

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONS AMENDMENT BILL 2001

Second Reading

Resumed from 2 August.

HON N.F. MOORE (Mining and Pastoral - Leader of the Opposition) [7.44 pm]: I begin by contemplating the irony which we find ourselves experiencing at the moment. The first sentence of the second reading speech made by the Minister for Housing and Works states -

This Government is committed to restoring the confidence of people living and working in regional Western Australia.

At the very same time that that Bill is being debated in this House, the Government in the other House is ripping the heart out of the representation of regional Western Australia.

Point of Order

Hon TOM STEPHENS: The Leader of the Opposition is a reasonably experienced member of this House who would know that if he went too far down that path, even perhaps of reading only that sentence, he would be in breach of the standing orders.

The PRESIDENT: The Leader of the Opposition would be aware of the standing orders relating to current debates in the Legislative Assembly. I am sure he will proceed to address the Bill before us.

Debate Resumed

Hon N.F. MOORE: I refer to the policy of the Labor Party that is being implemented in Western Australia. The effect of the Labor Party policy is to take eight members of Parliament from the regions of Western Australia. Had it gone down the path of implementing all of its policy, 16 members of Parliament would have been removed, including eight from the Legislative Council. The Labor Party tells us that it will introduce legislation that will restore the confidence of people who live and work in regional Western Australia. The irony is that we are debating this Bill at the same time as the Labor Party rips the heart out of regional Western Australia.

We have a strange situation in which the Government is saying to the people of Western Australia that the good news is that it will give the public four regional ministers. That might be good news for some and bad news for others; however, that is the good news in this Bill. The bad news is that two of the regional ministers are city ministers of Parliament. The people will get two country ministers with a particular interest in Western Australia who will -

Hon Ken Travers: They will do a better job than you have ever done.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The member should not carry on like that; I have not even started yet.

The Government will provide four regional ministers, two of whom will reside in the city and will be given a couple of regions in the bush to make up the numbers. Fortunately, two of those ministers are sitting in the House today. Both of them are good regional ministers who represent their electorates with enthusiasm and vigour; there is no doubt about that. I am among the first to congratulate people who do a good job, and these two ministers do a good job in their electorates. Hon Tom Stevens can cast aspersions at me if he wishes; however, when the occasion demands it, I am happy to compliment him on the work he does.

The Bill before the House states that the existing law provides that there be one Minister for Regional Development and that he take responsibility for all the nine regional development commissions. That was a good system because one minister looked after regional development. Four, five or nine ministers would not compete with each other and have different views about regional development, as is proposed in this Bill. However, the Government has decided that it wants to have a minister in charge of each regional development commission. It is the Government's right to propose that and the Opposition will not oppose that because the Government is entitled to make those management decisions. It is my opinion that that decision will make no difference and may be counterproductive. I put this on the record because I want to examine how this will work in practice.

Two city ministers and two country ministers will look after the nine regional development commissions. I wonder how they will coordinate their activities and work together. I will ask the Minister for Regional Development to explain to me what his role is in all this because, no doubt, he will have some overarching role. Later, I will discuss the cabinet subcommittee that has a further overarching role. I am told that the Premier is the chairman of that subcommittee. There is also the Regional Development Council, which is another overarching body. At the end of the day, one wonders who is running what, why and how, and whether this

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whole thing will run right off the tracks. When the coalition was in government, a minister was responsible for regional development and for all the regional development commissions, and he worked with the Regional Development Council. There was a prospect of uniformity and continuity, and ministers did not compete with each other because they happened to be ministers for different regions. The system worked well. Although I would have preferred the minister to have been a Liberal Party minister rather than a National Party minister, that was a matter of internal coalition politics. However, most people would agree that Hon Hendy Cowan did a good job in that capacity, and the development commissions have grown into worthwhile organisations over time.

I will deal fleetingly with the history of the regional development commissions. They go back a long way. Before I became a member of Parliament, I remember that the Sir Charles Court Government appointed regional administrators in many of the regions, particularly in the north, when Sir Charles Court was the Minister Coordinating Economic and Regional Development. Those regional administrators were appointed to coordinate the activities of government agencies in the regions. For example, Des Clancy was the regional administrator of the Gascoyne. His job was to make sure that when a road was dug up for one service, it was not filled in and sealed before the next group came along and dug it up again. That is a simple analogy. However, it was designed to get coordination between the various agencies carrying out work in the regions. It was a good start to get complementary activity by the various government agencies within the regions.

Fundamentally, the problem is that most of the decisions that relate to regions are made in the city by disparate government agencies that do not talk to each other about what they are doing in the regions. Therefore, they can do things contrary to each other. It was a good idea to have somebody located in the regions whose job it was to keep an eye on that. Out of that came a system of advisory committees that basically provided advice to ministers, but did not have a significant executive role in any sense.

Over the years, the regional development commissions, or authorities, as they were at one time, grew up. They took on different powers and had legislative backing. Eventually, in 1993 the previous Government introduced a Bill into Parliament, which basically brought together all the regional development authorities under one minister. A uniform system was brought in for each development commission. It provided for development commissions across the whole of regional Western Australia for the first time ever. Nine were set up; they were the Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne, Mid West, Wheatbelt, Great Southern, Peel, South West and Goldfields-Esperance Development Commissions. The Act provided that they be responsible to one minister, and that seemed to work well. The Act also provided for the Regional Development Council, which consisted of the chairpersons of the various development commissions, plus some government appointees. The council had the job of providing a coordinated response to the minister on issues of importance, from a regional development perspective, across the State.

I had a quick look at the then Labor Opposition's attitude to the Bill in 1993. It supported it. In fact, it congratulated the Government for bringing it in at that time. As I said earlier, it worked well. Contrast that with the situation the coalition Government inherited in 1993, when a number of development authorities had been set up for all sorts of political purposes. We all know - I will not go into the detail of this - about the situation that existed with the South West Development Authority, the number of dollars it had and the way it was tied in with the Bunbury 2000 strategy that Julian Grill brought in prior to the 1983 election.

Hon Kim Chance: It was brilliant.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It was a brilliant political strategy.

Hon Kim Chance: Great for Bunbury too.

Hon Barry House: We are still paying for the office space in the Austmark tower.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I will come to that, because that is an important part of what happened in the 1980s.

Hon Kim Chance: It certainly put Bunbury on the map.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Bunbury has always been on the map. Bunbury is on the map more than any other city because of an old set of circumstances whereby the party that wins the seat of Bunbury wins the election. That seems to have been the case for as long as I can recall. Therefore, in 1983, just before Brian Burke was elected, there was a heavy push for the Labor Party to win Bunbury. Out of that came the brilliant strategy of Bunbury 2000. It was terrific for Bunbury and great for the south west, but not so good for anybody else. SWDA was set up. Clearly, it was a political organisation designed to ensure that the Labor Party maximised its electoral circumstances in the south west, particularly in the seat of Bunbury, knowing that if it could hang on to Bunbury, it could hang on to office.

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SWDA was set up, and regional ministers were appointed. For example, Hon Jeff Carr was appointed Minister for the Mid West. Suddenly a silver and glass office block appeared in Geraldton, along with another one in Northam, one in Kalgoorlie and one in Bunbury, all of which were set up to provide office space for the Government of the day, but particularly for the minister for that region and for the regional development authorities that were being set up. Therefore, the extraordinary situation in Geraldton, for example, was that the local member, Jeff Carr, was also the local minister, so in the nice, gleaming new office block was the minister's office alongside his electorate office. That happened in two or three places around the State. It was clearly a political strategy designed to maximise the re-election prospects of the local members in those regions.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon N.F. MOORE: This is a fact, so the member should not suggest that somehow or other it is not. As an aside, it was interesting not only that these buildings appeared but also how they got there. Bearing in mind who built them and got all this government business, I suggest that in some cases there was also a significant element of corruption. I cannot prove that there was corruption, so I will leave it as a suggestion. However, a number of entrepreneurs were given the capacity to construct buildings, knowing they would get a significant amount of government tenancy - for example, the Austmark building in Bunbury. When I was Minister for Sport and Recreation, about half the sport and recreation budget was needed to pay the rent in the Austmark building. That is an exaggeration, obviously, but the rent we were paying in Bunbury was way over the top of what one would expect to pay in Bunbury. We could not get out of it. The only way we could get out of that building was to find another tenant to take our place. Who would go into the Austmark building, with the rates the government agencies in it were being charged? We all know who built the Austmark building. He is now in London enjoying the celebrations of the 150 years of the America's Cup, and probably enjoying the fruits of his labours over many years. The same thing happened at Viskovich House in Kalgoorlie. I am not sure what happened in Northam and Geraldton. However, similar buildings were constructed. I am not sure who built them.

Hon Kim Chance: In Geraldton it was the SGIO building.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Of course it was. That was when the SGIO was part of the Government - it was almost part of the Labor Party, in fact. That all adds up. I would not be proud of those days if I were in the Labor Party. I am sure that most members these days are not proud of them.

During the eight years under the previous Government, we went back to one minister. The previous Government got rid of all the ministerial offices scattered around regional Western Australia, and the minister basically had a ministerial office in Perth. However, we are now going back to the old system, under which there will be four ministers, and the potential is to go back to the bad old days of the 1980s.

