

It must be explained to the unions that their interests are the State's interests, and the previous Government went some way towards achieving progress in that area. However, the research the Government intends to carry out into the new freight policy and the part played by Total West should be questioned stringently.

It was not essential to establish Total West; the important aspect was to remove the trucking from Westrail. It had been proved that the railways could not run that segment of transport efficiently. The administration of Westrail, the Co-ordinator General of Transport, and everyone else involved in it agreed with that point of view. It is not possible for Westrail to run this service in competition with a private transport system.

I hope the Minister will recognise, when the committee's report becomes available, that if Westrail continued to carry less-than-car-loads freight, approximately 1 300 more people would be needed.

A number of fundamental lessons have been learnt in this area. Indeed, I found the whole experience very rewarding. The sad part of the situation was the political aspect. I suppose it is only human nature that, when one tries to introduce something new to a system which has been regulated for 50 years, the opportunity will be taken by opponents to try to exploit the position. Indeed, the unions did exploit it. It is said they vandalised some of the vehicles and freight was sent in the wrong directions initially. However, the situation settled down after a few months.

Many lessons have been learnt in this area and I hope the Government will adopt a pragmatic approach and will not change the direction of transport policies too greatly. Another monitoring report will be available from the Transport Commission shortly and it will be interesting to see the progress which has been made in that area.

I indicate to the Premier that we are anxious about the structuring of the Budget, particularly bearing in mind the taxing measures which have been adopted prior to its introduction. I do not refer to increased rates and charges; I refer to the taxing measures announced by the Government prior to the structure of the Budget being known. All these measures should be dealt with at the same time, but time will tell what will happen.

The debate has given me the opportunity to express some of my anxieties about the actions of the Government so far.

**MRS HENDERSON** (Gosnells) [7.53 p.m.]: Mr Speaker, I rise to support the motion.

I would like to extend my congratulations to you on your becoming Speaker of this House. I

know you will continue to perform your duties with the fairness and forthrightness which you have demonstrated so far during this session. I hope that during your term you will have the opportunity to Chair debate between members, each representing approximately the same number of electors, so that the fairness which you have demonstrated will also be extended to the voters of this State.

I am extremely proud to be in this place making my maiden speech, representing the people of Gosnells as part of a Labor Government. The Australian Labor Party has a long and well-established place in Australian society as the party which represents the hopes and aspirations of the ordinary working people of this State.

It has always represented the tradition of a fair go for everyone, coupled with concern for those who find themselves in difficult economic circumstances. It is the party which says that all people are equal while at the same time recognising the varied talents and skills of each individual. It is the party which stands for those things that make life in a civilised society possible—sharing, concern for others, and compassion and help for the poor, the sick, and the disadvantaged. It puts concern for the well-being of society above promotion of self-interest. It is the party which grew out of the need for working people to have representation in the law-making processes of this country. It is the oldest political party in Australia and one which rejects the promotion of vested interests and privilege.

It is the party the policies of which were overwhelmingly endorsed by the people of this State in the February election and again in the Federal election in March.

In paying tribute to the Australian Labor Party, I would like also to make mention of our leader in this House, Brian Burke. He is a person I have known for many years and whose compassion and concern for the underprivileged is legend in his electorate and now throughout the State. He is a person of drive and ability who will lead this State forward through the difficult economic times we are experiencing.

I made mention of the development of the Australian Labor Party to represent the needs of working people. At no time have the working people of this State had more need of strong and effective representation of their points of view than now. For their immediate industrial needs, the trade union movement has always acted on their behalf. From time to time it is suggested that, while unions may have been essential in the aftermath of the industrial revolution with its pro-



duction of a mass of underpaid, underfed, and ruthlessly exploited workers, such a need does not exist today. Nothing could be further from the truth. Just as the industrial revolution changed the whole face of society and moved industry from the cottages into the factories, so the current information and technology revolution will produce changes in our way of life as far-reaching and dramatic as the industrial revolution. It is no exaggeration to talk of factories with a handful of supervisory workers checking on the programmed machinery and to forecast massive losses of jobs in communication, banking and insurance, retailing, and all sections of manufacturing industry. Professor Stonier from Bradford University predicts that by the end of this century 10 per cent alone of the working population will provide all our required commodities—food, shelter, clothing, transport, and energy.

The current high levels of unemployment in Australia are obviously not due to changes in technology. Undoubtedly a worldwide slump in demand has been the major cause of small business bankruptcies and redundancies in industry. This has been exacerbated by the monetarist and contractionary policies of the former conservative Federal and State Governments which sought to bring down inflation at the massive social cost of soaring unemployment.

However, it is during periods of recession, when high unemployment leads to a decline in levels of trade union industrial activity, that many employers will take advantage of the opportunity to introduce new labour-saving systems. In Australia this activity was undoubtedly assisted by the former Federal Government's investment allowance which offered attractive incentives to industry to introduce employment-displacing machinery.

