

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural - Leader of the House) [10.01 pm]: I move -

That the house do now adjourn.

Whitby Falls and Member for Bassendean - Adjournment Debate

HON KIM CHANCE: In so moving, I want to raise a matter that was raised in an adjournment motion last week by Hon Helen Morton. Last week Hon Helen Morton made a scathing attack on the member for Bassendean, Martin Whitely, on the way he handled the position of the residents of Whitby Falls. In particular, Hon Helen Morton said that none of that abuse was more devastating than that dished out to them by the Labor Party, and in particular by Mr Martin Whitely, then Minister Bob Kucera, and to a lesser degree the current Minister for Health, Jim McGinty. It happens that I have some knowledge of the leading role that Mr Whitely had in supporting those residents, and I was taken aback by the comments that were made. Hon Helen Morton went on to allege that Martin Whitely did not disclose that he was a Labor candidate, that he suggested he was a member of the Seamen's Union of Australasia, and that he secretly attended meetings and destabilised the process that was taking place; that is, the process that the coalition government had in place to move the residents from Whitby Falls. If I was surprised at this bizarre allegation, then Martin Whitely was more than a little bemused by it, and he has asked me to correct the record, which I am more than happy to do.

Let me just say from the start that from my own knowledge of those events, perhaps our government should have acted faster than it did; however, our government did act to rehouse the residents. It was Martin Whitely who displayed great courage and commitment to those men, and it was he who held the government to account for the time it took the government to get to that point of resolution. Martin Whitely actually took on the government in this matter to the extent that he threatened to divorce himself from the government. He put his job on the line even though he was no longer even the member for Roleystone; by then he was the member for Bassendean. There was absolutely nothing for Martin Whitely to gain by putting his neck on the line in the way that he did, except his complete commitment to those people whom he undertook to represent. To be abused for that by anyone is grossly unfair and demonstrably wrong. However, it is obscene for the member to be abused by Hon Helen Morton, given her role in this matter.

I refer to a letter provided to me by a lady called Linda Nolan, which states -

... my brother Ken Hockridge now deceased lived at Whitby Falls Hostel for over 30 years. Ken was born a deaf mute with many other mental health problems. Whitby Falls Hostel in Mundijong was a wonderful fully operational farm and home, not an old asylum as Helen Morton describes it.

In April 2000 the residents and their families were told by Helen Morton of plans to move the men to more suitable accommodation in the suburbs. As Whitby had been their home for most of their lives the families of the men believed their loved ones could not cope in the metro area.

The residents and families first met Martin Whitely at the April 2000 meeting, he told us all who he was -

He did not pretend to be anything but a Labor candidate. The letter continues -

and said he was prepared to help us in our endeavour to save the men from being shifted from Whitby Falls Hostel as he could see that none of the residents or their families were happy with the idea of the men having to leave their home. So SAVE WHITBY FALLS PSYCHIATRIC HOSTEL ACTION GROUP was formed by all the families and Martin Whitely.

...

In 2000 I listened in with permission, on a phone conversation Helen Morton had with my father Robert Hockridge, and in this conversation Helen Morton repeatedly assured my father that Whitby would never be closed and the men would not be moved.

Geoff Gallop became Premier in 2001 and promised his party would keep Whitby open, he failed to keep that promise, But Martin Whitely still worked tirelessly with the families to try to fulfill that promise or to find a suitable alternative.

Is that the action of a person who was supposed to have abused those people? He took on Geoff Gallop. The letter further states -

When Helen Morton and her party were involved with Whitby Falls Hostel they wanted to close the only home those residents had known for most of their lives. The farm style life was healthy and most of all in my brothers case he was not locked away in a city institution. The men also could work on the farm and that gave them a sense of purpose in their lives.