I ask the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development, during the second reading debate, to provide some assurance that we will not go back to those days, and to indicate whether the Government proposes to have ministerial offices in the regions, as it did in the 1980s. I do not have a problem with ministers having offices in the regions. As Minister for Mines, I had one in Kalgoorlie. The current Government has not carried on with that. Kalgoorlie is the centre of the mining industry in Western Australia, and, in my view, it was important for an office of the Minister for Mines to be situated in the middle of the mining industry. Members can argue all they like about whether it is a good thing; however, I was not a local lower House member seeking to get myself re-elected by setting up an office in Kalgoorlie, as opposed to the situation that occurred with Jeff Carr, David Smith and other ministers in the previous Labor Government. Without being critical, I am interested in knowing, in a blanket sense, whether the Government proposes to have ministerial offices in the regions and, if so, how it proposes to set them up. I hope the minister will advise that in his response.

I hope he will also indicate that the Government has no intention of asking its favourite friends in the private sector to build some new buildings in regional Western Australia in return for government tenancies. It is bad enough that the Labor Party itself built a building and filled it with rent-paying government agencies. That is a favourite trick of not only the Western Australian Labor Party, but also the national Labor Party. It makes a steady income from government agencies that are stuck paying significant rates because they cannot get out of the long leases. I hope we do not see any more of that. That was another black mark against the Labor Party when it last had its nose in the trough and access to the chequebook. We will see what happens on this occasion.

Let us look at what the Labor Party has set up since Dr Gallop became the Premier. Kim Chance, a country member, is responsible for the mid west, wheatbelt and the great southern. I do not know why he was given responsibility for the great southern; I guess nobody else was left to take it. I understand why he is responsible for the mid west and the wheatbelt, because they are part of his electorate and he knows them quite well. A parliamentary secretary also looks after the mid west, wheatbelt and great southern. That is another body in the mix about which I talked earlier and to which I will return in a moment. I do not know how this will work,

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although I have no doubt that the Minister for Regional Development will explain. Hon Kim Chance is the Minister for the Midwest, Wheatbelt and Great Southern, and a parliamentary secretary helps him in those three regions. Hon Thomas Gregory Stephens, BA, JP, MLC is Minister for the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne. I know the honourable member has a significant understanding of that part of the world. I do not have a problem with him being the minister for that area, although I suspect he will use the role for political purposes, as has always been his wont. He knows what those purposes are and that he will exploit that role to his heart's content. As the Minister for the Kimberley, he is able to use the jet to fly to the Kimberley whenever he likes. It does not make any difference that he is also the local member. As the Minister for the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne, he can visit those areas at any time with no purpose other than that of visiting his electorate.

Hon Tom Stephens: Explain how it works, from the basis of experience.

Hon N.F. MOORE: If I travelled in relation to the mines portfolio, it would be to visit a Department of Minerals and Energy office or open a building. My travel related to the Department of Minerals and Energy. However, being Minister for the Kimberley means that Hon Tom Stephens can travel to the Kimberley. He does not have to do any activity in relation to the portfolio, because Kimberley covers Kimberley.

What sort of questions are we able to ask the regional development ministers? Can we question them about things going on in the Kimberley, the Pilbara or the great southern and expect them to know the answers? I do not think they would. A particular school in the region for which Hon Tom Stephens has responsibility may not have anything to do with what he is doing. Therefore, he could hardly be expected to answer a question that should properly be answered by the Minister for Education.

Hon Kim Chance: If it were a development-type question and we were given a little notice, we should be able to answer almost anything.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I look forward to that. If people want to have all that goes with calling themselves the Minister for the South West or the Minister for the Kimberley, they must be responsible for more than answering questions with some notice. Ministerial responsibility is not a licence for Hon Tom Stephens to hop in the jet and fly to the Kimberley whenever he feels like it. The ministers must have a job. What is Hon Tom Stephens' job as Minister for the Kimberley? I ask that question of all the regional development ministers. What are their jobs? I was here when Hon Bob Pike was appointed parliamentary secretary. He was asked what his job was, and his reply was to tell the member to put it on notice. He did not know.

Hon Kim Chance: I have heard a worse answer.

Hon N.F. MOORE: A similar question can be asked of the regional development ministers. I think it has already been asked, and the answer is about as good as the one given by Hon Bob Pike.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson interjected.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I think it is amazing. The honourable minister always amazes me. Hon Tom Stephens is Minister for the Kimberley. He may well do a very good job. I hope so, for the sake of those regions. On the other hand, it may well be a simple way of ensuring that he can fly to the Kimberley without having to worry about things like housing, works or local government - although if he put his mind to it, he could go anywhere for local government.

Hon Kim Chance: I am happy to organise a briefing from the chief executive officers of the regional development commissions in my three areas to help you understand the way it works in my regions and the relationship between the minister and the development commissions.

Hon N.F. MOORE: That is a very generous offer. However, we are discussing a Bill the Government has brought to the Parliament that says that instead of having one minister for regional development, we should have four, two of whom are city members. I am asking the Government what is going on in regional development; I am not asking the chief executive officers.

Hon Kim Chance: The minister will do that in his response. However, I am happy to help out.

Hon Barry House: That also sounds like a repeat of the 1980s. They always wheeled out their officers. They would not front the public as members or ministers.

Hon Kim Chance: I am giving the member access to my CEOs; I could not be more generous.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is easy to tell the members who have been here a while and who have seen all this before. That is why I am raising these issues; I have seen it before. I also saw regional development repaired between 1993 and 2000. Not everything was perfect, but it was better than what we had. I am raising the spectre of reverting to what we had in the 1980s.

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Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Hon Ken Travers probably was not even born then. A man of his maturity on these issues is obviously very young. He obviously does not know what happened in the 1980s. If he did, he would be the first to say that we should get away from that. I raise these issues because it is an important fact of political life that regional development went through a very bad time during the 1980s. The portfolio was used for the grossest of political purposes. I want to make sure it does not happen again. I am sure the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development will tell me I have no need to fear. I am looking forward to hearing that. I am also trying to figure out how the new system will work. Hon Kim Chance and Hon Tom Stephens are responsible for the mid west, wheatbelt, great southern, Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne. That is a large part of the State. They are country members who understand what goes on in regional Western Australia. Their appointments are a good thing, to the extent that having them appointed ministers is a good thing. However, Hon James Andrew McGinty is the Minister for Peel and the South West.

Hon Kim Chance: A Kalgoorlie boy.

Hon Ken Travers: And Bunbury.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: A man of all seasons.

Hon Barry House: He was run out of Bunbury a long time ago.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I am disappointed that he was born in Kalgoorlie, because so was I.

Hon Louise Pratt: Me too.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Was she? Good grief.

Hon Kim Chance: At least half the State was.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Well, at least somebody was born there.

Hon Jim McGinty is now the Minister for Peel and the South West. He is also the Attorney General, Minister for Justice and Legal Affairs and Minister for Electoral Affairs. He has a fairly significant portfolio load, so I suspect that he will not spend a lot of time in Peel and the south west because he also needs to look after Fremantle, the metropolitan area, Augusta and all of those places.

Hon Barry House interjected.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Well, I suppose that could be said. Perhaps that is why he got the south west job. Did he actually chop down that tree or is it just a myth?

Hon Barry House: Well, it mysteriously died.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Members would be aware of that tree that was blocking the view and that mysteriously died. I am sure the Greens (WA) are aware of it too. It is absolutely disgraceful.

On top of all that, we have Hon Nick Griffiths as Minister for Goldfields-Esperance.

Hon Tom Stephens: He comes from one the mining centres of the world - Wales.

Hon N.F. MOORE: That is probably the closest that anybody in the Cabinet comes to knowing anything about mining. He was born in Wales!

Hon Kim Chance: So was Hon Bob Kucera.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Well, that is a double whammy!

Out of these four ministers who will look after regional Western Australia, only two of them know anything about it. How often will Hon Nick Griffiths spend in Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Esperance when he has other things to do in Perth as well look after his own electorate? What happens when he goes to Cabinet and says, "My electorate wouldn't mind having that" but his regional development commission says "We would like something in Kalgoorlie", something that may compete in the budget situation with the other thing. Which side will Hon Nick Griffiths be on? It is not hard to judge that, is it? He will have a conflict of interest. Hon Tom Stephens has no conflict of interest because his electorate and the region he is looking after are the same. Hon Nick Griffiths took over the Goldfields-Esperance portfolio because Hon Clive Brown, who was originally in charge of all these things, including the Goldfields-Esperance region, had too much to do. It was a good move by the Government to take something away from him and give the people of the Goldfields-Esperance region at least some hope of seeing a minister.

Hon Ken Travers: The minister visited the region quite regularly when he was responsible for it.

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Hon N.F. MOORE: Hon Ken Travers would know all about that! He is a genius, so we must always assume that what he says is correct!

