

ordered to lie on the Table of the House.

Question put and passed.  
Clerk's certificate that it is in conformity with the Standing Orders. I move—

That the petition be read and

**THE HON. CLIVE GRIFFITHS** (South-East Metropolitan) [3.36 p.m.]: The petition reads as follows—

To the President and members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia:

We the undersigned residents of the Langford area hereby humbly petition the honourable members of the Legislative Council of Western Australia to do all within their power to strongly urge the State Housing Commission not to plan future group housing in the Langford area in a similar manner as has occurred in the Wingrove Precinct.

The main reasons for the objection to this type of development are that it is an environmental eyesore, a potential slum area and a type of housing unacceptable to the majority of those who will be forced to occupy it.

And your petitioners will ever pray that their humble and earnest petition may be acceded to.

*The petition was tabled (see paper No. 1).*

#### **EVIDENCE ACT AMENDMENT BILL**

##### *Leave to Introduce*

**THE HON. N. McNEILL** (Lower West—Minister for Justice) [3.43 p.m.]: In order to assert and maintain the undoubted rights and privileges of this House to initiate legislation, I move, without notice—

For leave to introduce a Bill for an Act to make further provision with respect to the taking of evidence by or for Courts or Persons acting judicially to amend the Evidence Act, 1906-1971, and for other purposes.

Question put and passed; leave granted.

##### *Introduction and First Reading*

Bill introduced, on motion by The Hon. N. McNeill (Minister for Justice), and read a first time.

#### **GOVERNOR'S SPEECH**

##### *Distribution of Copies*

**THE PRESIDENT:** I have to announce that for the sake of accuracy I have obtained copies of His Excellency's Speech which will now be distributed to members.

#### **ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: FIRST DAY**

##### *Motion*

**THE HON. J. C. TOZER** (North) [3.47 p.m.]: I move—

That the following address be presented to His Excellency:—

May it please Your Excellency:

We, the Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and to thank Your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

I appreciate, Mr. President, the honour of being granted this opportunity to thank His Excellency and to initiate the debate on the Address-in-Reply.

Reflecting as it does the policies and intentions of a new Government under a new Premier, His Excellency's Speech this afternoon introduces an exciting prospect for a new member. I regret I will not be able to dwell on all the matters to which reference was made, but I do hope the opportunity will present itself as the legislative programme unfolds.

In Western Australia we are going to see changes that will have the effect of making the operation of government more efficient and, therefore, more effective. His Excellency referred to steps which will be taken to put Government officers with the experience, the skill, and the authority into outlying areas where decisions will be made, on the spot, by persons with an understanding of the problems to be solved.

For too long we have seen judgments being made by someone in St. George's Terrace who just does not have an appreciation of the need, because he is too remote from it. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the North Province.

I am reminded of a cliché which is time-worn but most appropriate when one considers the current approach to government in this State. Let us have "less government in business and more business in government."

Already we are seeing a positive approach towards putting the function of government on a more businesslike footing. The spiralling number of civil servants is being checked, economies are being effected where they do not result in loss of efficiency and, possibly most important of all, a measure of consideration and courtesy is being demanded of all officers dealing directly with the public.

Government departments are again being given a sense of purpose and pride in the work they are doing. This conscious effort by Ministers of the Crown will have a salutary effect on the performance of the Civil Service and the welfare of our State.

The record of the Brand Government in the 1960s illustrated the businesslike approach to national development and, as His Excellency reminded us, we can be assured that our new Government will be pursuing a vigorous policy to launch fur-



ther major industrial and mining enterprises. Many of these projects will be in the North Province and, most important of all, is the development of the offshore gas fields on the north-west shelf which will have such far-reaching effect on the economy of this State and of the whole nation.

Spectacular resource development must not be regarded as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. The disabilities of remote areas are brought about by lack of people. Labour-intensive processing operations will bring the population and thus the social amenities that create a life style that we would wish for everyone.

This is what development is all about: A better economic, social, recreational, cultural, and physical environment—a better total environment—has to be the principal objective of any developmental programme.

It is an unfortunate fact that the very best laid plans and proposals can be delayed, if not thwarted, by the course of events which are quite beyond the control or influence of this Government and this Parliament. The actions of the Commonwealth Government, over which—like the coming and going of the tide on the Kimberley coastline—we have no control, could seriously impair or retard the progress and prosperity of the State of Western Australia.

The manner in which the Federal system of Government has evolved in Australia has produced a situation of enormous complexity and our Premier will need great patience and persuasive negotiating power to overcome the problems that are bound to arise. Let us hope that Federal leaders can be convinced that the key to success in resource development in this State may well be "less Government in business".