The video my husband filmed in 2000 at a rally in Mundijong to try to save Whitby was sent to the media, this was suggested and encouraged by -

Guess who? Martin Whitely. The man Hon Helen Morton says abused those people. The letter also states -

I am very happy that five men from Whitby have a lovely new home, but I along with the rest of the families would have been even happier if the other 20 or more men had been allowed to live out their days at a fully upgraded Whitby, instead of being shifted off to old nursing homes. The state and future people with mental health problems have lost a very unique and alternative life style in Whitby. In my opinion both government parties let everyone down hopelessly . . .

That is a criticism of the government. What it is specifically is an endorsement of what Martin Whitely did. The letter from Ms Nolan closes by stating -

. . . but thank you Martin Whitely for continuing to still help the families.

There have been a number of occasions when Hon Helen Morton has come into this place specifically unable to tell the truth and has made the most absurd allegations against people she knows are not guilty of what she alleges. She has come into this place and alleged that I and other ministers have broken not only state laws, but also federal laws. She does not have a shred of evidence and refuses to clarify the matter when invited. She has come into this place and abused the man who went out on a limb and took on his own Premier and colleagues; specifically, the Minister for Health. I know this because I saw it happen. The role Hon Helen Morton played in this matter makes her the last person in the world who should ever raise the question of who abused the men at Whitby Falls.

Prime Minister's Plan to Tackle Abuse in Aboriginal Communities - Adjournment Debate

HON ROBYN MCSWEENEY (South West) [10.11 pm]: I put on record my disgust at the Premier's attitude to John Howard's plan to tackle abuse in Aboriginal communities, which has come out of the report "Little Children are Sacred". The headlines in tonight's news state "All, except WA, to send police to NT". Even Tasmania has said that it will send two police officers to the Northern Territory. We have something like 5 000 police officers. Why cannot we send some police to the Northern Territory? Why cannot we send two, three, four or five?

Hon Shelley Archer interjected.

Hon ROBYN MCSWEENEY: The member has problems in her community all right! We are the only state -

Hon Shelley Archer interjected.

Hon ROBYN MCSWEENEY: I expect that from the member. Queensland is also sending police to the Northern Territory.

The Premier has said that this is a manufactured crisis. It is not a manufactured crisis. I have a quote -

Generations of young people are being lost, families are being destroyed, and whole communities are being torn apart. There are no excuses, we have to make a stand. The very future of our aboriginal communities is at stake.

Do members know who wrote that? Geoff Gallop wrote that. He was right. He wrote that in the Gordon report, the cover of which has the subtitle "Putting the picture together". That was back in 2001. Sue Gordon does not think that it is a manufactured crisis. In fact, she is going to be on the Prime Minister's task force. She is a wonderful person. I am pleased that she is doing that. I thought that the Premier was better than this and that he would do all he could to help.

There are problems in remote areas. There are 807 notifications of children with a sexually transmitted disease, which equates to 600 children. A total of 81 to 86 per cent are Aboriginal. From last December to April, 60 of those children, 52 of whom were Aboriginal, were under the age of 14 years. When I looked at *The Kimberley Echo* tonight I read of a terrible sexual assault in Halls Creek. It continues. I know that we do not have enough police. Why are there not enough police? Someone put it to me tonight that if we did send some police to the Northern Territory, they could learn. They could then come back here. What is wrong with doing that?

I refer to the words "this manufactured crisis". Let me read out what was said on the Howard Sattler program. It is very blunt but it is from a remote area nurse who says -

I ask the politically enlightened to give a 5-year-old boy painful penicillin injections for his anal sores caused by syphilis. Why don't they come and change the colostomy bag on a 6-year-old girl so mutilated by her rape that her genitalia had to be reconstructed? Or let them help us convince an 11-year-old that her rape wasn't her fault (whilst we are giving her antibiotics for the gonorrhoea she acquired). That's what those at the coalface deal with on a distressingly regular basis.

That person worked at the coalface. It does not say whether she was in the Northern Territory. The health nurse just says she was a remote area nurse. This report "Little Children are Sacred" contains all sorts of stories, just as the Gordon report does. The Gordon report was not implemented in a responsible way; its implementation was very tardy, and the Auditor General's report indicated that. I am not sure whether all the recommendations have been followed through. I think 197 recommendations were made and there are 97 recommendations in the "Little Children are Sacred" report. The reports are very similar. Many of the recommendations mirror each other.