What we have now is a rather strange structure for regional development in Western Australia. We have the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development, who happens also to be the Minister for the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne, so he has two jobs. He is a minister for three regions but he is also the overarching minister, presumably. We then have Hon Kim Chance, Hon Jim McGinty and Hon Nick Griffiths as ministers for other regions. Therefore, they are subservient in some respects to the overarching minister, who happens to be Hon Tom Stephens. However, we also have the cabinet subcommittee chaired by the Premier. I would be interested to know how this all fits into some hierarchical structure, because it seems to me that the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development - who under our system used to be Hon Hendy Cowan, who was responsible for everything - is now one of four, subject to a chairman who is the Premier.

Hon W.N. Stretch: You have to have someone in charge with that set up. I agree with you.

Hon N.F. MOORE: Perhaps Hon Bill Stretch is right, and maybe the Premier is there because he cannot rely on them to do the job on their own. On top of that, there is Hon Francis Logan, who is the parliamentary secretary. Does he go to the cabinet subcommittee meetings? I would be interested to know that too, down the track, just so I know how it all works. What we have here is the potential for significant competition and for ministers to be doing their own thing and going off in all sorts of different directions without anybody being in charge, other than the chairman of a cabinet subcommittee, which meets I do not know how often. There is also another minister who thinks that it is his job to be in charge of all that anyway. Why would one have a Minister for Regional Development? What is Hon Tom Stephens's role as Minister for Regional Development as opposed to being the minister for the three regions, and taking into account that he is a member of a cabinet subcommittee chaired by the Premier? I would like the minister to tell me what his job is. It is becoming more confusing the more I read about this. I must confess that I am easily confused, as the minister will probably tell us afterwards.

I read a very interesting speech by the member for Pilbara on this issue. He has had a long and significant interest in regional development, having been involved in the Pilbara Development Commission in a very significant way. He could not believe it when he read about this. He is a former member of the Labor Party and he could not work out who was doing what and why, and why the Government would create a structure like this when the one in place was not too bad and was working quite well.

Hon Dee Margetts: Will you be voting against it?

Hon N.F. MOORE: No; I have already said that we will not be opposing it, because the Government is entitled to make as many mistakes as it likes.

Hon Dee Margetts: But you have not said anything nice about it.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I have not found anything nice about it yet, but I have not finished either. We have a little way to go yet. I said that Hon Tom Stephens would probably do a good job as Minister for the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne, but I do not know what his job is as Minister for Regional Development. That is what I am trying to find out at this particular point in time.

I also want to throw into that mix, as I did earlier, the Regional Development Council. The Regional Development Council, set up under the 1993 Act, consists of the chair of each commission, three persons appointed by the minister. What is its role vis-a-vis the cabinet subcommittee and with respect to the Minister for Regional Development? Does it report to the Minister for Regional Development, the cabinet subcommittee or the conglomeration of four ministers who happen to be regional development ministers? What we have now is nine regional development commissions reporting to five ministers, if we include the Premier, plus a Regional Development Council, which is presumably reporting to the Minister for Regional Development. However, we will need to find out if that is correct or not.

I want to spend a few moments talking about regional development generally and indicate some of the concerns I have about where it has been, where it might be going, and for what its worth, suggest how it should go in the future. I have a lot of enthusiasm for regional development and I think the second speech I made in this House was all about decentralisation and regional development. It has been an issue that I have found of considerable interest over the years. There is no doubt, in a State like Western Australia, which is basically a city State in which the vast majority of the people live in the metropolitan area and a tiny minority live in the bush, that it is a very city-centric State. It is very easy for government agencies to ignore the fact that a very big part of the world is out there over the Darling Range and north and south of the metropolitan area. We need to put in place a system of government administration that gives the regions a chance to have their voices heard, their needs addressed and their potential maximised, because in Western Australia the vast majority of the wealth of this

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State comes from its regions. As a former Minister for Mines I am aware that some \$20 billion of the State's earnings comes from the mining industry. That is the major industry in Western Australia. I think the other day somebody in the other place was saying that the wealth of Western Australia comes from the city. That was a member defending the one vote, one value legislation. How anybody could say that the wealth of Western Australia comes from the city is beyond me. I know the city is productive, but it essentially lives off the export earnings of our rural industries, which are basically the mining and petroleum industries, which are far and away our biggest industries, and those such as agriculture, fishing, pearling and tourism. Therefore, it is important, if we are to maximise the potential of the regions and the industries contained therein, for us to have in place a system of government administration that works well and does the things I referred to a few moments ago. At the same time it must be recognised that Western Australia has 140 local authorities, who also see a role for themselves in regional development, particularly in their own municipalities. There have been problems over the years, when local authorities and regional development commissions get in each other's way, and each thinks the other is treading on its patch. This should not happen. It is important for regional development commissions to understand their role, and that this role is not the same as that of local authorities.

Regional development commissions, in my judgment, are set up to do two things. First, they provide a coordinated government response to the activities of various government agencies in the regions; a bit like the old regional administrators. They must make sure that each department knows what the others are doing within each region. Second, their main job is to become involved in the economic development of the regions. One of the aspects of the existing Act that I have never liked very much, and went along with only grudgingly, was the involvement of regional development commissions in social development in the regions. I have never seen this as a valid role for the commissions. There are enough other agencies doing that without the need for regional development commissions to be involved. That is part of their brief, but it does not help their cause to become involved in issues that do not relate to the big picture economic issues affecting the regions. Commissions should be involved in the big picture economic development issues within the regions. There is plenty to do in that part of their portfolio. A number of industries need assistance and support from government agencies, either to get started, or to help them grow. A simple example is tourism, an industry in which I was involved as minister. It is a growing industry in Western Australia, and the regions are the attraction in Western Australia. Good regional tourism policies are needed if that industry is to be maximised, and regional development commissions have a role in that, in concert with the Tourism Commission.

Some thought also needs to be given to where the regional development commissions fit into the government structure. Should they be independent of government, and be able to say what they think about issues and put forward proposals independent of government, or should they be seen as a part of the government bureaucracy? The member for Pilbara argued very strongly for the independence of the commissions, so that they can actively promote their cause, without any fear of being gagged by the minister. In the past regional advisory committees were set up to advise the ministers, who would then take that advice to the appropriate other minister in government, if there was such a person, and the development commissions were to be seen and not heard. Maybe the Minister for Regional Development could tell me what the Government's position is on this matter. Are the development commissions able to have a very forthright and up-front role on the matters they think are of concern, even though that may mean saying things that are contrary to the Government's point of view? Will regional development commissions that have a view contrary to government policy be able to publicly state that view, or will they be constrained to maintaining a confidential approach to their minister?

I have always taken the view that regional development organisations of some sort are very important, in the context of the geography of Western Australia. It is such a sparsely populated part of the world, and because of the city-centric nature of government in Western Australia, it is essential that these commissions get the ear of government. There may be some advantage in having four ministers instead of one, because that will give the development commissions more chance to get to the minister. This Government has only 14 ministers, and I wonder whether reducing the number from 17 to 14 and giving these ministers unreasonable portfolios is any better than having 17 ministers with one minister taking control of the regional development portfolio. The Opposition will wait to see whether this situation means that Hon Tom Stephens can get to the Kimberley or the Pilbara more often than Hendy Cowan could, or if Hon Jim McGinty can get to Augusta more often than Hendy Cowan could in the old days.

The regions are pretty enthused about their commissions, and do not want anyone tampering with them, and making them any less capable of delivering the goods than they are now. To return to the local government issue: if there is one sticking point in all this, it is that the development commissions must be made to keep out of local government, and try to work together with it. If the local government is against the development commission, there is little chance of making much progress. Development commissions should also keep out of social issues, and avoid being minor issue lobby groups. There is a difficulty here, if the commissions are to be

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given independence. Steps must be taken to prevent them from becoming involved in issues such as whether the local parents and citizens association is serving the right sort of lunch for the children at the school. Regional development commissions have become involved in issues as petty as that on some occasions. The message must be sent to these organisations that their job is the big economic picture, and they must not get in the way of other organisations in the region. It is also important that the regional development commissions develop proper relationships with other government agencies in the regions. Many government agencies, particularly the bigger ones, that are providing services in the regions, have a regional structure. Sometimes this can come up against the activities of a regional development commission. I do not know how this can best be done, because everybody knows that all government agencies, and ministers as well, become very territorial after a while, protective of what they have, and often are not prepared to share and coordinate with other organisations. It does not matter how hard ministers might try, they generally do not succeed in getting agencies out of their own backyards. Over time, these ministers find they themselves become territorial, and start to defend their own agency against some other minister's agency that happens to have a different point of view. If the Department of Education, for example, is running a regional system that is important to the way it delivers its services, it should work together with the regional development commission, and not be at odds with it. If a regional development commission has a different point of view from another agency that is running a regional program, how will that be sorted out? If the regional development commission has the right to say things publicly, then suddenly the Minister for Education may have a beef with the Minister for Regional Development over some dispute between two agencies. It is unclear how that can be resolved without removing the right of the regional development commission to make public comments. This will then limit the capacity of the commission to get its message across in its own region.

I raise that as another example of where problems have developed in the past and where they may develop in the future unless the Minister for Regional Development can get across the message to the regional development commissions that their role is one of big picture economic development, and that is what they should stick to. I am not sure how he will get across that message if he has three other ministers working with him. The regional development commissions should do everything they can to develop industry within regions, and they should keep out of areas looked after by other agencies. They have a responsibility to let the minister know if there is a problem with another agency and if there is room for improvement. It is not their job to get involved in the day-to-day activities of other government agencies.

