

GALLOP LABOR GOVERNMENT

Motion

Resumed from 27 November on the following motion moved by Mr C.J. Barnett (Leader of the Opposition) -

That this House condemns the Gallop Labor Government for its failure to govern in the interests of all Western Australians and the failure of its ministers to discharge their duties in an open and accountable manner.

MR B.K. MASTERS (Vasse) [4.31 pm]: I am pleased to support this motion. I refer members to a comment made by the Minister for Peel and the South West, who is also the Attorney General, in the estimates committees during September last year. He was asked whether the South West Development Commission would provide any further assistance to the areas of Capel, Busselton and Augusta-Margaret River. His reply was that it would not because that area was along the “Chardonnay Coast” and the commission did not need to put any more government resources into that area.

The Minister for Peel and the South West was a Bunbury boy. He was born in the south west and was educated there for most of his schooling. I was told a story that one of his former teachers, a Catholic nun, was stopped in the street by none other than Alf Bussell, whom most members will know. He related the story that the former teacher of the Minister for Peel and the South West said that she remembered Mr McGinty very well. She said words to the effect that “He is not the Messiah; he is just a very naughty boy.”

Clearly the minister has a strong affiliation with the south west. He knows the area well. He spends a fair bit of time in the south west chardonnay coast area. He owns a house in Augusta and does a lot of crayfishing. I have no problem with his having a holiday home in the south west corner. However, that suggests to me that he should have a very good understanding of the south west, of its needs and of the government facilities and services that should be provided to areas of real need - I emphasise real need - and, in particular, in and around my electorate.

I will provide some information to members on the other side, and I am sure it will be instructive to members on this side, about what is currently happening in the south west. Two Fridays ago I went to a funeral of a very well respected farmer. He was well-known and quite young - compared with me; I consider him to be young at 62 years of age. He had shot himself. I have since found out that there were many reasons that he shot himself. Nonetheless, he had no health problems but, at the age of 62, he decided that the weight of the world on his shoulders was too great for him to bear. That afternoon, after I had attended the funeral, I was talking to Travis Macrae, a young 25-year-old journalist with the *Busselton-Dunsborough Mail*. I mentioned to him that this farmer had committed suicide. He said that three of his former classmates had committed suicide in the past two months. Simon Penn, another young journalist working with the *Busselton-Margaret Times* said that people at the *South Western Times* were aware of seven or eight suicides that had occurred, mostly by gunshot, in the past few months. Before that, I had been speaking to a volunteer chaplain, whose name I will not mention. As she left my office she said that she had been to seven or eight funerals for young people, all of whom had killed themselves. Later that day, I was walking around Busselton during lunchtime and met Robert Burr, who is heavily involved in personal counselling in the Busselton area. His business, South West Counselling, is the largest counselling service in the south west outside of Bunbury. He said that the number of relationship problems that he was dealing with, including marital relationships and problems involving people who could not cope, was overwhelming him, and his business was unable to cope with the demand.

I address the ministers on the other side of the Chamber who are bothering to listen to what I am saying. There are many reasons that these terrible problems, including suicides and relationship breakdowns, are occurring in the south west. I must admit that one of the reasons is that dairy deregulation has brought some pressure to bear on some members of the south west community. I am also aware that what this Government is doing to the south west timber communities is having an equally profound effect on the mental stability and desire of people in the south west to live. I include Busselton in that area. Until recently, Busselton had four timber mills and a work force of some 300 people in the mills and associated industries. This Government is not providing enough resources, through grants, to Anglicare Financial Counselling Services and to the Department for Community Development. The people in the south west are feeling these terrible pressures partly as a result, as I have mentioned, of dairy deregulation, the effect of the closure of the timber industry, the Bali bombings, the September 11 incident and so on. It is for those reasons that this motion, which was moved last week, is so spot on. The Government is not putting enough money into those areas of need to reasonably meet those needs.

I will move away from this unfortunate and morbid subject, which is nevertheless a real issue, and talk about some other issues in the south west. A very high proportion of residents in Capel live in Department of Housing and Works properties. I am very happy with that situation because my dealings with those people have shown them to be overwhelmingly good tenants. However, the Capel town site needs its fair share of services and

facilities. It needs its roads, including the Bussell Highway, upgraded; and it needs infill sewerage connections so that further urban development can occur. However, before that infill sewerage can take place, the town needs its waste water treatment upgraded. Those projects have been pushed way beyond a 10-year time line because the Government considers that area to be the chardonnay coast. It does not believe that extra money should go into that part of the world.

