction of modern air-conditioned railcars on the Bunbury route which will reduce the journey time to approximately 2 hours.

## RAILWAYS

### *Electrification*

2458. Mr RUSHTON, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) What is the timing for the following development between Perth and/or Kwinana and/or Bunbury—
  - (a) rail electrification;
  - (b) a four-lane highway?
- (2) Is this timing any different from that of the O'Connor Government's proposal?

Mr GRILL replied:

- (1) (a) 1988-1994;
- (b) A dual carriageway already exists between Perth and Kwinana via the Freeway, Leach Highway, and Stock Road.

Attention is being given to other sections with higher traffic volumes and potential for growth which could be upgraded in the foreseeable future. These include the Mandurah bypass, Ennis Avenue, Dawesville, and Australind.

In particular, preliminary earthworks have already commenced for the Mandurah bypass in preparation for a bridge across the Peel Inlet. Also, duplication of the Ennis Avenue section of Bunbury Highway is planned to start in April 1984 and when completed will provide a dual carriageway all the way to Mandurah.

- (2) The timing for rail electrification relates to the stage when it will become viable in accordance with evaluations carried out by Westrail.

I am not aware that the O'Connor Government had a proposal based on a committed time-scale, whereas it is our Government's stated policy to electrify the Kwinana-Bunbury route when the project is viable.

The O'Connor Government had no plans for a four lane highway to Bunbury. Im-



portant sections of the Government's proposals will be completed in the near future and other sections will follow progressively.

## FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT

### *Contravention: Warnings and Summonses*

2459. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister representing the Minister for Industrial Relations:

In the last 12 months in respect of sections 21, 85, and 93 of the Factories and Shops Act—

- (a) how many warnings by inspectors have been given to traders in respect of breaches of the above;
- (b) how many summonses have been issued for those breaches;
- (c) how many summonses have been issued against directors of the companies involved?

Mr PARKER replied:

- (a) to (c) Statistics in relation to these matters are not maintained and therefore the information requested cannot be made available to the member.

## EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

### *Commonwealth Employment Programme: Funding*

2460. Mr BRADSHAW, to the Premier:

- (1) Did the Premier's department receive \$125 811 from the Commonwealth employment programme?
- (2) If so, how many will be employed and for how long?
- (3) If "Yes" to (1), in what capacity will the money be spent?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

- (1) The Department of the Premier and Cabinet received \$125 811 on a cost-sharing basis from the community employment programme. The department's contribution was \$53 875.
- (2) and (3) Five people are to be employed for 12 months in the women's interests division of the department.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### POLICE

#### *Port Hedland*

619. Mr HASSELL, to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:

- (1) Is he aware that the Police Department is proposing to move from Port Hedland to South Hedland the licensing section of that department?
- (2) Have representations been made to the Minister about that proposed move and what has been his response?
- (3) Is the Minister aware that there are five new and used car dealers and one caravan dealer who also has a car dealer's licence in Port Hedland and that there are no car or caravan dealers in South Hedland?
- (4) Is it correct that the only reason the licensing bureau is to be moved is that the police want to put computer links in the new police complex at South Hedland?
- (5) Is the Minister aware that the distance between Port Hedland and South Hedland is 20 kilometres and that the move will create a very considerable degree of inconvenience and cost to the businesses which are most directly affected in terms of volume in dealing with the department?

Mr CARR replied:

- (1) Yes, I am aware of the proposal.
- (2) Yes, I have received representations opposing the proposal. The proposal has in fact reached a very advanced stage. My understanding is that tenders have not only been called but also may well at this stage have closed. I am not sure of the exact details, but certainly tenders have been called.

Our response is to not agree to the representations to relocate it back in Port Hedland and it is therefore intended that the proposal will go ahead as part of an overall police complex at South Hedland.

- (3) It is acknowledged that more existing motor vehicle dealers are located in Port Hedland and that there are none actually in South Hedland although some vehicle dealers are situated in the light industrial area which is in fact closer to South Hedland than to Port Hedland.

Perhaps the most significant factor is that there is considerably more population in South Hedland than Port Hedland and this trend is continuing with the likelihood that South Hedland will grow in population and Port Hedland will decrease in population.

- (4) and (5) I indicate that this move is not specifically related to the computer link argument by which within a reasonably short time all drivers' licences and eventually, vehicle licences will go onto computer link. This process is under way, and will take place anyway irrespective of the location of the major police station at Hedland.