It is a simple Bill. It takes away one minister and brings in another four. I am not sure whether that is good news or bad news. It depends on how well it works. The Opposition will not oppose the Bill. The Opposition looks forward to seeing how the new arrangements will work in practice. There will be, inevitably, competition between the regional development ministers as they compete with each other for government resources. With only one minister, decisions can be made on behalf of the Government about how resources are allocated around the regions. Ministers would not be arguing with each other in Cabinet as they tried to look after the interests of their regions. We will now have a situation in which four ministers will be looking after different regions of the State. One minister will be slightly pre-eminent from the others. The Premier will probably get involved. How will they reach agreement about the allocation of resources to regions? If the past is any indication of what may happen in the future, there is no doubt that the South West Development Commission will get a heap of money and the other commissions will have to fight for the balance. Let us hope that does not happen, as Bunbury and the south west are going along swimmingly at the moment. The developments in Bunbury over the past 10 to 15 years have been extraordinary. Bunbury looks magnificent and the south west is going from strength to strength in a number of industries that have grown up in recent times. Wine and tourism are not traditional Western Australian industries, but they are growing strongly in that region.

Hon Barry House: Do not forget mining and forestry.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I am talking about the industries that are not traditional. I am talking about the ones that have grown because people have asked what else they can do besides running cattle and developing forestry.

The mid west is suffering at present for a number of reasons. It needs additional support and help. The great southern has a range of new industries. The goldfields has its ups and downs because it is very reliant on one industry. The regional development commission in the goldfields-Esperance area needs to look at diversifying industry. Other things need to be done in the goldfields that will give that economy the chance to flatten out the peaks and troughs. The tourism industry in the goldfields is one that can be promoted significantly, but there must be others. The manufacturing of mining equipment is a fledgling industry in the goldfields, but it has huge potential. The Kimberley is advancing in leaps and bounds, although its traditional industries are not growing very much. The region has new industries in the form of tourism and pearling. They are growing dramatically. The Pilbara will continue to be heavily dependent on the resource sector. Until now, it has had a steady ride. Like other regions in Western Australia, it needs other industries. A fundamental role of the regional

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development commissions is to find other industries that can be attracted to Western Australia. They need to determine which appropriate industries can be attracted. It is then for the Government to be innovative and flexible in providing support for the development of new industries in the regions. I am not sure whether the previous Government was flexible enough in respect of those sorts of things. There is only a limited amount that State Governments can do to attract industry; in most cases, it is a taxation issue. Commonwealth Governments need to be persuaded to be flexible with their taxation regimes, and to use them as a vehicle to attract industries to the regions of Western Australia and Australia.

A lot has been said about the city-country divide. A lot of it has been exaggerated in the minds of those who talk about it. The previous Government was very sympathetic to the regions of Western Australia. State Governments are limited to a certain extent in what they can do for major industries. The federal Government has control of most of the serious levers that make a big difference. We must continue to work in regional Western Australia on the basis of trying to create the environment that will attract new industries and give existing ones the chance to survive. It is all very well for city people to say that no more trees should be chopped down, regardless of whether it gets rid of an industry. People must think from the point of view of the people who live in those parts of the State.

I hope the new structure will work as I am keen to ensure that the system that was working well in the past is not set back in any way by four ministers being involved, all of whom have other things to do. I hope the portfolios are not seen as duties that are tacked on. I think Hon Nick Griffiths' responsibilities were tacked on. There is no relationship between the racing and gaming portfolio and the goldfields-Esperance portfolio. There is only a relationship in terms of racing, not portfolios.

Hon Tom Stephens: Two-up.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The member should not talk about his constituents like that. All regions have two-up. They can have it to their hearts' content. I remember the day when that rule was brought in by the Burke Government. Since then, anyone who wants to apply for a two-up licence can get one. That is why the genuine game is going broke, but that is another story.

When a minister holds the portfolios of racing and gaming, government enterprises and goldfields-Esperance tacked on the end, it is clear that it was taken off one minister and given to another minister because the first one had too much to do. It gives the impression that the goldfields-Esperance portfolio is something that the minister does at five o'clock in the afternoon for half an hour after he has done everything else. I know that Hon Nick Griffiths is a good and honourable minister who does his job well. He does not answer any questions, so he must be doing something right!

Hon N.D. Griffiths: I learnt that from you.

Hon N.F. MOORE: I know he will take his responsibilities seriously. There may be other ministers who do not have the same enthusiasm for all their portfolios, and will see regional development commission responsibilities as tack ons. I hope that does not happen. One of the good things about the old system was that the Minister for Regional Development had that portfolio as one of his main jobs. He had only one other job. His main job was to make sure that all the regional development commissions operated properly, the council worked well and everything was on track. With four ministers, all of whom have other things to do, it may well be that they will ignore the needs of the particular region if they regard the portfolios as a mere tack on. It is vital that we get this right. We cannot afford to miss the mark by going down the path of what seems to be a good political strategy of allocating a number of regions to a minister. It may be a better system for the Government to give each of the nine regions its own minister. The new system will involve varying workloads and tack ons. I see that as I look down the Gallop ministry, as reconstituted for the seventeenth time on 1 July 2001. The Opposition will not oppose this Bill.

Hon Peter Foss: The ministry keeps changing to keep us confused.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It does. There is a book that lists the reconstituted ministries. Each time the ministry changes a new list is put in. The Gallop Government fills up half the book.

Hon Peter Foss: It is the third Gallop Government.

Hon N.F. MOORE: It is more than that. The Government realised that it did not have a Minister for Tourism and it had to tack one on. It then realised that it did not have a Minister for Mines, but it was too frightened to have one. It did not want to face the embarrassment of saying that it forgot to appoint a Minister for Mines. It would have had to admit to two mistakes.

Hon Peter Foss: Someone realised he had to earn some money.

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Hon N.F. MOORE: That is right. I have read out the latest Gallop ministry. The four ministers are regional ministers with a regional development minister in charge. I conclude by saying to the minister, not in any critical sense, that I will be grateful if he can explain how it will work. If he can explain that it will work well, I will be the first to congratulate him, but if he makes a serious mess of it, I will criticise him to my heart's content. The reason the Government did this was not for any proper management process, but because it wanted to say to the people out there that they have their own minister. If I was living in Bunbury and was told that my minister was Mr McGinty, I would say that that was not an improvement on what I had before; in fact, it would be worse.

Hon N.D. Griffiths: You would be in the minority.

Hon Peter Foss: He's the minister on the way to Augusta.

Hon N.F. MOORE: The people in Kalgoorlie do not know Hon Nick Griffiths yet, but if I were in Kalgoorlie and was told that my minister was Hon Nick Griffiths, I would also say that he was worse than what I had. The people in the Kimberley might say that having Hon Tom Stephens is a good thing. There are some good points and some bad points, just like the curate's eggs. I conclude by saying that this must be taken seriously; it should not just be a political exercise. The Government must make it work. If it does not work, it should admit that and go back to the old system, if that will work better than the one in place. The Opposition does not oppose the Bill. I look forward with great interest to seeing how it will work in practice.

HON DEE MARGETTS (Agricultural) [8.41 pm]: I was among those who received a letter in mid-July from the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development; the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne. In seeking ideas for nominations for the regional development commissions, Hon Tom Stephens clearly wrote in his second paragraph that -

The role of the Commissions is to coordinate and promote sustainable development to achieve strong and vibrant regions.

I took note of that, of course, and when I received notice about the mid west economic forum, I carefully looked and looked through the program, but I could not find anything that related to sustainable development. I thought the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development; the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne must have got this reference from somewhere. In the meantime, I contacted the ministry and asked whether it had a charter. I was told that it did not, but that there were some policy documents. I was also told that I should look at the legislation. I examined the existing legislation and discovered a list of the objects and functions of the commission, but it did not actually state the role emphasised by the minister that -

The role of the Commissions is to coordinate and promote sustainable development to achieve strong and vibrant regions.

It then set out the aims, which I guess equate to the objects and functions of the commission. It seemed to me that I needed to find the source of this statement. In the end, I discovered a document called "A Regional Development Policy for Western Australia". This is the most recent policy document relating to regional development. The foreword was written by the former Premier, Hon Richard Court MLA, and former minister, Hon HENDY COWAN MLA. The most recent policy document for regional development in Western Australia appears to be the place to look. I looked at pages 7 and 8, which detail regional development principles. The document said -

The foundations of the Regional Development Policy have been established by seeking from stakeholders the values fundamental to quality of life in regional Western Australia. The specific values of regional development, which are clear and unequivocal, are as follows.

These include a strong economy, vibrant, cohesive communities, sustainable environmental management, and responsive governments. It seems that the underlying principles are that -

The policy recognises the primary concepts for sustainability contained in the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD), endorsed by Western Australia in 1992, of "using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased".

It goes on to say that -

Local Agenda 21 recognises that the integration and balance of social, economic and environmental aspirations of any local community are essential to attain sustainability. The principles of Agenda 21, which is planned to be adopted by all Western Australian Local Governments by 2000, are supported by this policy.