I suggest that what the Prime Minister is trying to do is a good thing. Someone suggested yesterday that his action was a circuit breaker. If it is a circuit breaker let us get behind it. Self-determination has not worked; nothing has worked. I am standing here and criticising the Premier because, even though I am Liberal, I believe he is my Premier. He is everyone's Premier in Western Australia, and he is making Western Australia look bad, and that is not a good thing. Even Peter Beattie, whose state is experiencing appalling problems with Aboriginal children, is cooperating with the federal government. I think in one community in Queensland every child under eight had a sexually transmitted disease, or many children under eight were suffering. From tonight the Prime Minister is sending police if we can believe what came off the computer tonight from Australian Associated Press. We are looking bad. That is not good; we have our own problems, so we know about the poverty and alcohol and the associated problems.

Hon Kim Chance: Why are 12 Western Australian cops the issue when, as of 1 July, Mr Howard will put 1 800 community development employment program - CDEP - workers out of a job? Why is that not the problem? Despite these wonderful words he said, he will put 1 800 people out of gainful employment. I do not get it.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Yes. We debated an issue in this place and it is not as black and white as the Leader of the House is suggesting. This is about child abuse and about doing something for children.

Hon Shelley Archer interjected

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Ken Travers): Order! I know Hon Shelley Archer is seeking the call.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Hon Shelley Archer is mouthing off. I have read about five-year-old boys having syphilis and I could take her through plenty more things that happened up north in our Aboriginal communities to our Aboriginal children. This is a circuit breaker.

Hon Shelley Archer: Rubbish!

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Does Hon Shelley Archer want to sit in the gallery in 30 years' time listening to someone say that we should have done something. I am sick of it.

Hon Shelley Archer: It is a political game by Howard, and you know it.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: It is not a political game. How dare Hon Shelley Archer say it is a political game when goodwill has been shown by all the other states except this one. I am ashamed to have a Premier such as the Premier of WA. Just on this issue, I am ashamed. This government needs to jump on board and stop politicising a problem about which, perhaps with good will, we can do something.

Whitby Falls and Member for Bassendean - Adjournment Debate

HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan) [10.18 pm]: I wanted to talk about another thing today but I cannot let the comments of the Leader of the House go by without responding to them. The leader is grossly ill informed on this matter. There is absolutely no way in the world, judging by what he said to me, that he has accurate information. I know those men very well; I met with them every week for nearly three years. I was working on that program day in and day out.

Hon Kim Chance: So they said. They know you well too.

Hon HELEN MORTON: At absolutely no time did I say to them that they would be able to stay in that hostel. I never ever said so. It was the most disgusting, terrible place that people could ever be asked to live in. However, the one thing I did say was that if any of those men did not want to move off that farm, we would build them new houses to live in there on the farm, and that was in the process of being done when Martin Whitely became involved. What he did - I was there when he did it -

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You were just political point scoring, and you know it.

Hon HELEN MORTON: The minister should just be quiet for a minute.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Don't tell me to be quiet.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Ken Travers): The Minister for Local Government will allow Hon Helen Morton to be heard.

Hon HELEN MORTON: We had meetings with families on weekends and at other times of the week that suited those people. Two blokes came along in duffel coats, purporting to me - I was running the meeting - to be members of a union supporting an old seafarer who lived in the facility. At no time did they say to me who Martin Whitely was. He looked exactly like the other bloke who was with him, and I assumed and was quite happy that the chap who lived in the facility had some people from the union supporting him. At no time was I concerned about that, except -

Hon Kim Chance: Why did Ms Nolan say that everybody knew who he was?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Because they did after a while, as he outed himself at the meeting and destabilised everything. He basically said to the family and the residents, "Don't believe what she's saying. It's all a load of hogwash. All she's trying to do is get you off this place so that the mineral sands mining group can come in here and take it over", scaring that entire family and all the people concerned for no good reason, other than to create some sort of political mileage. The next thing he did, along with Geoff Gallop, was have a community rally of 300 people. He had whipped up the local community for no good reason at all. What happened was that for 18 months the progress of those men was put on hold while that stupid man went about the process of trying to get political mileage out of those men and their families.

