

and we should present those views strongly. However, we should on all occasions be willing to produce arguments rather than diatribe and be willing to listen to the other point of view.

To members of the Opposition parties I say that, having been a student of the subject for many years, I believe that conservatism is a plausible philosophy. I happen to think it is totally and utterly flawed, but I understand why individuals believe in it and will continue to do so throughout human history. It is a mistaken belief but I respect the integrity of members opposite who hold such views. I hope they will present arguments for conservatism instead of diatribe and I shall enter into the spirit of debate in this Parliament in respect of the divisions between the Opposition's philosophy and the Government's philosophy.

[Applause.]

MR NALDER (Narrogin) [3.07 p.m.]: Firstly, I add my congratulations to you, Mr Speaker, on your election as Speaker of this House. I am conscious of the importance of your position and I trust you will find your time in the Chair both fulfilling and rewarding.

I also acknowledge the work done by my predecessor in the electorate of Narrogin, Hon. P. V. Jones. He was a long serving member of Cabinet under the previous Government and in that position he served the State and the Parliament well.

In my opening address to this Parliament, I would like to focus the attention of members on the current economic crisis and the balance of payments deficit and to indicate the catastrophic effect they are having not only on Western Australia but also on the nation as a whole. I shall refer to what I believe are some of the basic causes of the problem and how we as a Parliament can, if we have the purpose of mind and intent, instigate some of the remedial action necessary to get this country back on the road.

I am sure most members will be aware that the majority of our export earning income is derived from the overseas sales of the products of primary industries. I ask members to look further than just agriculture and to consider also the mining, fishing, and timber industries. These industries make up 78 per cent of our total export earnings and that is evidence of the importance of these industries and how their progress is vital to the economic growth of this country.

One does not have to be an economic genius to realise that unless a sufficient margin of profit is made on the amount of capital invested industry very soon will close down, or it will run into severe, financial hardship that can cause many more far-reaching problems in the community at large. That is the situation we have on our hands at the moment and unless some more positive action is taken immediately, what some people are calling a cyclical trough will become an increasingly deeper pit and that could become bottomless. Any depression or recession which reaches that sort of magnitude can take decades from which to recover.

So what are the problems to which I refer? We have heard them so often in the past 12 months but they bear repeating: They include high interest rates, fuel prices and wages. These factors have made the input cost in production too high for the returns received and have subsequently affected all primary industries, and in particular agriculture.

Fertiliser is another substantial input cost to agriculture. The cost of basic superphosphate at the metropolitan works is \$14.65 per tonne.

Added to that figure is the Government bounty of \$12 per tonne. I believe the bounty was introduced, not only to ease the initial purchase price of the product but also to encourage people to use more of it in our deficient soils.

I ask members to consider for a moment the percentage of the bounty today compared with that of 10 or 20 odd years ago. In the early 1970s superphosphate cost \$14.80 per tonne, and the bounty was still \$12, or 81 per cent. In the 1960s the purchase price was \$16.40 and the bounty was \$6, which was 36 per cent. Today that percentage of bounty is only 10.5 per cent.

This demonstrates the rapid increase in costs, an increase which has tended to make people take short cuts. To make that budget look better for the bank it is extremely easy to halve the superphosphate bill. If farming properties have a good superphosphate history, and have developed what is known as a superphosphate bank in the soil, in the short term this does not have too great an effect on pasture production. But on some properties this lack of fertiliser on the pasture has continued for far too long and productivity is starting to drop far below what can be attributed to seasonal conditions.

Productivity is another of the points I would like to touch on briefly. Productivity relates to the amount of work done for the wages paid. I am of the opinion that over the past decade the productivity of the work force has been declining rapidly.

It appears to me that everybody believes he has a right to a job, and in a buoyant economy so he should. But do people consider the employer? One has only to consider the different attitudes between Australia and the United States to see why we have a problem here. There are union demands and interference—the greed of the people who want more for doing less.

How long can that continue? How long can it be tolerated? Let us consider the Public Service and the Easter break. There was a time when Easter was a religious festival and people had a holiday from Good Friday to Easter Monday. Today many, but not all, have Tuesday off as well. For what reason, I ask?

These trends tend to snowball in the community, and I am convinced it is part of the inherent problem we face in all industries—there should be a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. There is an age-old philosophy, "When you are asked to walk a mile, then walk two." That just does not happen today.