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The accepted principles of social justice - equity, access, participation and human rights - are strongly promoted by the policy.

Implementation will also be guided by the principles of the National Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

That is a fairly strong statement. As I said, this statement was fully accepted by the previous Government. Members may be pleased to hear that the process was outlined on page 5 of the document. It said -

This policy has been developed to ensure a whole-of-government approach to regional development. The policy has been formulated through the Regional Development Council, the peak advisory body to the Minister for Regional Development, and was overseen by a Policy Steering Committee. Chaired by the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Commerce and Trade, the committee included industry and community representatives, the Chairman of the Regional Development Council and Chief Executive Officers of the Western Australian Municipal Association and 14 State Government agencies. Steering Committee members are listed in the Appendices.

While I have not always considered trade and development policies to be warm and friendly, I thought that given the level of endorsement the policy appears to have and given the clear statement about the role of the commission made by the current Minister for Local Government and Regional Development, I was surprised that it was not yet clearly stated in the legislation. I suppose it is because these policy documents have taken a long time to put together. There have, of course, been regional development strategies for a long time, but these are the most recent policy documents. I assume that the current Government also endorses these principles. It is not unreasonable for the stated goals of this legislation to be clear for the purpose of accountability and that the objects of the legislation match the policies which presumably guide it and which were clearly outlined, repeated and emphasised by the current minister. I do not see a great deal of point in the development commissions operating if they are not looking to sustainable development, because the opposite of sustainable development is unsustainable development. I am sure we do not want the regional development commissions to be supporting or promoting unsustainable development, whether it is socially, economically or environmentally unsustainable.

Hon Peter Foss: What about sustainable non-development?

Hon DEE MARGETTS: Yes. Therefore, I foreshadow that I believe it will be of assistance to everybody if we clarify this situation. Members will note that I have circulated an amendment to that effect, which will simply add the words that appear to be strongly enunciated in both the policy and the current minister's statement on the role of the commissions. It has been brought to my attention that there are rules about what is considered an amendment and what will be accepted. I have looked carefully at those issues and whether this Chamber can consider my foreshadowed amendment about whether the policies currently guiding the regional development commissions can be reflected in the legislation; whether the legislation is accountable; and whether the auditor has everything he needs to guide him in his audits when he looks at the performance of the regional development commissions. What I am proposing is perfectly legitimate under those terms. The Clerk has helpfully suggested that one could consider a number of issues when looking at whether such a foreshadowed amendment is right for this Chamber to consider, one of which is the scope of the memorandum. In this instance, the memorandum mentions such things as looking at the requirements of the Financial Administration and Audit Act and also recognising that this strengthens the existing arrangement by making each regional development commission accountable to the minister responsible for the corresponding region. To be accountable, the ministers and the regions would need to know what the policies of that Bill are.

Let us look at the title of the Bill. We must look at what is relevant in this legislation, and of course the title is a good place to start. It has been mentioned that the word "relevant" does not mean identical to what is in the Bill; it means for the purpose relating to or bearing on the matter at hand. An amendment may be relevant even if it proposes to amend a provision in the parent Act that is not dealt with in the Bill if the amendment is otherwise relevant to the Bill's subject matter. I would argue that there is not much more relevance to the Bill's subject matter than the issue of accountability to the policies of the development commissions, if that has currently been left out by omission or the policies have only recently been developed. We should also look at the title of this Bill because it is a very good guideline of what is or should be included in any amendments. The title reads "Regional Development Commissions Amendment Bill 2001". That is about as broad as it is long. The long title is "An Act to amend the Regional Development Commissions Act 1993". Once again, there are no problems about the title.

The Government argues that the Bill has been put together to make the regional development commissions more accountable. The regional development policy of Western Australia recognises, as I have mentioned, the primary concepts of sustainability in regional development. This amendment which I foreshadow will bring the Regional Development Commissions Act 1993 into line with the existing policy and accountability requirements

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of the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1985. It will provide an additional criterion by which the performance of the regional development commissions can be assessed and by which the ministers for each region can be more accountable to the goals which are the primary purposes of the commission. I am afraid that is not being exhibited currently by commissions, such as the Mid West Development Commission, when they are involved, for instance, in organising the mid west economic summit but do not actually recognise the impact that the shortage of water, the costs or the ecological consequences of using large quantities of fossil fuel-based electricity, or other economic activities might have on development. Many people in the community are concerned that regional development has become narrowly focused, which may be different from what was intended in the first place. It seems to be a little different from what was intended in this latest policy of last year, and that is to look at employment creation.

Everybody should know that the major employment creation engines in our community are small business. Currently, a number of the development commissions may have gone astray in that they seem to be concentrating on what has recently been described as the “big picture” item; that is, assuming that exports are the only real side of economics, when the structure of a large part of our economy is based on secondary and tertiary sectors, which is also extremely important. I am talking about the retail trade and also the provision of services, computer services, intellectual property and so on. The issue now is that a slightly outdated idea still exists in regional development commissions. Our policy is a little more advanced, but the regional development commissions have not caught up to the policy, because they forget that the major development potential for creating employment within their regions is probably local small business, and diversifying and using better the resources that exist in the regions. It is not about the cargo-cult attitude of waiting for some enormous overseas investor to come in to mine a mineral and do some basic processing to it for export in bulk. That is one definition of development, but it actually leaves out a great deal of what the community is expecting of Governments and development commissions.

I would argue that on all the measures of relevance for the scope of the Bill - the title of the Bill, the issues relating to accountability and so on - my foreshadowed amendment cannot be argued to be irrelevant in any way, shape or form. This Chamber may well decide that it does not want to have the word “sustainable” in the Regional Development Commissions Act, and the commissions may have their own reasons for wanting to pretend that unsustainable development is somehow valid or viable or we should be promoting or encouraging unsustainable development. However, we have to get with it, we have to get where the community is at and wanting us to go, and the first thing we have to recognise is that the Legislative Council perhaps needs to keep government accountable, and this is a very important way of doing it.

Strong arguments have been put for a number of Bills, and I am sure most members in this Chamber when they have been in opposition have argued strongly about the necessity for the Chamber to consider amendments. That includes an argument by Hon Tom Stephens about a native title Act. However, that argument on relevance was struck out because he was dealing with an issue which the powers in the Bill precluded this House from considering. That is not the case with my foreshadowed amendment. There is no problem with the powers of the Bill; they are clearly enunciated in the policy and are therefore clearly within the scope of the Bill. They are clearly within the bailiwick of this Chamber to consider and I urge, when I have the chance to put my foreshadowed amendment, that it is first, considered and, second, supported by this Chamber, because it is time that we came into the year 2001.

If this regional development policy for Western Australia is not the policy upon which the regional development commissions operate, the minister should tell us what is the policy under which the regional development commissions are meant to operate and then perhaps put in another one. However, if this is the policy and it has gone through, we are not talking about warm, fuzzy environmental groups here that have put in their input; we are talking about the decision-makers from all levels who would normally be party to such agreements. If this is the policy, I guess it is time for the legislation to clearly reflect that and to be accountable to its own policy. That is clearly what the legislation asks us to do. It is clearly within the scope of the legislation, and I urge members to support that amendment when it is put.

From the point of view of the legislation, even within the principles that have been enunciated by the Clerk, it is not the case that it must be only part of the legislation in the amendment Act. It must relate only to the scope of the Bill, and clearly my amendment does that. Honourable members should consider that and consider that this is a chance to put something right - not add something new - that has been recognised in the planning processes of the regional development commissions.

HON DERRICK TOMLINSON (East Metropolitan) [9.00 pm]: I never cease to be intrigued by the way in which the human mind works. I was working outside the Chamber when Hon Norman Moore commenced his

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speech. I was trying to concentrate on an important treatise I was reading while at the same time listening to and assimilating the words of Hon Norman Moore.

Hon Peter Foss: They were excellent.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Yes, they were. While I was juggling those two tasks, I heard the voice of Gough Whitlam who repeated, "The States are an historical anachronism." For the life of me I could not relate what Hon Norman Moore was saying and what I was reading to that voice from the past. I was forced to give up trying to read the treatise and I listened to Hon Norman Moore and his description of the edifices that were built in Bunbury, Northam and Geraldton by a previous Government in the name of regional development.

I tried to recall where I had heard Mr Whitlam speak those words, when it suddenly struck me. In 1975 I attended a conference on new federalism at the Australian National University and one of the speakers was Mr Gough Whitlam. It was before November 1975, so he must still have been the Prime Minister of Australia. Mr Whitlam spoke about the model of new federalism, which he had developed and published in 1972. Central to that thesis was the proposition that the States are an historical anachronism. The proposition for new federalism developed by Mr Whitlam in 1972 was to have a central Government at Canberra, to eliminate the historical anachronisms of the States and create regional administrations. The Whitlam Government had already started down that path with its Department of Urban and Regional Development - DURD, with a D.