What happened after that? Eighteen months had already been lost. The election had been won. What happened? Nothing. I was a member of this Parliament - members can ask Hon Sue Ellery about this, because she advised me, as a new member of Parliament, after this issue, and very rightly so - and I put an urgency motion on the notice paper, but because I did not understand how I had to elbow my way in here to get an urgency motion up-front, my motion was not discussed. However, that night Martin Whitely made a statement to the Legislative Assembly. That night, three years later, Martin Whitely took on the government. Why did he do that? He had abandoned those blokes for three years. He was not the member for that area anymore. He had left them. However, he suddenly took on the government, because he knew that I was going to show him up if he did not.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, Minister for Local Government!

Hon HELEN MORTON: I had asked a series of questions. I had visited the facility. I knew those men were being abused. I knew the police had been called in. I knew those men were being neglected. I knew about the bad treatment they were receiving, and it was because -

Hon Kim Chance: Of course you knew. You were the CEO of the health service.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I was not. I was a bloody member of Parliament by then. I had been out of there -

Hon Kim Chance: It was on your watch.

Hon HELEN MORTON: It was not. I was in this place by then.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! I realise that this debate will stir up emotions, but I urge members to just calm down a bit and allow Hon Helen Morton to be heard in silence.

Hon HELEN MORTON: The Leader of the House has his timing all wrong.

Hon Graham Giffard: Throw her out.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Graham Giffard, someone may be thrown out, but it will not be the member who has the call.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I left that place in 2002, unfortunately. My five-year contract had ceased. The thing that really bothered me about leaving - not that the Armadale redevelopment was fantastically successful, along with all the other things that had happened - was that homes for those men had not been provided for them. I made it my business to start asking questions every month. I put notices on the notice paper, made statements in the house and did whatever I could to make sure that, from a fairly disempowered position as an opposition member of Parliament, I would be able to push the government along on this issue.

What happened? Not long after I had been out there those men were moved surreptitiously into other facilities. The Leader of the House referred to a video that was mentioned in *The West Australian* - I brought copies of that in here last time I raised this issue, but I did not refer to any of it. At that time the men were sent back because Geoff Gallop had to stand by his promise to them. Martin Whitely had not done anything until that time. He had completely abandoned these people. Bob Kucera had abandoned them. To be fair to McGinty, he hardly knew anything about this; that is why I say he was involved to a lesser degree. He did not actually get involved. Martin Whitely was their local member of Parliament for three or four years before he changed electorates. He

did nothing for the men in that time. It was not until 2005 when I raised this issue in Parliament that Martin Whitely started acting. He knew I had enough information at that stage to start making life a bit unpleasant for him. I do not care about that. That was what I was going to do and the fact is that it happened the way it happened. Seven years later those men have now got their houses and that is fantastic. The Leader of the House should not even begin to imagine he knows half as much about this as I do.

Hon Kim Chance interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Ken Travers): Order! Hon Shelley Archer has the call.

Prime Minister's Plan to Tackle Abuse in Aboriginal Communities - Adjournment Debate