I am sure that members will not be surprised that I intend to speak about the North Province. Particularly, do I want to refer to the economic circumstances of the people who live and work there.

I first went to the north in 1947 and I guess this great slumbering giant captured my youthful imagination. Sixteen years later, the Minister for the North-West at the time sent me back there and I sincerely thank him for making it possible for me to play a part in the gradual awakening process.

Now I wish to record my appreciation to the electors of the North Province for giving me the opportunity to help mould their destiny by representing them in this Chamber. I shall do my utmost to justify their confidence.

A tremendous amount has been achieved but there is no room for complacency. There is so much to be done before we can be satisfied that the Kimberley and Pilbara regions of Western Australia are providing the economic en-

vironment for a contented, stable, and prosperous community.

In the Pilbara alone more than \$1 000 million has been spent in the last 10 years developing iron ore mines and pellet plants and the infrastructure associated with these undertakings. It has been a colossal achievement by any standard, but statistics reveal that we have not progressed as far as real decentralisation is concerned.

Despite the fact that the development of natural resources has taken place in remote areas, the significant build-up in population occurred in Perth. Right throughout this last bustling decade the percentage of the population living in the metropolitan area increased as a proportion of the State total.

In 1961 only 57 per cent of the State population lived in Perth; by 1966 this had increased to 66 per cent; in 1971 it was 68 per cent; and today it is over 70 per cent.

With our present Government we have the breadth of vision, the drive, and the business acumen to achieve great resource developments in the North Province, but we need more than this.

We need to adopt a completely new philosophy towards the governing of a State covering a million square miles. There has to be a positive and conscious desire to make decentralisation work. We must take deliberate action to remove the factors which make it unattractive for people to live in remote areas and which make it almost impossible for a small or middle sized service industry to survive.

I would like to tell a story which poses a question about the geography of my distant province. The question will serve to introduce the points I wish to make.

In the tiny coastal town of Onslow, the bishop makes an annual visit and the opportunity is taken to baptise babies born during the preceding 12 months and to confirm the two or three young people who have been prepared for the event. It is an important day in the life of the town, and the bishop is grand in his flowing robes and accoutrements of office.

On one such day, the ceremony over, the bishop was approached, rather diffidently, by a local fisherman. He had read about the blessing of the fleet each year but he had never had his boat blessed. He asked whether his boat could be blessed. The bishop readily agreed and they immediately went off to the bay.

Because of the high tidal movement of the north-west coast, the fisherman's boat was moored a long way out. The small party jumped into the dinghy and rowed out to it; the ceremony was duly performed and the long row back to the beach commenced.

At this stage a tourist coach arrived at the bayside Beadon Hotel and the attention of the visitors was immediately



attracted to the small row boat approaching the shore with what appeared to be a bishop, in magnificent white robes with gold braid, mitre on head and crook in hand, sitting in the bow. They crowded to the water's edge.

The bishop was something of a showman, and not one to miss an opportunity like this. As the dinghy came within hailing distance of the people on the beach he stood up, raised his arm and called, "I say, is this Australia?"

Well, we could reassure the witty prelate that he was, in fact, landing on the Australian land mass, but sometimes people in the North Province seriously doubt whether the place in which they live and work has any connection with the politico-economic centre of gravity of Australia—or Western Australia—in southern areas. They see a huge gulf separating north from south which somehow results in a different set of rules by which they have to live.

In the North Province public services and utilities tend to become luxuries rather than necessities. Domestic electric power charges vary between 50 and 300 per cent over and above those applicable in the south-west. It is just too expensive for the average man to provide home air-conditioning so necessary for the comfort and well-being of his family.

Commercial rates are prohibitive but refrigeration and air-conditioning are essential for the preservation and display of perishable goods.

The need for electric power under trying climatic conditions is great but the cost is crippling.

It is worrying to observe the sociological problems introduced by the high cost of power, and I will mention one example only. State houses are not designed for air-conditioning because the tenants could not pay the bill, and a second-rate living unit results. As a consequence, a wide social schism is developing between the occupants of mining company and Housing Commission homes.

In Western Australia, one electricity authority should be responsible for supplying the one commodity to one State-wide community at the one price. It is neither logical nor fair that there should be disparity in charges between the north and the south.

It is of interest to look at the cost of water, a commodity for which, like electricity, there is such a vital need in the northern areas. The recently amended water rates reveal that a person occupying a comparable home in Port Hedland and using the same amount of water as that used by a Perth suburban householder, will pay double the amount for his water. In Wyndham, it is somewhat more.

I could go on through the whole gamut of essential services to reveal the same disparity, but the time limitation will prevent this.

Let us look at road maintenance charges. Truck owner-drivers may contest the issue with the principal contractors, but my sympathy lies with the consumer at the other end of the run who is the one to actually pay.