Hon N.D. Griffiths: Please be careful, this is not the Legislative Assembly.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: That is why I was careful to distinguish between what I am saying and what the Attorney General might have said in another place. DURD had fostered a regional development program through initiatives such as the Albury-Wodonga Development Commission. Albury-Wodonga is midway between Sydney and Melbourne and straddles the border of the two States of Victoria and New South Wales. The Albury-Wodonga Development Commission was to attract, in the first instance, industrial development and, with industrial development, social and community development in what was to be a new regional development centre. As I recall, the then Premier of South Australia, Don Dunstan, was the only State Premier to accept the invitation to have a regional development centre in his State. I forget the name of the regional development centre that was proposed to be outside Melbourne.

The concept of new federalism, developed by Mr Whitlam, to eliminate the States -

Hon N.D. Griffiths: The term "new federalism" was a term used by Mr Whitlam's successor, Mr Fraser, to deal with his policies.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I beg to differ.

Hon N.D. Griffiths: You may beg to differ, but you are wrong.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I will differ because there were two concepts of new federalism. The first was the concept developed and published by Mr Whitlam in 1972. I have a copy of that on my bookshelf at home that sits alongside *Mein Kampf*. That concept of new federalism was Mr Whitlam's concept. The new federalism coined by Malcolm Fraser in -

Hon N.D. Griffiths: Was to have us introduce company tax!

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: The member should let me respond to his argument. The concept of new federalism by Malcolm Fraser was of a different kind. Malcolm Fraser argued for the restoration of the independent taxing powers of the States, and to give to the States a discretionary authority to impose a surcharge or to allow a reduction of income tax within their own territories. Hon Nick Griffiths may recall that Neville Wran, as Premier of New South Wales, effectively attacked this as double taxation in the 1975 New South Wales election.

Hon N.D. Griffiths: The New South Wales election held on 1 May 1976.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Neville Wran's argument demolished the Liberal opposition of the day because of this double taxation proposition. Two distinct concepts of new federalism were developed in the 1970s. One was about the elimination of the States altogether and the creation of new regional administrations. The other was about the restoration of the independent economic power of the States by giving them discretionary authority over income tax.

Hon N.D. Griffiths: What you say is true, but the term "new federalism" was not one of Mr Whitlam's terms.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Tomorrow, I will bring the publication in which Mr Whitlam's 1972 treatise on new federalism is published. It was clearly so.

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I will refer to the Bill itself, and I will start with this concept of new federalism. The first proposition was to eliminate the States. The second proposition centralised decision making with what we would now call the federal Government, but what was called in this model the central Government, in Canberra. That Government would be responsible for the development of policy and the legislation of authority for such policies. That same Government would also be responsible for raising revenues to fund those policies and programs. It would have the responsibilities for policy formulation, program development and legislative authority, and revenue powers to implement those policies and programs. All the decision making would be at the centre. The regional administrations were seen to be forms of agglomerations of local government authorities according to geography and communities of economic interest. The regional authorities, rather than Governments, would be responsible for the implementation and administration of the programs initiated at the centre. There would not be an independent policy formulation authority, an independent legislative authority or an independent resource authority. The regional authorities would simply administer policies developed at the centre. That is a rather neat model of public administration - one body at the centre responsible for policy formulation, legislation and revenue raising, with regional authorities responsible for administration and management to follow the directions or prescriptions from the centre. That is a neat and, in some respects, efficient model of public administration.

I will compare that notion of public administration and regional development with the notion of regional development that has evolved here in Western Australia. Historically, we have the anachronism of a State Government and a large number of local government authorities. Perhaps Hon Bruce Donaldson can help me. How many local government authorities are there?

Hon B.K. Donaldson: There are 144. That includes Christmas Island and the Cocos Islands.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Now the member has turned my mind to something different. Each of those state and local government authorities has separate discretionary authority for making either state or local laws. Each of those independent local government authorities has independent authority for community development and independent power for revenue raising for the provision of infrastructure. That is different from the model under which policy formulation, legislative authority and revenue power reside at the centre, and will be dispersed among the regional authorities for administration; but there is no independent authority within the regional development commissions - I call them that for want of a better name. Western Australia's historical model is for functionally autonomous local government authorities for all aspects of economic and social development of their local community.

On that historical model of public administration in Western Australia have been imposed regional development commissions, which have no independent legislative authority; they derive their authority from the centre. They have no independent revenue-raising powers; they derive their revenue from the centre. In some respects they are in competition with local government authorities - something like the anachronism of the State Governments and the federal Government in the Australian political system. The States have plenary legislative powers. The Commonwealth has limited legislative powers, but has been ceded, or has by constitutional authority, the bulk of the revenue-raising powers.

The local governments have independent legislative authority within the limitations of the Local Government Act, and they have limited revenue-raising powers. However, they have revenue-raising powers to meet the commitments and needs of their local infrastructure. These functionally autonomous local government authorities are now competing with the regional development authorities, which are centrally administered and resourced.

I suggest that rather than the very neat model of public administration that was developed under Whitlam's new federalism, what is developing in this regional development concept of Western Australia is a cumbersome, confusing system of public administration that gives rise, unavoidably, to duplication and competition among authorities authorised to perform similar functions, but in direct competition with one another.

Hon N.D. Griffiths: Why didn't you say that between 1993 and 2001?

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Because I did not have the opportunity between 1993 and 2001. As Hon Nick Griffiths knows, at that stage I was a loyal backbencher. Now, however, I am a member of the Opposition and I am unleashed!

Hon N.D. Griffiths: I should not have interjected.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: It serves the minister right.

Hon N.D. Griffiths: I am admonished.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: The minister has caused me to lose my train of thought, regrettably.

Hon N.D. Griffiths: That is impossible.

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Hon N.F. Moore: Go back to the beginning.

Hon N.D. Griffiths: He'll do a Foss.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: The Bill before us -

Hon Peter Foss: You were saying it was a different model.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Yes, I know. I have caught up with that, and I am now progressing to the next stage. The Bill before us imposes upon that structure another level of authority. The new level of authority is ministerial authority. There are now nine regional development commissions, and instead of there being a single minister, there will be four ministers for regional development. Each of those four ministers for regional development will be responsible for a regional development commission, which in turn is, to use the words of the second reading speech, "responsible for facilitating and promoting economic and social development". Those regional development commissions are now responsible to a single minister. In fact, they will be responsible to more than one minister. The development commissions might have a single minister as their titular head, but they will not be responsible or accountable to only that minister. The notion of regional development is to promote economic and social development. The regional development commissions are charged with responsibility for attracting economic development to particular regions. Industry is one form of regional development. Economic development is inextricably linked with social development. With industry comes a work force, a management force and a professional force, which require housing and accommodation and other public services such as health, education, police and emergency services, community development, roads, transport, etc. The interrelationship between economic and social development means each regional development commission must be - as they have demonstrably been - involved in all aspects of the provision of economic and social services within its community or region. The proposition of this Bill is that they will be accountable or responsible to a single minister or, rather, a single minister will be responsible for them. Will that single minister assume responsibility for education, health, police and emergency services, community or social services, and transport and infrastructure within the region? The model that will inevitably develop is that those ministers and regional development commissions will be in competition with and accountable and responsible to the generic ministers for health, education, community development, transport and infrastructure. Rather than being responsible to a single minister, the development commissions will be responsible to a single minister who will be in competition with other ministers.

Members should bear in mind the earlier point that even though this Bill will mean that each regional development commission will be responsible to an individual minister, none will have independent revenue-raising powers. None of the regional development commissions will have independent legislative powers, not even to the point of local laws. Instead, they will rely on local government authorities.

Hon B.K. Donaldson: That's the way it should be.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: It is the way it should be; however, we are seeing the evolution of the most complicated, confusing and duplicated system of public administration in which authorities directed towards a single goal - regional, social and economic development - compete with other, similar bodies. Ministers, government agencies and various levels of government will compete with each other so that, rather than the situation in which Hon Gough Whitlam described the States as an historical anachronism, we have a system of public administration that is an anachronism. It is the most anachronistic system of public administration the human imagination has devised.

Hon N.D. Griffiths: Are you suggesting that the Act should be repealed?

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: If I had my druthers, if I could do what I think, as the Minister for Racing and Gaming has invited me, I would draw up a different Constitution for Western Australia. However, I do not have my druthers; nor do I have the time or opportunity. All I can do is stand as a member of this Council and look at the legislation before us and try to contemplate the consequences of the decision we are making. The consequences of that decision will be the imposition on regional Western Australia of a totally unworkable structure of public administration. The proposition that regional development commissions will be responsible to individual ministers is patent, palpable nonsense. If I had my druthers, as the Minister for Racing and Gaming is offering, I would ask this Government to please do what the previous Government was unable to do - send me to Christmas Island as the Administrator so that I can watch from a distance of 2 200 kilometres the unravelling of this unhappy system of public administration.

Hon G.T. Giffard: Who is next on the ticket?

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I will introduce him to the member and make sure he gets to know him.

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I would rather watch from a distance than be a member of this decision-making body and support this legislation in the full knowledge that it will impose on the public of Western Australia a totally unworkable and unmanageable system.