Last week I saw in an article in the daily Press that Anzac Day in 1987 will fall on a Saturday. Apparently we are having Monday off as well. When will it all stop?

One of the elders of our political party often states that we must keep the farm in the family and the family on the farm. I believe it is vitally important for our total economy that this happen.

Recently the Federal Minister for Primary Industry recognised the value of the farming family when he stated that the corporate sector will never take over the family farm because who would work so hard, for so long, for so little return? In some aspects he is probably right. But for how long can it or will it continue? The Government of the day needs to restimulate interest in the job and give incentives, all of which will create more productivity, and further down the line create more jobs.

I am conscious of what is being done to date with the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation with regard to drought relief, interest rate assistance, special carry-on finance, and

the household support scheme. I commend the Government for what it has attempted to do, but is it enough?

I have heard it said that many of the farmer's financial ills are self-inflicted as a result of bad decisions, and in a very few cases this is correct. But many of those being lost to the industry are our better and more progressive farmers. Some accepted better advice or developed the Henry Schapper syndrome to get big or to get out. They did both. They got big and then got out.

With interest rates at 10 to 12 per cent and average seasons, figures were encouraging and the economics quite sound to purchase more property. But jump the interest rates to 20 per cent plus, throw in a couple of droughts and a frost, and that creates a different picture. What do you have? More broke cockies.

That then raises the frost issue. There is drought aid, which covers the obvious, but I believe that assistance should be broadened to cover crops which are frost affected. Some of my learned colleagues may not be aware that just one frost in the vital flowering stage of any crop can render it completely useless. It may be the best looking crop in the district, having everything just right—rain, sun, fertiliser, and so on—but just one cold night and it is ruined. A frost can be just as economically disastrous as a drought.

Some farmers in my electorate have been affected for the last three consecutive years. The criteria for eligibility for some of the previously mentioned schemes are too tight. A lot depends on the viability of the applicant, and that viability depends largely on the value of his assets. Under current market forces, depressed and deflated land values should not be used as a basis for viability. With the exception of extreme cases more assistance should be given to those in need.

A classic example of the change in land values and its effects is that of an applicant to RAFCO recently who was told to obtain his finance from a commercial bank because he had a big enough equity in his own property and RAFCO was only a last resort lender. Because that finance was not available commercially, a suggested revaluation of the property was undertaken by the Valuer General's Office. After resubmitting his application to RAFCO he was told that his equity had dropped to such an extent that he was no longer viable. And all this was in a matter of days!

Also the assets test has created more than its share of problems for farming families. I am aware that this is a Federal Government responsibility, but the State Government could help by allowing the transfer of land within farming families free of stamp duty. This would be a very big incentive, and it would assist eligible people to obtain the old age pension without putting their family properties under further debt and at risk. I appeal to the Premier to give this matter very serious consideration.

The interest rates topic is probably more complex than any of the other issues I have raised, but unless interest rates drop to a more realistic figure, then the chance of any farmers remaining viable in the future will be questionable. The finance companies and the banks have been making fortunes out of people going broke.

Just two weeks ago the Western Australian R & I Bank announced a record profit for the year of over \$26 million. None of this record profit helped our balance of payments or our overseas trade.

I would like to use the example of one of my constituents who is in the process of selling all his assets at the present moment. This example shows how easy it has been for farming people to fall into the trap of borrowing large amounts of money. Being only a very small land-holder, he leased a nearby farm, as well as sharecropping in a neighbouring district. The crops looked so good that year that he decided he needed a new header for the harvest.

The price of the header was \$115 000 and the finance company terms were no repayments for the first year, and then seven years at \$40 000 each. So for a \$115 000 machine, the total repayment was \$280 000.

Year one was marvellous; the farmer took over 1 200 tonnes of wheat to Co-operative Bulk Handling from his sharecropping programme. For year two he budgeted on 1 000 tonnes of wheat from the same acreage sown. The only problem was that he harvested 120 tonnes; just one-tenth of the previous year's crop. So he has become just another statistic that high interest rates, coupled with bad seasons, has laid to rest.

Another area which needs to be attended to with much haste is the provision of adequate water supplies for the water deficient areas of the State.