The Transport Commission is not able to separate accurately charges levied on northern destinations as opposed to southern areas, but sample investigation has revealed that about one-third of the total receipts—\$3.5 million in 1973-74—relates to goods consigned to destinations north of the 26th parallel.

On a *per capita* basis, this means that every man, woman, and child in the north is paying \$20 per annum. Every person in the south is paying something less than \$2.

In Halls Creek every tonne of goods carries a charge of \$4.50; for Harvey the figure is 20c.

Clearly, the road maintenance charges amount to a direct tax on isolation. I suggest that an alternative source of revenue has to be found but, as an interim measure, its application to food-stuffs and consumer goods should be removed forthwith.

What an astounding farce the road haulage permit fee is! An officer of the Transport Commission is called upon to spend a few minutes writing out a permit. The time of this activity is the same whether the permit is issued for Dandaragan or Derby, but the fee is calculated on the miles that will be covered. Thus for general freight, in the Dandaragan case, the cost is 20c per tonne, and for Derby it is over \$5 per tonne.

What logic can there be for this direct burden on consumers in remote areas? There can be no relationship between the distance travelled and the cost of issuing a permit. Why should anyone reasonably expect people in the remote areas of the State to carry the major burden of paying for the operation of the Transport Commission?

I wonder if the Prime Minister is aware of the result of the removal of the subsidy paid on petroleum products. In his apparent crusade against the farming community of the nation, I wonder if he understands the impact on isolated inland centres far removed from ports. In Halls Creek the price of petrol will automatically rise by 7½c a gallon, and for outlying stations the price will increase by double that amount. Drummed products will increase by 37c a gallon. This includes aviation fuel, but flying is an integral part of the day-to-day activity of the north and, at times of heavy rain, the very life-line of society.



I have no difficulty in understanding that people of the outback rather wonder if they are, in fact, part of Mr Whitlam's Australia.

Do the decision-makers in the south recognise that the recent 30 per cent increase in shipping freights means that a concrete block maker in Broome is paying \$80 a tonne for cement landed in his yard? One can imagine the impact on building costs in the Kimberley.

I have referred to but a few of the innumerable disabilities to which the people in the North Province are subjected. I could go on and on.

Some of these additional costs are relatively small in themselves, but the effect is cumulative. Costs compound themselves one upon another.

The cost to build a house is high. Therefore, the rent has to be high. Therefore, the valuation, which is determined directly from rental, is high. Thus water, sewerage, and municipal rates are escalated out of all proportion, making rentals higher still, and so on.

There is no pool of rental houses so an employer has to provide residences for his employees. His premises will cost at least double the cost of comparable buildings in Perth.

The storekeeper has to pass the extra, extra, extra costs on to his customers in addition to the high burden of freight, electricity, inventory, and the rest. The customer has no escape.

If we want a really silly example of the compounding effect of these cost burdens we can consider the question of sales tax. In the late 1960s we were able to attract a number of wholesalers in various lines of business to Port Hedland.

Is it known that sales tax was levied on cost ex warehouse? Thus it was levied on a selling price which included the initial cost of the goods, plus packaging, handling, insurance, freight, road maintenance permit fee, the high overheads already described, depreciation, and the rest. The sales tax was levied on this final cost out of the warehouse and not, as one may have expected, ex factory or ex wharf in the case of imported goods.

The Taxation Department in Canberra insisted that this was the law.

I have used the past tense deliberately because the warehouses, for the most part, have been forced out of business in the same manner as have so many support and service industries.

One would be excused for concluding that Governments over the years had embarked on a deliberate policy to discourage people from establishing themselves in remote areas.

The requirement is quite clear—we must adopt positive measures aimed at eliminating the existing disabilities which

react against the effective establishment of stable communities in isolated areas in northern Western Australia and other remote areas.

There must be a recognition that such stability is in the best interests of national development and State-wide progress.

In the long run, subsidies and handouts do not provide the answer: what we need to do is eliminate the need for such subsidies.

I would like briefly to pursue the question of the part that has to be played by private enterprise.

The distributors of razor blades, cigarettes, tyres and, to a limited degree, batteries, spread all freight costs over all products sold anywhere in the State and thus the cost in Wyndham is the same as it is in Perth—in theory at least. Surely this is a worth-while objective to aim for with all other products provided we can guarantee that small isolated towns will not be left off the distribution list.

Look at one of the smallest items in the northern consumers' daily costs. The morning daily newspaper costs 19c in Kununurra, and 16c in Roebourne. Air freight accounts for the additional cost and it is claimed that the price is subsidised at these figures.

But every day road transport takes the newspaper to Esperance or Geraldton and it is sold at 7c, as it is in Perth.