I make the point also to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that this proposal for the major police complex at South Hedland, including the court-house and so on, is in fact the result of long-term planning, planning which would have been well under way when he was Minister for Police and Prisons, although I do not say that in criticism of him. It is reasonable that most of the Police Department's facilities should be established in one location and the South Hedland location, on balance, seems to be the most appropriate place for that. I have received detailed advice from the commissioner which refers to the procedures which can be adopted for motor vehicle dealers to license vehicles in bulk in the case of new vehicles. In many cases where only a transfer of licence is involved it is not necessary to actually sight the vehicle and transfers can be done by mail.

## STOCK

### *Sheepskins: Disposal*

620. Mr TROY, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Has the Minister heard that thousands of merino sheepskins are being destroyed each year, and that they create a disposal problem?
- (2) Is the Government doing anything that would lead to prevention of this waste and to overcoming the disposal problem?

Mr EVANS replied:

- (1) and (2) It is a fact that every year, thousands of Western Australian sheepskins, which are a by-product of the slaughtering industry, are destroyed. This is either because they do not carry enough wool to justify fellmongering—removing the wool—or they are not of good enough quality to tan for leathermaking. It is also a fact that because they are classified by local authorities as an undesirable waste, they can present a disposal problem.

Merino skins are not well favoured for tanning because they are ribby—that is, they have areas of different thickness—the skin is usually thin; it can be fatty compared with the skins from other breeds; and often they tend to split.

However, if they could be suitably treated they could find alternative uses, with or without the short wool—for example in interior decorating.

The Government has allocated \$29 000 from the employment creation programme for a special project aimed at finding better and cheaper ways to treat these skins for less conventional uses.

The project will be carried out by the Department of Agriculture's food and technology research group, and will employ three people.

I expect to be able to report on the progress of this research once it is under way.

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS: DISPUTE

### *Electrical Trades Union: AC Electricians*

621. Mr PETER JONES, to the Minister for Works:

Given that he advised this House on a previous occasion that matters relating to the ETU strike were beyond his competence and responsibility, would he now advise whether or not the Press reports of yesterday's date, 6 December, which suggested there had been a direction from the Public Works Department—I do not mean specifically from the Minister—to the effect that work should not recommence on the Alexander Library, which is a Government building, a

Government public work being undertaken at the present time—

Mr Brian Burke: Who made this suggestion?

Mr PETER JONES: Would the Premier wait until I have finished my question?

Mr Brian Burke: I am just interested in who made the suggestion. You made it.

Mr PETER JONES: Given that the Press reported yesterday that a direction had been given from the Public Works Department—

Mr Brian Burke: The Press did not report that.

Mr PETER JONES: —that work should not commence, and that contractors had been advised not to recommence activities at the Alexander Library pending the outcome of a meeting to be held tomorrow I ask—

(1) Will the Minister now advise whether his earlier statement that the matter was not within the competence of himself or within his responsibility is correct?

(2) Was any indication, direction or advice given by the Public Works Department or any officer of the Government relative to these activities?

(3) If not, will he please now explain the relationship and the Government's attitude to work on public buildings paid for by the taxpayer, including the Alexander Library?

Mr McIVER replied:

(1) to (3) No direction was given. Officers of the Public Works Department held discussions with the contractors with my approval. Because of the delicate nature of the situation with the ETU we felt it would be wise to request—not direct—the contractors not to start their employees on the Alexander Library, a request with which they agreed. We will discuss the question of costs at a later stage.

Several members interjected.

Mr McIVER: The advice was given because we had a situation in which an organisation has been on strike and has cost the State a considerable amount of money, and we can see a conclusion in sight. I repeat what the Public Works Department said to them yesterday, that "You do not punch a man in the face when

you are going to extend the hand of friendship".

This matter has been going on for some time and we are very anxious, as are members opposite, to see an end to this dispute.

Mr Hassell: Very anxious to support the unions in breaking the law.

Mr McIVER: What would the know-all Deputy Leader of the Opposition do?

Mr Hassell: Some people want to work and you should be supporting them.

Mr Brian Burke: You would call them homosexuals probably. Condo the marvellous!

Mr McIVER: I would take the same action again. I trust from tomorrow's meeting—

Mr Peter Jones: You advised them not to work.

Mr McIVER: With the approval of the contractor. We negotiated with the contractor.

Mr Peter Jones: The Government's advice was not to work.

Mr McIVER: Because in my opinion it would have provoked—

Mr Brian Burke: The Government did not give any instruction or advice.