The rate at which jobs are disappearing in this country is frightening. Future generations will not thank the conservative forces of this State which label as "greedy" unions which seek to prevent the loss of jobs; nor will they be able to fathom the logic of such intense opposition to reduced working hours when ultimately this will be the only way to spread around the community the limited opportunities to work.

There is no doubt that Australia will not escape the consequences of this technical information revolution which has already swept other industrialised countries. Undoubtedly the growth of the largest and strongest companies and the growing internationalisation of production will have a dramatic impact on our small business sector which currently provides the greatest employment opportunities of any component in our economy. It has been calculated that five million people in

the United Kingdom may become unemployed in the 1980s as a direct result of new technology. In West Germany, it has been calculated that two million clerical jobs will disappear. As the vehicle building and steel-making industries in Australia shed labour, we are likely to see automated machinery displace these jobs as the industry restructures itself.

The paradox of this situation is that here, in Perth, thousands of people are walking the streets seeking work, and a crying need also exists for the creation of jobs in other community service areas.

Undoubtedly the lives of hundreds of elderly people would be brightened by the visit of a friendly and concerned person to check on their well-being. Whether they are coping independently at home or whether they live in a nursing home, there is no doubt that their loneliness is a major problem in our society. Similarly, young mothers at home with small children would, I am sure, welcome the provision of neighbourhood centres where they could obtain occasional child care when they have dental or medical appointments, or other private business to attend to. I believe that no task is more difficult, more demanding, and more important, than that of a mother at home looking after two or three young children.

The burgeoning of learning centres in the suburbs is testimony to the needs of mothers and others for places providing contact and the opportunity to learn skills in an informal setting with adequate child care provided.

Our eroded beaches cry out for grass planting schemes, our classrooms are still bursting at the seams. There is no lack of vital and important jobs to be done. At the same time, thousands of our young people have become angry and disillusioned as they search in vain for work; meanwhile, overtime is common and many people hold two jobs. What is needed is a concerned Government prepared to tackle these problems, and fortunately for Western Australia and Australia, we now have that Government.

As industry moves to greater automation, and more and more jobs are lost, there will be not only savings in costs for employers because of the reduced wages bill, but also enormous increases in output. In this situation it is essential that the interests of the community are protected. Unless action is taken at the point where jobs are lost, the opportunity for the creation of other jobs in the service and community service sector, utilising these benefits of increased productivity, will escape.



The technology which makes possible this increase in output has often been developed at public expense at universities and institutes of technology. The Government must act to protect the interests of the community as jobs are shed. If it does not, it will passively accept responsibility for the welfare of those unemployed people while the companies involved reap the financial benefits and use these benefits to absorb other small competitors.

What is to be done? Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Government on the appointment of a Minister for Economic Development and Technology as a major step in giving recognition to the importance of this problem. Secondly, the Labor Government in this State and the Federal Labor Government have always maintained that economic recovery can be assisted only by expansionary policies which stimulate demand. The Premier is to be commended for his stand on this at the recent Premiers' Conference. Lack of demand could well be the only factor at present putting a brake on the introduction of new technology. Increased production is of little benefit to anyone if a substantial section of the community is unemployed and unable to purchase the products available.

Allied with these points, of course, are the questions of sensible use of our resources and energy, bearing in mind the needs of future generations. Similarly, there is the question of limits on the quantity of consumer products that the community can or should absorb.

In the short term, one thing stands out clearly. While Western Australia may be at the forefront of research and development in some fields, it has been firmly positioned in the stone age in regard to industrial relations. The former Government's policy of confrontation is one that has now been abandoned. I welcome the Government's planned tripartite council with representatives of the union movement, the employers, and the Government examining and advising on matters of industrial relations. I hope the Press will follow the Government's lead and seek to report on the causes of any future industrial disruption which may occur, rather than solely on the effects. I have been disappointed to find that the rhetorical anti-union rantings that characterise Liberal Party election material also echo from the other side of this House.

That people in this State are being laid off from their jobs after 10 or 15 years' service, often with only a few hours notice, is appalling enough; that those people who take up the cause of these redundant workers should be described as "greedy" or "power hungry" is utterly abomin-

able. I repeat what I said earlier: The need for unions to represent the needs of their members is as important now as it ever was. The days when people abandoned their democratic rights to be consulted in decisions affecting their lives as they walked through the factory gates should now be over. The rapid restructuring of work in the wake of technological change demands that unions be involved in the decisions made about the jobs of their members.

Other countries, with more advanced and progressive Governments than our previous Government, have clearly shown the way. Working people must have access to information about the future plans of the enterprise where they work, and must be given the opportunity to contribute to decisions made about those plans. Working men and women, through their unions, must be able to participate in the making of decisions affecting the organisation and the future of their work. Work is probably more important in our society than in any other society in history. Because work is vital to our self-esteem, and a source of personal satisfaction or dissatisfaction, there is no doubt about the need for workers to gain greater dignity and recognition at work. This concept, broadly called "industrial democracy", is not new, and I look forward to its establishment in Western Australia.