Who is paying the distribution costs by road? It is all those who are reading the paper, including the reader of the 19c paper in Wyndham.

Is it any wonder that the question is asked, "Is this Western Australia in which we live?"

Let us have a Western Australian newspaper for the people of Western Australia—all the people—at a uniform State-wide price.

This is but one commodity. The same argument could be applied to so many more.

Could not the Federated Chambers of Commerce and the Chamber of Manufactures be inspired to adopt the "one State—one community" philosophy if the lead were provided by Governments?

It may be appropriate to mention that my concept might be a worth-while investment for southern areas. The day will come when certainly gas, probably water, and possibly electric power will be flowing from north to south—like Lang Hancock's railway: downhill. Already the value of exports of minerals from the North Province far exceeds the combined value of wool and wheat from the south and development will continue to rush ahead, despite the difficulties. Perhaps a future member for a metropolitan province will be appealing for uniformity with the more favoured north in the year 2024.



Before I resume my seat, Mr President, may I offer congratulations to you on your elevation to the very high office in control of this Chamber. All members will agree that it is a fitting culmination to a distinguished career in this Council.

I also congratulate the Hon. Neil McNeill on his attainment of Cabinet rank and leadership of the House; the Hon. Graham MacKinnon for his return to the Ministry; and the Hon. Norman Baxter for his promotion to the front bench.

I look around the Legislative Council Chamber today and see a good blend of experienced members and new chums like myself. I can see young people and some who are not so young. I welcome the presence of three female members.

It looks like a good team with which to tackle the task ahead and I approach my term in this House with enthusiasm and confidence.

**THE HON. H. W. GAYFER** (Central) [4.09 p.m.]: I formally second the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. R. Thompson (Leader of the Opposition).

*House adjourned at 4.10 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, the 22nd May, 1974

### MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY

The Legislative Assembly met at 11.00 a.m.

#### PROCLAMATION

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr J. C. Bartlett) read the proclamation of His Excellency the Governor (Air Commodore Hughie Idwal Edwards, V.C., C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., D.F.C.) summoning the first session of the Twenty-eighth Parliament.

#### OPENING PROCEEDINGS

##### *Message from the Governor's Senior Commissioner*

A Message from His Excellency's Senior Commissioner (His Honour Mr Justice Virtue) requested the attendance of members of the Legislative Assembly in the Legislative Council Chamber. Members accordingly proceeded to that Chamber; and, having heard the Commission to do all things necessary for the opening of Parliament, returned to the Legislative Assembly Chamber.

#### SWEARING-IN OF MEMBERS

His Honour, Mr Justice Lavan, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Western Australia, having been commissioned by His Excellency the Governor, entered the Chamber to administer to members the

Oath of Allegiance to Her Majesty, or the affirmation required by law, and was conducted to the Chair. The Commission to swear-in members having been read, the Clerk produced the writs for the general election, held on the 30th March, 1974, showing the names of the members returned. These members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the affirmation required by law, and signed the Roll.

The Commissioner then retired from the Chamber.

#### ELECTION OF SPEAKER

**SIR CHARLES COURT** (Nedlands—Premier) [11.49 a.m.]: The House being duly constituted, I move—

That the Hon. Ross Hutchinson do take the Chair of the House as Speaker.

**MR McPHARLIN** (Mt. Marshall—Deputy Premier) [11.50 a.m.]: I second the motion.

**MR HUTCHINSON** (Cottesloe) [11.51 a.m.]: I submit myself to the will of the House.

There being no other nomination, Mr Hutchinson was conducted to the Chair by the mover and seconder of the motion.

**THE SPEAKER** (Mr Hutchinson) [11.52 a.m.]: I thank members for the signal honour they have conferred upon me, and I now assume my duties as Speaker of this House by taking the Chair.

**SIR CHARLES COURT** (Nedlands—Premier) [11.53 a.m.]: Mr Speaker, may I take this opportunity to express to you my congratulations on your assuming this very high office of Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia. You bring to the office a tremendous amount of experience; experience gained as a back-bench member behind a Government, behind an Opposition, as a Minister, and as a front-bench member of an Opposition. In the course of your experience you have had occasion to see and to hear many people who have passed through this Chamber; a large number of whom have contributed greatly to the working of our Parliament and of our State. You now have the privilege—or should I say the duty—to listen to many more people, but from a different angle.

It must be quite an experience for a person to take the Chair having been a Minister and a member of Parliament for so long. You are now in the position where you cannot interject or contribute, except as laid down in the Standing Orders!

We have every confidence in your capacity to fulfil your duties because you come to this position of Speaker not only with a tremendous record of achievement as a member and as a Minister, but also with