Mr Thompson: It sounds as though it did.

Mr McIVER: The Government did not.

Mr Peter Jones: He said they got advice.

Mr Brian Burke: He did not say that at all. You do not listen. You are deliberately trying to worsen an industrial dispute.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Darling Range to order. The House will come to order. The Minister is replying to a question.

Mr McIVER: I will put this in perspective for the benefit of members. The contractors were approached by officers of the Public Works Department to get their reaction about not starting their employees on the Alexander Library because we felt it would only provoke the present situation. We are doing all in our power to bring this strike to an end.

Mr Hassell: And make sure people do not do the work they are supposed to do and want to do.

Mr Brian Burke: Mr Nasty.

Mr McIVER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition would provoke them and have the whole of the State come to a halt. He knows nothing about industrial relations.

Mr Hassell: Supporting all the union thugs.

Mr McIVER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition should not start his jackboot tactics on me. He should not try to frighten me; he does not frighten me one scrap with his rubbish.

The SPEAKER: Order! I think the Minister is winding up his answer now.

Mr Brian Burke: He is winding up the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr McIVER: In conclusion, I repeat that it was not a direction. It was a sensible discussion between the contractors and the Public Works Department and I believe the men concerned accepted that when they knew the reasons. It is not our intention to provoke this strike. We want to see it end, as does everyone else in this State.

### "BUNBURY 2000"

#### *Implementation: Progress*

622. Mr D. L. SMITH, to the Premier:

Arising from the review conducted in Bunbury on Monday by State Cabinet of the progress towards the implementation of the "Bunbury 2000" development plan, can he now inform the House what progress has been made?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

I am very pleased to do so. After years of inactivity on the part of the Liberal-Country Party Government we can see now some of the fruits of an intelligent and serious policy of decentralisation and regional development.

Several members interjected.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The Opposition had nine years and the only thing that Bunbury did not lose was the Post Office.

There is no doubt that though "Bunbury 2000" was well received when we unveiled it last year there were those who were sceptical about our ability and will-

ingness in Government to make it a reality. This week we have shown that we are willing and able to deliver.

Mr MacKinnon interjected.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: Members opposite had nine years. What did the former Government do in Bunbury? It did not even widen the road.

Mr MacKinnon: We had a growth rate of population which you are not even predicting will be greater under your proposals.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BRIAN BURKE: As far as I know nine years of Liberal Government achieved only one thing in Bunbury—the loss of the two seats the then Government held.

This is the record so far—members opposite should sit and be enlightened—with the implementation of "Bunbury 2000"—

(1) The establishment of the promised south-west development authority under the dynamic directorship of the former Mayor of Bunbury, Dr Ernie Manea.

(2) Production by the authority of a detailed regional plan and objectives including a target population for the region of 200 000.

Does not that hurt members opposite; the party of inactivity—the party of "gunnas"? Pretty soon, judging by the way they are looking after their constituencies there will not be enough people living in Narrogin to support a member even on the malapportioned basis on which members opposite depend. To return to the Government's record—

(3) A Government commitment to relocate the Bunbury railway marshalling yards that have been a barrier for many years to the city's development, releasing prime land for redevelopment.

Why did not members opposite do that in their nine years in Government? They are so smart; they should tell us why they did not do it. They had nine years and we have done it in nine months.

Mr McNee: You have done more damage in nine months than we did in nine years.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: Instead of running around the place bashing homosexuals and convicting the unemployed of being dole bludgers why did not the previous Government shift the marshalling yards? To return to the Government's record—

- (4) Approval in principle for the construction of a 12-storey \$17 million office tower and hotel complex in the city centre.
- (5) Plans for high-class tourist facilities and hotels throughout the south-west.
- (6) A Government building construction programme.
- (7) The transfer of Government functions to Bunbury.

Several members interjected.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: Members opposite can squeal. They had nine years, and what did they achieve?

Mr Peter Jones: It seemed like nine years to you.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: It seemed like 90 years to us if the member for Narrogin wants to know the truth. What did his Government achieve in nine years? Talk about Dr Dolittle! It is good that the Opposition learns what is happening in Bunbury because it is not likely to have a member down there for a few years. To continue with the record—

- (8) Advanced trials to cut the time of the railway journey between Bunbury and Perth from 3¼ hours to 2 hours.

What do the 14 shadow Ministers for Transport have to say about that?