Some employers in Western Australia have, I believe, deliberately hidden from their employees plans to introduce new technology, which in turn has resulted in wide-scale redundancies and a permanent loss of jobs. Such occasions highlight the need for legislation to establish the rights of unions to seek information for the benefit of their members. In the meantime, I look forward to an open and consultative approach by the Government to its employees in the introduction of new technology.

Mr Speaker, I am conscious of being one of four newly elected women to this place. The four women who sit here today represent the same number of women as has ever sat in this House on either side of the Chamber. I think this is a clear example of the way in which women have been underrepresented at the decision-making levels in our society. In Government, in the Public Service, in law, in education, and in management, women have rarely been involved in the making of decisions that affect their lives. Partly through tradition, partly through the difficulties of combining family responsibilities with other responsibilities, women have a history of exclusion from Government in this State. This is not to say that women have been inactive. Women's groups and individuals for years have been on depu-



tations to Ministers, have written letters, have compiled submissions, and have generally sought to persuade men to make decisions which women have thought were necessary. This involvement has always been indirect and has often been unsuccessful. I am pleased that our Government has signalled its intention to establish a women's advisory council to give women direct access to Government. I am pleased that the Government has received almost 60 submissions from a wide range of women's groups strongly in favour of the establishment of such a council and the appointment of a women's adviser. Similarly, the work that has been done by a wide range of women's groups in calling for antidiscrimination legislation is to come to fruition during the term of the current Labor Government.

Women's groups throughout Western Australia have long expressed their grave concern about the incidence of violence to women and children in their homes. I pay tribute to these women, who, in the absence of any domestic violence legislation, have established a network of refuges to give a safe haven to women and children fleeing from violent situations. I welcome the Federal Government's increased funding for this area and look forward to our State Budget for further improvements.

In closing, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank all those electors of Gosnells who gave me the opportunity to represent them in this Chamber. I would thank also the staff of this House and my parliamentary colleagues for their assistance and co-operation. My grateful thanks go to all those dedicated Labor Party workers in Gosnells who assisted me to win the seat. These are people who have a vision of a better society, and who selflessly work towards that goal.

Finally my thanks go to my parents for their encouragement, and to my husband whose loving support has always been a source of great strength and inspiration.

[Applause.]

**MR LAURANCE** (Gascoyne) [8.07 p.m.]: I appreciate receiving the call to take part in this debate on the Supply Bill, which will appropriate funds to enable the Government to carry on the running of the State until the Budget is passed later in the year. I am not confident, however, that the funds will be spent wisely and well.

**Mr Blaikie**: One thing we can be guaranteed is that the funds will be spent.

**Mr LAURANCE**: That is correct, but they will not be spent wisely and well.

**Mr Blaikie**: It is a spending Government.

**Mr LAURANCE**: It is a big spending, big taxing Government. Labor Governments have been known to be big taxing Governments, and this Government has started off in that same vein. It has given an undertaking to the people of this State that they can expect to witness what they have seen Labor Governments of previous times do in this State. Labor believes it can tax heavily to support its programmes.

No doubt the Premier will be able to use these funds, and he may even be able to bring back to his side some of the groups he has alienated in his first few months of Government with a litany of broken promises. We have witnessed also broken traditions in a number of areas, and I will point out to the House where this Government has broken with long-standing tradition.

**Mr Parker**: Sometimes that might be better.

**Mr LAURANCE**: In some cases that might be so, and I am not opposed to change.

**Mr Parker**: We have never been afraid to break with tradition.

**Mr LAURANCE**: The Labor Party may pay the penalty for that. The Supply Bill gives us an early opportunity to appraise the actions of this Government over the last five months, and to have an early glimpse of what we are likely to witness in the Parliament.

My appraisal is this: In the five months the Labor Party has been in Government, and the few days we have been in the House, I regard this Government as very cynical and overconfident.

**Mr Tonkin**: Cynical! Come on!

**Mr LAURANCE**: In a moment I will give the Minister an example.

**Mr Tonkin**: You might criticise us for being idealistic, but not cynical.

**Mr LAURANCE**: We are still in the early days of this Government. It is to our advantage politically if this Government continues to operate in the way it has, but my point now to Government members is that already their Government is cynical and overconfident. Government members may think they have a right to be overconfident as a result of the comfortable majority they hold in this House; but it is a very cocksure Government which will lay down the law to people throughout the State, whether they be cigarette smokers, public servants, or members of the Opposition. It is not too early to label this Government as a maverick Government as a result of the way its members have cavorted around the place.

**A Government member**: At least we are not an extreme right-wing Government.