Yesterday in his maiden speech the member for Mt Marshall spent some time talking about the necessity for adequate water supplies, the development of further storage facilities, and the extension of water schemes to these areas. This will help alleviate most of the additional burdens that country people have to bear. Providing adequate water for household purposes and for livestock in rural areas is more important than being able to water lawns and gardens anywhere. Having adequate water is a necessity of life, no luxury; and it may encourage people to stay in the more remote areas.

Because of the drift to the cities on the coastal strip, the loss of population in inland centres also has a big impact on small businesses that service these areas. Their future viability is at risk, because we should all know that it takes approximately 1 000 people to allow a grocer, a butcher, or a baker, to remain viable, and as the population in these areas declines, some small towns could disappear altogether and that would be disastrous for the State. Purely from a point of national security we need to keep as wide a spread of people as possible. So let us encourage people to stay put, let us create incentives and give encouragement, and assist all the small businesses as well. It is far easier to subsidise people who are probably third or fourth generation in a particular area than, at some later date, have to pay people to live where they do not want to go.

Mr Speaker, over the years I have heard much from all Governments on decentralisation, but what is taking place is regionalisation, and I warn the Government that in many fields of Government activity, the regional centres it has chosen are not in the best interests of the country community as a whole, and that I intend to oppose some of the moves that are rumoured at the moment concerning regionalisation of some Government services.

Another area of great concern to me and to many people in my electorate is the animal welfare lobby group, or liberationists, who are becoming a louder noise in our community. Recent media coverage was given to this group, who are calling for a boycott on woollen products and endeavouring to destroy the live-sheep trade, and they should be treated with the contempt they deserve. These emotionally involved, ignorant people, who are using ill-founded information to try to destroy a market that took some time and a lot of expertise to develop, should be made to eat the product

they are trying to keep here. The majority of the live sheep in the trade are not used for human consumption here. These people have not found out why any sheep perish on the ships. It is not from poor conditions, but more likely from being spoiled. Too often the sheep have not adjusted to the new diets they are faced with and simply overindulge.

Few farmers willingly subject their livestock to hard conditions, nor do they tolerate cruelty, but to criticise the mulesing operation and to try to destroy the export trade cannot, and should not, be tolerated. I am not racist at all, but it is interesting to note that most spokespersons for this group have a definite accent. I respectfully suggest that perhaps these people should not be offered the hospitality of this once great country.

Mr Speaker, during my pre-election campaign I met an elderly constituent who gave me a pearl of wisdom when she said that if I was ever elected to Parliament I would find that I would have a lot of dealings with academics and bureaucrats and her warning to me was that I would find they were very intelligent people but had, in general, a serious lack of commonsense. Unfortunately, her words of wisdom have already proved correct, as I have found with dealings with some Government departments.

I will use an example of an experience I had with the Education Department. One of the departmental policies is not to provide a school bus service to anyone who resides within a 4.5 kilometre radius of a school. In this particular case the family resided just 40 metres inside the said line, and so they were not eligible for a school bus service even though their shortest route to town was 11 kilometres and that was only after they took a short cut through three of their neighbour's paddocks. I guess that was fair enough, but what put the icing on the cake was that the departmental officer who investigated the complaint found that another member of the same family lived in another house on the same property, but it was outside the 4.5 kilometre line, and I have been told that the suggestion was made that the respective families swap houses so that they could use the school bus. Do members wonder that country people can get frustrated? Maybe our list of unemployed people should be added to.

Referring to the unemployed, I draw members' attention to the number of unemployed people, and to the complete waste of many people's lives. Once again I raise a Federal issue, but I feel that if this State were to press-

ure the Federal Government, other States would soon join in.

It is interesting to note that my following remarks are similar to those made by the Prime Minister in his address to the nation last week. I believe the dole as such should cease and that some community service be done for some reward. What our social security system is doing is developing a generation of people who not only do not want to work, but also do not know how to work, and they cost this country millions of dollars. I believe the scheme could be administered at minimal cost through local government, and for each week's work one could get a week's pay. Maybe food vouchers, or such like, could be used for payment. At the present moment see how many people flock to the hotel or the TAB the moment they get their cheque. It is soul-destroying for many.

One can look at a privately-run scheme in Narrogin which has had huge success in recent months in training unemployed people. The concept was so different that it was difficult to fit it into any Government-designed scheme. It is successful because it lacks red tape and any bureaucratic interference. But it does need some support and I thank the Minister concerned who has been approached on the matter and who has offered assistance.