Mr Laurance: What about the deficit?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: The only thing the Opposition achieved in transport policy when in Government was to close the Fremantle-Perth passenger service. Talk about negative! They should be ashamed of themselves. To continue—

- (9) Planning and preparatory work for a four-lane dual carriageway between Bunbury and Perth has been completed.
- (10) A commitment to the establishment of a tertiary education facility in Bunbury.

Where was the previous Government going to put that facility? Surely mem-

bers opposite have not forgotten. We stick by our commitments. Where were members opposite going to put the college of advanced education?

Mr Laurance: Where are you going to put it?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: In Bunbury; that has been announced. I know it hurts members opposite to read the *South Western Times* these days but it will do them good. Members opposite had nine years; where were they going to put the college? What have they been struck mute about now?

Mr Grill: Don't forget the reopening of the Bokal-Bowelling railway line.

Mr Tonkin: And the Mundijong station.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: That was in line with the previous Government's policy of "close everything up and turn out the lights". That was another line that was closed down.

Mr Laurance: What about the deficit of \$70 million?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: All I know of is the deficit members opposite left us when we came into office. I know this cabal of Communists in the Public Service along with the Communists from the CWA was deliberately tricking the previous Government about the employment grants. But when we went into Government the same Under Treasurer who served the previous Government faithfully and on whom it lavished praise said, "You are looking at a deficit in a short time of \$30 million". We said, "We have only been here a week. Do not say we have spent so much in a week".

Mr Laurance: What about the Westrail deficit this year?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: We will answer for that in due course. I am interested in the deficit the previous Government left us and which we are fixing up.

In summary, "Bunbury 2000" is an aggressive development strategy directed towards creating an alternative urban capital in Western Australia and accelerating the social and economic development of the entire south-west region. Its success is important to the whole State. The member for Albany should take that on board. Mealy-mouthed on local television, he whinged and said Albany was not getting much,

and the member for Narrogin says Narrogin is not getting much. Members opposite have the psychology of it wrong; people are clapping their hands with glee at the success of the strategy and they are saying, "We want to be next".

Several members interjected.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: That is the broad approach.

Mr Stephens: Is there any truth to the statement you are now working on "Albany 3000"?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: No, we are working on Albany 1986, if the member wants to know the truth. It is coming along quite nicely. In conclusion, it is clear that if the broad approach adopted for "Bunbury 2000" works, it will be a model for the promotion of regional development throughout the State using the same successful technique of building on a region's natural advantages.

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS: DISPUTE

### *Electrical Trades Union: AC Electrics*

623. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Works:

In relation to the Alexander Library and the approaches to contractors that he spoke of recently, I ask—

- (1) What undertakings were given to the contractors relating to the costs involved of not working for those days?
- (2) What undertakings have been given to the unions relating to the work lost?
- (3) What undertakings will be given to protect those employers and employees who want to work?

Mr McIVER replied:

- (1) to (3) The costs will be negotiated, but because of the length of the question and for the sake of accuracy I request the member to place it on notice.

Several members interjected.

## MINISTERS OF THE CROWN: FEDERAL

### *Support Staff: Liberal Party Policy*

624. Mr BURKETT, to the Premier:

Is he aware that it is the policy of a future Federal Liberal-National Party Government to strengthen substantially the politically-appointed support staff of Ministers, as outlined in a statement—

The SPEAKER: Order! Unless the question relates to one of the Premier's portfolios, or concerns his Government, I will have to rule it out of order.

Mr BURKETT: It does, Mr Speaker. This was outlined in a statement by one of the Federal Liberal Party's leading strategists, Dr Jim Carlton. I ask—

Is this the policy of the State Government and the Liberal-National Party Opposition in this State?

Mr BRIAN BURKE replied:

I think members of the Opposition in this place would have been absolutely shocked—

Mr Bryce: Ready to condemn.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: —to see in this national newspaper the encouragement of people to believe that the Liberal Party intended to bolster the ministerial staff complement of its Ministers.

Mr Laurance: Why don't you support the mining of uranium at Yeelirrie, instead of supporting South Australian uranium?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I cannot believe it is true. We seem to be developing in this State—

Mr Laurance: What about doing something for this State? What about getting on with the job? You sit here every afternoon criticising the Opposition instead of running the State. Why can't you run the State? What about getting some development going and creating jobs? You have a jobs programme, but not one person has been employed under it.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gascoyne will come to order.

Mr Laurance: I certainly will, Mr Speaker.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: This tetchiness of the member for Gascoyne is very surprising.