I add one more anachronism. It is argued in the second reading speech that this Bill is about giving self-confidence back to the regions, to rural and remote Western Australia. The Bill is supposedly about giving back to people in rural and remote Western Australia the understanding that government is not remote from them. It intends to do that by giving them a regional development commission and a minister to whom that regional development commission is responsible. The proposition we are being asked to accept is that the residents of rural and remote Western Australia will then come to the understanding that government is close to them and that it understands and is responsive to their needs. That is a highly desirable proposition. However, the Government that developed that proposition also has an electoral reform Bill in this Parliament. I will try to avoid contravening standing orders.

The PRESIDENT: I will attempt to help the member conform to standing orders.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I have read in the daily Press that the consequence of that legislation will be to take eight members of the Legislative Assembly out of the regions and to place them in the metropolitan area. Therefore the Bill will focus all political authority in the centre and take away political authority, and representation, from the regions. The anachronism is this: we have a Government that, on the one hand, is centralising political authority but, on the other hand, is saying to the regions that it is decentralising political authority by giving the regions a minister responsible for the regional development commission that, in turn, will provide social and economic development. How can that game be played by a Government that is introducing other legislation that will take away the independent political authority, and representation, from the regions by centralising political authority?

Hon Kim Chance interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Perhaps the member who is on his feet should address the Bill before the Chamber.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Thank you, Mr President. I was going to finish the address rather than continue it. I started with a proposition -

A government member interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I will carry on because there is no limit to the human imagination!

I started off with the proposition that the States are a historical anachronism. I used Mr Whitlam's proposition of the elimination of the States, and a system of public administration that was very neat in its conceptualisation. In contrast, this system is a hybrid form of the existing historical anachronisms and a new public administration that does nothing more than create a confused, and confusing, political system and public administration system in Western Australia.

The Opposition supports this Bill, and as a loyal member of the Opposition, I will also support the Bill. However, I would like the opportunity to observe its unravelling from a distance of 2 200 kilometres.

HON PETER FOSS (East Metropolitan) [9.34 pm]: I would like to correct one matter: the Opposition is not supporting the Bill - it is just not opposing it. That is an important distinction, because something that was not greatly understood by the Government when it was in Opposition is that one of the things that Parliament must occasionally do is allow the Government to make its own mess. If the Opposition tried to impose its view on how this particular area should be organised, Parliament would bear responsibility for the resulting mess. As it is, the Opposition wishes for the Government to be given the opportunity to demonstrate that it works, and to bear the responsibility to the public if it does not work. Of course, the Opposition might oppose the Bill because of a feeling of déjà vu. There is a concern that the various ministries will be misused in the way they were under the Burke Government.

Hon Kim Chance: That is your allegation.

Hon PETER FOSS: That is a worry. The next thing this Chamber will be told is that WA Inc did not exist, and history will be rewritten. There is a man who is consistently denied entry into Australia because, despite all the evidence to the contrary, he maintains that the Holocaust did not take place. The capacity of some people to reinvent history is quite extraordinary. I am waiting to hear from the Labor Party that WA Inc did not occur.

Hon N.F. Moore: There are a couple of people still overseas who won't come back because of WA Inc!

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Hon PETER FOSS: That is right! I understand that the Leader of the House is saying that WA Inc is the result of an over-fertile imagination. I would agree with that. One of the problems that Mr Brian Burke had was an over-fertile imagination. His capacity to rip money out of the system was absolutely without parallel. However, it happened, and another thing that happened during the time of WA Inc was the massive abuse of the ministerial offices for the various regions of the State. I believe that argument was put forward extremely well by the Leader of the Opposition. The nice little stories we heard, and which we all knew about at that time, show the capacity of the Labor Party as it then was. We hope that we are talking about the Labor Party in the past, one that has put those poor practices behind it. The Labor Party has had the capacity to recognise where it went wrong, and when it acted dishonestly or corruptly. It can see all those things, and it has decided that this is a new Government. In fact, I know it has done that because I keep in my drawer a piece of paper that proves to me that it recognises the past, and that it wants a new style of Government. This paper is titled "The Ministerial Code of Conduct" of March 2001. I believe this is commendable document, although it has a few omissions to which I have drawn peoples' attention. However, it does state all the things that ministers should be conscious of, the things that the Burke, Dowding, and Lawrence Governments were not conscious of.

Hon N.D. Griffiths: And the Court Government.

Hon PETER FOSS: No, the Court Government followed those rules implicitly. It was very good. The important point is that there were outrageous usages of ministerial power, particularly under the Burke Government. I think the Leader of the Opposition gave the example of how people are still paying enormous rents in Bunbury because of the deal that was done there. To this day, one of the major costs for the Ministry of Justice is paying the rent in Westralia Square, which is now called Hartley Poynton. It is absolutely outrageous that to this day the Ministry of Justice is still paying unbelievably high rents because of a deal that was done to try to raise the value of that building in the accountants' books to show that the Burke Government was actually doing very well.

Hon Kim Chance: You stop telling lies about our Government, and we will stop telling the truth about yours.

Hon PETER FOSS: It is quite the reverse: if the Government stops telling lies about us, the Opposition will stop telling the truth about the Labor Party. The Opposition will give this Government the opportunity to be different from the last Labor Government.

There is concern about this Bill. I think the Leader of the Opposition correctly pointed out that some ministers are taking an interest in the areas for which they have regional responsibility. The Leader of the House is one of those. Hon Kimberley Maurice Chance is a person whom we hope will look after the mid west, the wheatbelt and the great southern. I think the minister responsible for this legislation - and he has probably missed a bit of the debate - will also look out for the Kimberley, the Pilbara and the Gascoyne. Then we have the minister for holidaying in Augusta. That will be a wonderful one. Hon James Andrew McGinty will obviously never go on holiday to Augusta again, because obviously he will always be carrying out ministerial duties. The minister for the road to Augusta. There seems to be a tenuous relationship to that particular portfolio, but I am sure that he will never ever again go on holiday to Augusta, and that he will only go there because of his ministerial responsibility. Then, of course, we have the Minister for Goldfields-Esperance. It was carefully picked up by the Leader of the House that this is one of the those things that the Government went through, and said, "Blow me down, one of them has been left out." It could tell this in the same way that it left out tourism and mines. The Government forgot about the portfolios that earn money for the State. It got to the bottom and suddenly realised that a chunk of the State had been omitted. Not surprisingly, the Government does not have too many members out there; the Government lost the member for Kalgoorlie, and the current member for Kalgoorlie belongs to the Liberal Party. At long last, the Government realised the need to have a minister for that region.

It has been correctly pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition that the Opposition hopes that this is not an opportunity for using the power and the money of government - the chequebook, as the Leader of the Opposition put it - for political purposes. We hope it will be a genuine attempt to improve the lot of regional Western Australia. As Hon Derrick Tomlinson said, perhaps this is a sop to regional Western Australia. Regional Western Australia is not going to have as many members in Parliament, so to make up for that there will be more ministers looking after regional interests. Perhaps the Government realises that some form of representation is necessary, and if the regions will not have the voice in Parliament, they can have the voice in Cabinet. The increased role of regional development commissions might make up for taking away their voice in Parliament.

Hon Kim Chance: Whose voice are we taking away? What is Hon Peter Foss talking about?

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Alternatively, the commissioners would have a commissar.

Hon PETER FOSS: I think these people may very well turn out to be that. It is interesting -

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The PRESIDENT: Order! Provided it is relevant to the second reading of this Bill, I am sure it is interesting.

Hon PETER FOSS: It is interesting that, at the same time, the concept of a special voice for the regions can be embraced, and yet they are not to be allowed the number of members of Parliament they currently have. Geographical divisions are recognised -

Hon Kim Chance: The Government is not prepared to allow the continuation of a corruption.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Peter Foss will ignore the interjections, which are not pertinent to this Bill.

Hon PETER FOSS: Yes, you are quite right, Mr President; thank you very much for that.

I was going to make a rather philosophical speech, rather along the lines of that made by Hon Derrick Tomlinson, because I felt that he had brought to the debate a very interesting approach to the way in which government operates.

Hon Kim Chance: He occupied 45 minutes of the House's time.

Hon PETER FOSS: He said what needed to be said, and he sat down. That was very good indeed.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: It is all I ever do.

Hon PETER FOSS: Exactly.