Mr Speaker, I now make reference to comments made last week by the Premier in answer to questions in the House. He had made mention of the success of the National Party of Australia in the recent State election, and I thank him for his recognition because I too, like my colleagues, am very proud to be part of the successful team, so capably led by our parliamentary leader, Hendy Cowan.

However, the Premier went on to say that as a result of his party's actions and record, his party should be regarded as the farmers' friend. I do not know whether that statement was made on information given by Government advisers, because if he went out into the community and looked for someone who agreed with that statement, he would be confronted with looking for that proverbial needle in the haystack.

What happened, of course, was that in the first two to 2½ years of this Government's first term in office, in the public's eye the Government was isolated and insulated from anything the Federal Government did. Today that is not the case.

Mr Speaker, I do not have many more points that need to be raised, but one of great importance to the whole of our State and not just rural WA is the value of the family and the fact that it is still the basis of our society. The moral, social, and spiritual training that occurs naturally at home in the familiar family surroundings cannot, I believe, be underestimated as a value to our society. And yet, modern day man is helping to destroy much of this. Take family law and how it relates in particular to farming families. I acknowledge the right of both partners in a marriage if the marriage breaks down, but today it is too easy to get out of that commitment, too easy to run away and start again, too easy to lay claim to 50 per cent of a family farm that may have been in the family for several generations. Consider the financial hardships put on many farming families because the guilty party wants his or her share and more. Serious consequences have developed because of the lack of thought in previous legislation. Changes need to be made.

Other methods that are being used to corrupt our society are the media and the education system. Pornography and filth that are becoming the norm on ABC television are disturbing. That the ABC does not believe that 6.30 p.m. is prime viewing time and programmes are not likely to be watched by children, is a matter of concern.

We have so many double standards. We prosecute the Rodney Rudes for foul language in public performances but we allow similar or even worse rubbish to be transmitted into our own homes without recourse. A "Four Corners" programme of two weeks ago is a classic example of the sort of undesirable material that is being used today and shown on television. Similarly, the same sort of thing is happening in schools under the guise of sex education. It is high time we said, "No" and stopped those people responsible, who get their kicks from subjecting minors to this sort of disgusting literature and audio-visual material.

I now want to deal with wages—not wage restraint but wage reduction in real terms. It is blatantly clear that under the current economic climate Australians are living well beyond their means. We enjoy a standard of living that cannot be maintained. I do not have the answer to this vexed question, but unless some reduction takes place or there is a sudden increase in world demand and increased prices for our products our position as a leading nation will decline even further.

In conclusion I want to quote a few words from *Hansard* of 21 August 1947—

Much has been said about the value of primary production in this State.

It is true that primary production is a fundamental asset. Those words were part of my father's maiden speech and they are as true today as they were in 1947.

I sincerely thank all members for the hearing they have given me on the occasion of my maiden speech and I trust that the time I spend in this Parliament will be of benefit not only to the people in the electorate of Narrogin who elected me, but also to the State as a whole.

[Applause.]

MR LAURANCE (Gascoyne) [3.32 p.m.]: At the outset of my remarks on the Address-in-Reply I refer, Sir, to your appointment as Speaker. I would like to do so by referring to George Bernard Shaw who admired his tailor because every time he went to purchase a new suit his tailor measured him up again. George Bernard Shaw felt that he was deserving of great praise for doing so. I think that sums up my attitude towards your appointment as Speaker in that I am prepared to be like George Bernard Shaw's tailor.

I also want to congratulate the new members who have been elected to this House. Dealing firstly with members on this side of the House: I was delighted when the member for Murchison-Eyre took his place in the Assembly. I first met Mr Lightfoot when he was a constituent of mine. He owned Mooloo Downs Station and I was a fairly new member of Parliament at that time. I was traversing my very large pastoral electorate by travelling on the mail run. I went out in a mail truck and the trip took three days from Carnarvon. The upper Gascoyne mail truck delivered mail, fuel, and stores. It was an excellent way for me to keep in touch with my constituents who were flung far across the electorate. The truck visited 18 stations and this pretty unique ride each week took three days. Ross Lightfoot was then a pastoralist. He had a pretty successful time in the mining industry. He has had an illustrious career since and has ended up in this House. I have been closely associated with him since his election. It gives me a great deal of personal pleasure and pride to see him take his place in this House.

The member for East Melville has also joined this side of the House. He is another talented person who has been very closely associated with me over a long time. I am proud to be on