Mr Laurance: Run the State.

Mr Bryce: He let his mask slip.

Mr Laurance: All we hear from the Government are Dorothy Dix questions about what the Opposition is doing. What is the Government doing to run the State?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: We are interested in what the Opposition is doing. We like to encourage it.

Mr Laurance: I know you are; that is all you are interested in. You are paranoid about it.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: Everybody is interested in the contradictions within the member's party.

Mr Laurance: What about some jobs? What about some uranium for this State? You spend your whole time trying to get a development programme off the ground in South Australia. That is what you have done for Western Australia.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I think the credibility of the Opposition is of paramount importance to the public of this State, and I am about to demonstrate that this Opposition has very little credibility.

Mr Laurance: Your performance is more important than that.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: I know that is a matter of some concern to the member for Gascoyne.

Mr Laurance: A Government that nitpicks does not have much credibility, either. What about getting on with the job?

Mr BRIAN BURKE: This is not nitpicking.

Mr Laurance: Yes it is. You are parading there, while people are waiting for jobs.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: This touches on a subject which has preoccupied the Opposition for months.

Mr Laurance: What about getting on with the job?

The SPEAKER: Order! I have asked the member for Gascoyne on one occasion to cease interjecting while the Premier answers the question. This is the second time.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: This is a subject on which the Opposition has dwelt for months, and it is of paramount importance that the people of this State know that this State Opposition is out of step with every right-thinking branch of its own party in the country.

My answer to the question asked by the member for Scarborough is as follows—

Yes, I am aware of the policy announcement which appeared on page 2 of yesterday's *The Australian*.

It has been the practice of the Western Australian Government to appoint a number of specialist ministerial advisers and officers.

The practice of employing ministerial staff is well established under both Liberal-NCP and Labor Governments, in the Commonwealth and in other States.

The Government believes that in a modern and complex society it should have available to it the widest possible range of advice and experience, including support from individuals with an appreciation of the background to the formulation of Government policy and the interrelationships and sensitivities across ministerial portfolios.

In appointing ministerial staff on contract to the Premier, the Government fully acknowledges the right of future Governments to appoint different sources of advice and research assistance and to terminate existing contracts at the end of the Government's term of office, should they choose to do so.

I pause and ask the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to give an unequivocal commitment—

Mr Laurance: We will ask the questions; you just get on with the answers.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: —if and when the Opposition return to Government that they will not employ ministerial advisers. Here is his chance. He has been trumpeting for months.

Mr Laurance: Hopefully we will be concentrating on running the State.

Several members interjected.

Mr BRIAN BURKE: In the still and quiet of the lightning interjection of the member for Gascoyne, what does the Deputy Leader of the Opposition have to say? It is amazing; all we are asking him to do is to back up what he has been saying for months. He has been criticising our advisers.

The State Opposition while being trenchant in its criticism of the appoint-

ment of specialist staff to the Government, is remarkably coy about whether it would be prepared to appoint politically motivated advisers in the same surreptitious way as it did when last in Government.

Repeated challenges to the Opposition to state whether it would appoint advisers have been met with stony silence.

However, I suspect that there is no real conflict between Federal Liberal Party policy and the State Liberal Party because the State party would appoint political advisers if it was in Government, despite its hypocritical ravings at the moment.

#### ROADS

##### *"Jobs on Local Roads" Programme: Number Employed*

625. Mr LAURANCE, to the Minister for Employment and Administrative Services:

Can he indicate to this Parliament when it is likely that the first person is to be employed under the "jobs on local roads" scheme announced jointly by the Federal and State Governments some seven months ago?

Mr PARKER replied:

Under the job creation programmes sponsored by this Government in co-operation with the Commonwealth Government—both the wages pause programme and the community employment programmes—the situation now is that well over 1 500 people who were not previously employed are now employed.

Several members interjected.

Mr PARKER: How many times must the member for Gascoyne be told not to interject? Over 1 500 people who were not previously employed have been employed. Some of those people have been employed on schemes associated with roads, put forward by councils. The member for Gascoyne appears to have a fetish about the "jobs on local roads" programme. I have advised the member for Gascoyne of the situation on many occasions. I have answered many questions as to the position, and I can assume only that he is deliberately saying these things which are untrue because he knows what the truth is.

Several members interjected.

Mr PARKER: If he does not want to reveal the truth to the House I suggest he shuts up.

Several members interjected.