

GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC CREDENTIALS

710. Mr L. GRAHAM to the Treasurer:

I have a question to the Treasurer, the well-known St Bernard of Western Australian politics! He is actually a St Bernard with dentures!

I note with interest that the Treasurer and the Premier have been claiming great economic credentials. I also note that this State's economic growth is largely underpinned by a combination of a healthy world economy and the recent economic boom in China, which is consuming our natural resources.

- (1) Will the Treasurer please advise the House of precisely which of the Gallop Government's initiatives have caused the boom in China?

Mr R.C. Kucera: Putting you on the Independent bench was one!

Mr L. GRAHAM: The world's greatest health minister! The only minister in the history of the Westminster system sacked for doing a good job!

I continue my question -

- (2) Given that boom, will the Treasurer please explain to the House why his last budget forecast a fall in total mineral royalties from \$1.1 billion to \$1.07 billion?

Mr E.S. RIPPER replied:

- (1)-(2) Let us go over those economic growth figures. In the last financial year a gross state product of 6.75 per cent was forecast. The final accounts are still to come in.

Mr M.W. Trenorden interjected.

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Warren-Blackwood to order and I call the Leader of the National Party to order for the third time.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The domestic economy is growing at almost eight per cent. This State has the lowest unemployment for a quarter of a century. It is the lowest since state-based records began. The State also has the lowest debt on record. Those are figures of which the whole State can be proud.

Dr G.I. Gallop: Hear, hear!

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The whole State has produced that result. It is not just the Government. The Government has its part to play. The whole community has produced those wonderful economic results. They are good for employment, people seeking work and the prosperity of our businesses. What role has the State Government played in economic policy? It does play its part; for example, it has been very active in marketing the State, including promoting a relationship with China. I give credit to former Premier Richard Court for his efforts in that area. This Government has continued those efforts and has invested a lot in the marketing of Western Australia to China, Korea, Japan, the United States, the United Arab Emirates and India. The Government has promoted this State heavily.

Secondly, the Government has invested heavily in the infrastructure needed to underpin our economic development with a \$3.9 billion capital works program. Every year our capital works program has been more than \$3 billion. We have targeted some of that investment specifically at economic development; for example, \$180 million has been allocated for infrastructure on the Burrup Peninsula and funding has been provided to support the Ravensthorpe nickel project.

Thirdly, the Government has looked closely at our approvals process. It commissioned the Keating review. It is investing money in reforming the approvals process so that projects can be implemented in Western Australia more effectively and efficiently. We believe that one of the roles of Government is to deliver a decision-making service to business and, to promote confidence in investment, we want it to be timely, transparent and consistent.

Fourthly, we have been promoting economic reform in this State. Our electricity reform program was designed to achieve a competitive electricity market, achieve more private sector investment in power plants and release public sector investment to provide for improved reliability in the network, lower prices, more growth, more jobs and more investment. Who is frustrating our economic reform program? Members on the other side, who will not support the necessary structural reform of Western Power. They are at it again regarding week-night shopping. We know that if our Bill had been passed to provide for week-night shopping there would be more growth.

Point of Order

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 10 November 2004]

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Mr Larry Graham; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr John Day; Speaker

Mr J.H.D. DAY: If my memory serves me correctly, the member for Pilbara's question related to the boom in the Chinese economy and the role the Treasurer played in it. It is a matter of the relevance of the Treasurer's response. The Treasurer should be directed to make his answer relevant.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is the opinion of the member for Darling Range. The member for Pilbara asked a very broad question and I think the Treasurer is answering it within the parameters.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I was asked about the State Government's -

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, member for Kalgoorlie!

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Kalgoorlie to order for the first time.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I was asked about of the State Government's contribution to the community of Western Australia's magnificent economic performance. One of those contributions has been to promote an economic reform program. If our Bill for week-night trading had been passed there would have been more employment, more growth and more investment in the retail industry.

Dr J.M. Woollard interjected.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I am reminded by an interjection from the backbench that we have tackled the question of native title approvals. The Parliament has passed legislation to assist that area. We held a long series of meetings with the minerals industry and native title groups aimed at improving the process for the expeditious issuing of mineral tenements following applications by mining companies. We settled native title on the Burrup and we are making great progress on settling native title in the east Kimberley - all to promote development.

Such is the pace of economic development in this State that we have allocated extra money to the Department of Environment, the Department for Planning and Infrastructure and the Department of Industry and Resources simply to cope with the avalanche of applications for development. The State Government is responding by ensuring that our approvals agencies are properly resourced to deal with the booming economy that is steaming ahead in Western Australia; something that members opposite did not have a hope of delivering when in office.