I refer to the Busselton primary schools. I found out about this matter only a few weeks ago, and it concerns me greatly. The Department of Education regularly determines what is called a school's H factor. That is an indication of the socioeconomic background of the school's surrounding community. The H factor is calculated using information from the national census, which of course takes two years to compile. Therefore, the current H factor for schools in my electorate is based on the 1996 census. Some of the issues that are looked at when calculating the H factor are household income; occupation; educational level attained; Aboriginality; proficiency with English as the main language; standard of dwelling; tenancy, whether owned or rented; parenting, single or double; and so on. The factor is calculated on the basis of an average school having an H factor of 100. A school with an H factor of 90 is considered to be in a very difficult socioeconomic area. By contrast, a school with an H factor of 110 is considered to be in a very high socioeconomic area. Busselton's primary schools range from an H factor of 91.2 to 95.6, with Vasse Primary School having an H factor of 95.7. In other words, those schools are very much at the lower end of the H factor scale. Busselton Senior High School has an H factor of 92.46, which is effectively closer to the H factor of the very difficult socioeconomic areas that we would normally expect - I do not mean this to be a slur on the suburbs that I am about to mention - in places like Balga, Lockridge or the Shire of Kwinana. This is Busselton; this is the chardonnay coast. However, it has virtually as many socioeconomic problems, at least in terms of education, as many of the so-called more difficult lower socioeconomic suburbs of Perth.

Busselton Primary School is trying to raise money for a chaplaincy project. I commend Tim Baker and Greg Smith, the principals of the Busselton and West Busselton Primary Schools, for their active involvement in this project. However, we need more government assistance for projects such as the chaplaincy project; to build better quality schools, which it is doing; and to improve existing poor quality schools such as West Busselton Primary School, which is not in very good condition. Busselton Senior High School is a collection of buildings dating from the 1960s that was designed for 660 students, but next year will have 1 300 students. It is again with regret that I have to say that a member of the administration staff of that school committed suicide only last week. I think one of the reasons for that was that a current teacher was killed and a former teacher was severely injured in the Bali bombings. I am about to finish, because we have to move on, unfortunately, to allow the National Party to say a few words.

The Minister for Peel and the South West, the Attorney General, who is arguably the most influential person in Cabinet, has described the areas that I have just described as the chardonnay coast. He could not be more wrong. The problems of my electorate are the same problems that are being felt throughout Western Australia. I challenge this Government to understand what I am saying -

Mr R.C. Kucera: That was not chardonnay that was brought into the House, was it?

Mr B.K. MASTERS: I thank the minister for that very relevant and flippant statement. It is interesting that a music shop next to my electorate office has a T-shirt that says "Bob the boozer. Can he drink it? Yes he can." I am not sure whether that is relevant, but I do not find the minister's comment particularly relevant, considering that I have just been speaking about suicides in my electorate.

Mr R.C. Kucera: The point I am making when we are talking about chardonnay is that some of the finest wine in the world is produced on your coast down there.

Mr B.K. MASTERS: I have got a shovel in my car. The minister can dig himself a deeper hole if he likes. I think the minister has missed the point I am trying to make. The south west is under significant pressure at the moment. It is not the chardonnay coast that the Minister for Peel and the South West believes it is. This Government claims to represent all people, yet the Minister for Peel and the South West seems not to care for the residents of the chardonnay coast. This Government has to lift its game, because, until it does, this motion will remain absolutely valid; namely, that the Gallop Labor Government has failed to govern in the interests of all Western Australians.

MR J.P.D. EDWARDS (Greenough) [4.44 pm]: I also wish to speak to the motion -

That this House condemns the Gallop Labor Government for its failure to govern in the interests of all Western Australians and the failure of its ministers to discharge their duties in an open and accountable manner.

This morning I had the pleasure of meeting a gentleman to whom I have spoken on the phone a couple of times who has designed a very innovative and effective water saving device. What I will be talking about this

afternoon is a prime example of the failure of this Government and its ministers to discharge their duties in an open and accountable manner. I want to highlight the frustration and disappointment of this gentleman. This gentleman, who is more than happy to have his name on the record, is a Mr Philip Doust. Mr Doust has run a plumbing company for many years but now designs plumbing products. He is also an inventor of some note and has had quite a few inventions successfully produced and marketed around the world. Mr Doust is a Western Australian, and we should, of course, be very proud of that fact. Mr Doust has experienced a litany of what I would call poor communication, and perhaps even a lack of courtesy and out and out buck-passing when it comes to this Government.