HON SHELLEY ARCHER (Mining and Pastoral) [10.26 pm]: I rise to support our Premier in his stand against John Howard for politicising what is considered to be an incredibly serious issue. John Howard talks about how he is going to walk into Aboriginal communities and ban alcohol. That is a great idea, but what programs does he have in place to assist those people who are addicted to alcohol? Alcoholism is an illness. There is absolutely no program in place to provide those people with rehabilitation or any resources from the drug and alcohol services to address those sorts of issues. What will happen to those Indigenous people? They will move to towns where they can get alcohol freely. If we implemented the plan in Western Australia and stopped alcohol being available in communities, those people would move to Broome. What sorts of problems would we have in Broome? There would be overcrowding in houses, continued drinking, and continuing problems with itinerants - "long grassers" as we call them - who live on the street. This would create more domestic violence, more sexual abuse and all those other sorts of antisocial behaviours in the streets that are the result of drinking. That is what will happen in the Northern Territory if we implement a program to ban alcohol in Aboriginal communities. Those people will leave the communities and go to towns so they can get a drink, because they are addicted to alcohol. John Howard has nothing in place.

The other program proposes to give every single woman and child a medical examination. The federal government is going to force women and children to undergo a medical examination. They will have to be vaginal and anal examinations because John Howard is talking about sexual abuse of these people. Young children will be abused in a different sense. Members can imagine a five-year-old being dragged in and told, "You have to have a medical examination; pop up on the table and we will have a look at you." Think of the stress that that child will go through. Okay, if we do all that - ban the alcohol, do the medical examinations and clean up the community - what programs has John Howard got in place following that? Absolutely none.

Then we come to Western Australia and the community development employment program. Howard has ripped the heart out of and closed down the CDEP in Western Australia. In the towns of Broome and Port Hedland in my electorate we have night patrols, women's refuges, youth services and sobering-up shelters. They will all close. There will be nothing for these people. What will happen? There will be more domestic violence because there will be no-one there to pick up these children and take them home or to a safe place.

There will be no-one to assist women who have been violated by drunken men, and in some cases by drunken women. Absolutely nothing will be in place after 1 July, because John Howard has decided to rip the heart out of the community development employment program, which was supporting Indigenous people. How serious is he? He is not serious at all! This is just about politicising Indigenous people and Indigenous problems. It is not about solving the problems of Indigenous people. It is not about working with Indigenous people. It is just about making John Howard look good. It is just about making John Howard look like a white knight in shining armour, going out to save the world! However, he will not save the world. He will destroy it. John Howard has destroyed Aboriginal communities. He has done nothing in 11 years to help Aboriginal communities. All of a sudden, he has found Indigenous issues! Fantastic, is it not!

Hon Robyn McSweeney: What are you going to do?

Hon SHELLEY ARCHER: I have done more with regard to the CDEP than the federal government has ever done. For the past two years, I have been writing to the federal government, requesting that it keep the CDEP running in these communities. Did I get a response?

Hon Robyn McSweeney interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Ken Travers): Order! In case Hon Robyn McSweeney has not noticed, Hon Shelley Archer is not taking her interjections. For Hon Robyn McSweeney to keep up this running commentary is not assisting Hansard, or anyone else, to follow this debate. I therefore ask the member to listen to Hon Shelley Archer in silence.

Hon SHELLEY ARCHER: One of the things this government is doing is establishing multipurpose centres. A multipurpose centre was put into Kalumburu. The work that the Indigenous people, the police and the Department for Community Development have done in that community has enabled some of these people to

come forward and talk about the abuse that they have suffered. That is the work that the Western Australian government is doing to try to assist these communities with the abuse that is taking place. The government is also running alcohol and drug programs in the community to assist people with their alcohol and drug addictions. The government has also set up a number of teams that are going around these communities and explaining to women the dangers of foetal alcohol syndrome. A plethora of programs have been set up by this state government. I have written to the federal government a dozen times about its failure to look at implications of the changes to the CDEP. I have not received one response - not from the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, not from the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and not from the Prime Minister! Not one of those persons has responded to my requests for information about what will happen to the CDEP. The only response that I have been provided with is, "We cannot provide you with that information"! Therefore, we have no idea about what will happen with the CDEP in Western Australia in the next 12 months, 18 months or two years if this federal government is, unfortunately, re-elected. I can only hope that Kevin Rudd will win the election and will implement a program that will ease the closure of the CDEP, instead of just coming along and slamming it shut.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 10.32 pm