We see in this debate a very confusing attitude to the relationship between the people. Various theories have been proposed over time as to how government should be run. The Gallop Government was talking about super ministries, amalgamating departments and reducing the number of ministries and ministers. This is a very laudable idea, under some circumstances. This has happened in the federal Government, where there is an inner Cabinet, with other ministers and parliamentary secretaries working in a hierarchical structure in particular areas. The difference in the federal Government's system lies in the fact that all have some form of executive authority. Parliamentary secretaries in this Parliament have none; they are not sworn to the Executive Council, whereas the federal parliamentary secretaries are, and they do not have any executive power. In Western Australia, under the arrangements for Cabinet, all ministers are in Cabinet, unlike the federal system, where only some members are in the Cabinet. There is also no capacity for two ministers at the same time to exercise the same power. Under the ministerial responsibilities legislation, some sections of Acts can be allocated to different ministers. For instance, when I was Attorney General, there were some Acts for which the major responsibility lay with one minister, but the section dealing with the courts or the tribunals was with the Attorney General. That arrangement was set up when Cheryl Edwardes was Attorney General, and it is a very good system. It is sensible to have the court or tribunal referred to under the principal Act, and it also makes sense to have those courts or tribunals organised by the Attorney General. Any particular section, even a particular subsection, can be given to another minister, but the same piece of legislation cannot be given to two different ministers, and that is what has led to this Bill. The Government wanted to take the executive power contained in a particular section and split it up, but it was not possible to do that, because of the way the ministerial responsibilities legislation works. A particular section must be allocated to a particular minister. There is one exception to that - strangely enough it is the Attorney General. The Attorney General has the power to delegate ministerial responsibility, which is quite unusual, and it is done under the Supreme Court Act. It is possible for the Attorney General even to delegate those responsibilities to non-ministers. The responsibilities and the matters relating to the Attorney General are quite different from those dealt with by other Acts, and the Attorney General and someone else can simultaneously exercise the same power. The question has arisen as to whether Western Australia should adopt something like the federal system, which has the capacity to assign a particular Act to more than one minister. It has been done in this case for one Act, and has not been a general amendment to the scheme of things. It is still really not a duplication - the idea of senior and junior ministers has not been adopted. Each minister will have the power to exercise authority within a geographical area, rather than having a lead minister, with a junior minister exercising a subdivision of that power. I do not know if the Government is testing this method in the area of regional development to see if it works, with the aim of expanding it to other forms of ministerial responsibility and perhaps start having super ministries, with junior ministers exercising subsidiary power and carrying out the individual day-to-day-to-day responsibilities within the policy developed by the senior minister. There is a lot to be said for having a central cooperative response by a minister. The Ministry of Justice is a good example. Originally, the Ministry of Justice was a number of different departments, including the Crown Law Department, corrections or prisons, courts, juvenile justice and community corrections, all as separate operating entities. The problem with each of those is that what each does is tied in with what the other departments are doing. What happens at one point of the line necessarily impacts on people further along the line. If each is under a separate minister, with a separate chief executive officer, the net result is that all too often there is no cooperation. On the other hand, when all the departments are combined, there is a larger department, which can bring inefficiencies or efficiencies. The difference is that the efficiencies only come with hard work,

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while the inefficiencies come quite uninvited. I believe that, with one minister, the system was very efficient. We may not always have liked what Hon Hendy Cowan did, but when he said that something was to happen, it happened. He was one of those ministers with the capacity to carry the day when he made a decision.

There are some quite interesting dynamics in this Government. Hon Kim Chance is the most senior of the ministers involved. He is almost, in the pecking order, right behind the Deputy Premier, which was the position held by Hon Hendy Cowan. Hon Kim Chance has not exactly shown himself as someone able to get his way in Cabinet up until now, if the forestry issue is anything to go by. Then there is Hon Tom Stephens, who is theoretically quite senior, but everyone knows that he has been given this job to get him out of the way, the same way as he ceased to be the leader in this House as soon as any responsible work was involved in it. Hon Tom Stephens will not exactly be able to impose his will on the rest of the ministers.

Then we get down to Hon James Andrew McGinty. He is one of the wheeler-dealers in the Government. He is about halfway down the list, but there is no doubt that Hon James Andrew McGinty seems to get his own way in this Government. At the bottom of the list is Hon Nicholas David Griffiths. Hon Nicholas David Griffiths is very good at keeping his mouth shut. I am yet to tell whether he is having any impact on the Government. Theoretically, he is the most minor minister.

Hon Tom Stephens: All your colleagues wish you would keep your mouth shut. You embarrass them endlessly.

Hon PETER FOSS: Oh dear! That was a very strong and cutting remark from Hon Tom Stephens. I feel totally devastated by it. I remember the reaction in this House every time he stood up as Leader of the Opposition. He now employs brilliant tactical moves that he does not consult his colleagues on. It is amusing to see the way they all cringe whenever he pops up out of his seat with his eyes swivelling.

Hon Tom Stephens: You fibber!

Hon PETER FOSS: I can believe that Hon Tom Stephens really thought he was carrying his colleagues with him. The reality is that his party has shown him what they thought of him as soon as any responsibility came along.

If I may return to the Bill before the House -

Hon N.D. Griffiths: Are you going to speak on it?

Hon PETER FOSS: I have been speaking on it all along.

Hon N.D. Griffiths: Say something of substance for a change.

Hon PETER FOSS: The member obviously does not like this particular power.

Hon Tom Stephens: When is the member going to deliver on his commitment that he was going to be in the House for only four years and then bugger off?

Hon PETER FOSS: That was never my commitment. One of these days we will all believe what we read in *The West Australian*.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members should address the Bill before the House.

Hon PETER FOSS: We have gone from having one strong minister making sure that things happened for regional development to having a motley group of ministers with varying influences within the Cabinet - from the most influential to the laughable. I will not say who is who. There will be great difficulties in allocating resources to the various regions. Regional development will lose the strong voice that it previously had and will get a number of voices that will not agree. We will have a system in which all they will have left to do is what the Leader of the Opposition was concerned they might do: instead of representing regional development, the ministers will use their offices for political purposes in their regions. I am concerned about that. Whether or not it is their current intention, I do not believe that any of them will have sufficient influence to make sure that regional development in this State is properly looked after.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Some of them are going a bit giggly; the member may have caught them out.

Hon PETER FOSS: Yes. It may be that it will not be just an undesired consequence; it may have been the desired consequence from the beginning. I will not be so uncharitable as to assume that. Despite the attempts of the Gallop Government to consolidate departments and the number of ministers, this move to split up regional development appears to be a move in the opposite direction. I applaud the attempts of the Government. The previous Government failed to do similar things on occasions because of the coalition arrangements. Some sensible portfolio allocations were not made because the National Party had to hold certain portfolios.

What has been done with infrastructure is excellent. The idea of giving one minister the responsibility for all those things was a good idea. It was a little unfortunate that such a good plan and a reasonable allocation of

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portfolios was instantly upset by the performance of Hon Alannah MacTiernan. Had the Government been able to maintain its original consolidation of portfolios, it would have been a very sensible aggregation. I regret what has happened. I think that was the first rearrangement of the ministry. I cannot remember the order in which the rearrangements have taken place. I see the rearrangements as a retrograde step and somewhat unfortunate.

I see this current proposal as being a retrograde step; it is stepping away from the philosophy that I thought I could support of trying to aggregate some departments and natural groups so that interdepartmental rivalries and the refusal to cooperate could be stopped. Rivalries are part and parcel of the bureaucracy. Anyone who has seen *Yes Minister* or *Yes, Prime Minister* would be well aware of the sorts of interdepartmental rivalries that take place and the ways in which the policy of the Government can be defeated by bureaucrats. It is not an exaggeration; it is unfortunately too true. A strong minister who pushes a particular area can make a very big impact. Hon Hendy Cowan did that in the area of regional development. It is a good philosophy on the part of the Gallop Government to consolidate departments and make sure they are effective. Unfortunately, that is being ignored by this legislation. I have a nasty feeling that this is a hankering after the old days rather than being part of the new philosophy put forward by Hon Geoff Gallop in trying to get a more efficient administration in Western Australia. His theories have been tried out in Britain, although the idea of the super department has been around for a long time. It has been tried out at the federal level. The attempt to try it out in Western Australia is a good one. It has not gone as far as was done in South Australia. South Australia has had some difficulties, but it was worth giving it a try. For some reason, despite every other attempt at an aggregation of departments into workable groups - which I applaud - the Government is going in the opposite direction on this issue. I have to ask, why?

The real test of this legislation will be the one posed by the Leader of the House. He asked how it would work. There must be serious doubts about whether the Government wants it to work as a method of administration if it has not worked it out. Will Hon Tom Stephens be able to tell the House of the precise relationship between the ministers and the ministerial council?

Hon Tom Stephens: If the member will sit down I will tell the House in two minutes.

Hon PETER FOSS: Two minutes? It does not sound as if it will be an adequate explanation. The ability of Hon Tom Stephens to tell the House exactly how the ministerial council will work with the ministers, how the ministers will work with the Minister for Regional Development and how they will all work with the various regional development commissions will be the test of whether this is merely a division of the spoils or a genuine attempt at some form of revised administration. I worry that it is the former rather than the latter. I will listen with great interest to see whether the Government can provide a logical reason for doing what it is doing.

HON B.K. DONALDSON (Agricultural) [9.58 pm]: The Leader of the Opposition, Hon Norman Moore, prefaced his remarks during the second reading debate by referring to Gough Whitlam. I had other thoughts. I was thinking about the gratuitous remarks and platitudes he was directing to the Leader of the House, Hon Kim Chance, and to the Minister for Regional Development. I was deeply concerned, because there is a lot of bronchial pneumonia about and some bad colds. I scurried off to my office to find some Codral and aspirins. I was surprised; I thought the Leader of the Opposition was running a temperature. Mind you, we all admire and respect the people he was referring to, but I thought he was going over the top a bit. I certainly was not thinking of Gough Whitlam.

Hon Tom Stephens: I thought he was understating his case.

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: Understating his case! The Regional Development Commissions Amendment Bill intrigues me somewhat. I will begin by looking at the second reading speech.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.