Mr Doust has invented a water saving device called a Doust water brake. I guess a person who invents things wants to share them with others out of the goodness of his heart, but he also wants to make a quid. I recognise that, because he is obviously in business and is there to make money, as are all business people. However, he also has a strong desire, in this time of water shortage and an accent on all things water, to try to invent water saving devices. Mr Doust wrote to the Premier I believe at some time in October, and the Premier handed his letter to the parliamentary secretary. The parliamentary secretary thanked him for his letter dated such and such, and passed it on to, quite rightly, Hon Nick Griffiths, who is the Minister for Government Enterprises, which covers water resources. Mr Doust then received a reply that advised him to look up the Water Corporation's e-mail address or web site and to follow it up from there.

The point I am trying to make is that the Government, particularly the Premier, has been very vocal about the shortage of water and about all things relevant to water. I would think that to have something like this land on even the parliamentary secretary's desk would have sparked some flashing lights that here was a potential water saving device for all Western Australians. However, Mr Doust felt that he was being sent from pillar to post, and in the end he gave the game away and went through the office of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and I think he knows the member for Hillarys as well. In fairness to him, he tried to bring this to the Government's attention and was ignored. I remind members that the motion refers to the failure of the Government and its ministers to discharge their duties in an open and accountable manner. This is a prime example of a case in which ministers have failed to discharge their duties in an open and accountable manner.

This device has been tested and proved. For the benefit of the House, it is probably worth my while to explain what it is. It is a device that sits in the bottom of the tap. As I said, it is a water brake. A grommet is inserted into the bottom of the tap. The bottom of the tap is drilled out, with a thread in it. The grommet has a thread on it, which obviously screws into the bottom of the tap. Inside that grommet is a small rubber circular piece - I do not know how best to describe it. When the water comes in, the water pressure hits it, and instead of going directly through the tap, it works in a circular motion and cuts the flow of water. Tests show that it cuts the flow of water by some 70 per cent. That is a significant amount of water. In tests on different pressure levels, there was a slight difference in the percentage. The best it achieved was about 70 per cent, and I think the worst was about 50 per cent. Again, I say to the Government that surely this device needs some support, and perhaps, dare I say it, some incentives should be offered to the householders of Western Australia to put this device into their taps. It is a fairly simple device; is not difficult to install and is very effective.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Member for Greenough, I will just interject to make a couple of points.

Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS: Please do.

Mr R.F. Johnson: What you said is absolutely relevant. This device is so unique that there is great interest in it in America. It is not like a normal device that is fitted in a showerhead, which reduces the pressure and you have to dance around the shower to get wet. This is completely different. I have seen it work. It is quite unique. Apart from the fact that the Water Corporation has said that there is a 70 per cent saving in water supply, the best thing, as far as the Government is concerned, is that this gentleman is not asking for any money. He is not going to the Government or to the Premier for grants or anything like that. He thought that the Premier would be interested because of the water conservation goals that we are trying to achieve in Western Australia. I take my hat off to this man. It is a fantastic invention that we should be jumping up and down about.

Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS: The member for Hillarys is quite right. In fact, he stole my thunder. This gentleman has taken this device to the United States, and has a very successful market over there. In fact, I think the device sold out within the first month of production. He is now tooling up for a bigger and better supply to meet that market. He has a genuine desire to achieve water savings and to help the State of Western Australia. As the member for Hillarys rightly said, he is not seeking government funding. He is cashed up. He has produced this device and does not need any funding. It just seems to me that an opportunity has not been taken up. Maybe the processes of government need to be tightened, but that is obviously for the Government to decide. However, members on this side of the House have thrown their support behind Mr Doust and his manufacturing of this water brake, as he calls it. The Government has been singularly unprepared to assist. Basically, it has let an opportunity slip through its fingers. The fact that the Premier has taken the water issue under his wing obviously

means that, in his mind, it is an extremely important issue, as it is. The motion sums up the situation very well; that is, that the Government has failed to discharge its duties to the people of Western Australia on this issue.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr J.C. Kobelke (Leader of the House).