

**AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS ASIAN NEIGHBOURS AND TRADING PARTNERS**

*Urgency Motion*

**THE PRESIDENT** (Hon J.A. Cowdell): I received the following letter this morning -

To the President of the Legislative Council

I give notice that today I will move under Standing Order 72 that the House on its rising be adjourned until 4pm on the 24<sup>th</sup> December 2001 in order to discuss the long-term implications for the state arising from the deterioration of Australia's relationship with our Asian neighbours and trading partners and possible measures this state might take to ameliorate this problem.

Yours sincerely

Jim Scott MLC

Member for South Metropolitan Region

The member will require the support of four members in order to move the motion.

[At least four members rose in their places.]

**HON J.A. SCOTT** (South Metropolitan) [3.43 pm]: I move -

That the House at its rising adjourn until 4.00 pm on 24 December.

This is an important issue for these times. We probably have the worst relationships with our neighbours to the north that we have had for more than a decade. We had fairly good relationships with other countries in the region, with some exceptions, such as Malaysia. We have seen a period in which those fairly good relationships have deteriorated. When Australia's peacekeeping forces were sent to East Timor, they did a fantastic job, and are continuing to do so. Whether we deserve it or not, it put us offside with many in the Indonesian Government, particularly those with military links. Since then we have witnessed the incidents of the collapse of the twin towers in New York and the aeroplane crashing on the Pentagon. Whether one sees our response as correct or incorrect - I certainly do not agree with our response - our behaviour has certainly soured our relationships even wider throughout the Asian region, not only in South East Asia.

We are living in an Asian region. We must find ways to get on with our neighbours, who I expect in the future will become our major trading partners. We must have confidence that we can live without conflict with our neighbours. Clearly, Indonesia, with its vast population, provides great opportunities to Australia and great challenges. We must deal extremely carefully with the Indonesian Government, which is struggling to maintain its own democratic processes. Indonesia's democracy is in its infancy. It requires a great deal of assistance from us and other nations to get through a difficult period. We have seen the country run very much on a semi-military basis. Malaysia has already quite a poor relationship with Australia. Despite the state of our relationships, we will be very reliant on each other in the future.

The reality is that we have a lot to offer each other. We tend to produce exports that are not produced in Indonesia. We tend to have skills that are not easily obtainable in Indonesia. Our Asian neighbours offer us opportunities; they are clearly able to provide us with great trading opportunities. They also could provide us with the ability to live in a stable region, if they were able to maintain their democratic system and build on it further from its current very nascent state.

The problem is that we seem not to be planning to build on that relationship; in fact, probably largely in the spirit of boosting electoral chances, some people in this country seem to be quite happy to be throwing around all sorts of insults about people of other nationalities and particular religious backgrounds. This is extremely unhelpful. I ask today that the Government consider measures to build on our relationships with our neighbours and consider the benefits that will bring to us and them.

The federal Government has already struggled with a number of major issues. Western Australia has felt the impact, because it and the Northern Territory are the closest States to Indonesia. We see most of the refugees, and see most of those fishermen from the islands to the north who are illegally fishing off our coast. If we are to deal with these issues properly, we must have a mature relationship, not one based on name-calling or allocating blame. We must have proper programs. Although most of these issues come within the Commonwealth Government's purview, the State could put out its hand in friendship and try to break down the barriers that are emerging between those areas of Asia and Australia. It is important that this State Government arrange meetings with the appropriate officials and politicians not only in Indonesia but also throughout the South East Asian region. We must come to some understanding about how we can assist one another rather than hive off problems and blame each other for something that is no-one's fault. Australia is not the main protagonist, but our attitudes are not helping. I would like to hear from the State Government whether measures are being

implemented to build our cultural and trade links with the countries of our region. We as a State should start breaking the ice by dealing with some of the problems that beset Australia.

We have had a troublesome defence relationship with Indonesia. The Australian Government entered into arrangements with the Indonesian military in the hope that it would lead to our having a stabilising influence in the region. That did not work; in fact, that program was a dramatic failure. Whether that was Australia's fault, Indonesia's fault or anyone else's fault, I do not know. However, we must review our record in dealing with those issues. Part of the problem lies with our being prepared to assist but not being a good friend by criticising excesses. One element of being a good friend is being able to point out to one's friends and neighbours when they are doing the wrong thing. Our silence about what was going on in the Indonesian armed forces made us complicit in what went wrong in that country. While questions were being asked about the behaviour of the military, we continued to provide defence assistance and to build a relationship pretending that nothing was happening. In the process, we failed the people of the region, particularly those in East Timor and West Irian. Any new relationship must include our being able to speak out when we believe our friends are doing the wrong thing.

We could do much more to help Indonesia to rebuild. It has gone through tough times since the collapse of the south sea bubble - that group of economies which were shooting ahead but which collapsed and are now slowly recovering. We should be assisting them to get out of that predicament and supporting them when they seek assistance. We could probably provide much more assistance in the field of education, not just for our benefit - that is, making money from full-fee-paying overseas students - but also to develop a relationship with the future leaders of those countries.

It is clear that in building that relationship we must have a better understanding of the culture of people of the region, particularly their religious philosophies. I refer specifically to the Muslim religion, which has been very much maligned in recent times. We must do a great deal of bridge building in the region in that respect. I am sure that we can gain that understanding through cultural exchanges. Equally, the people of the region could gain a greater understanding of Australia and, as a result, we could foster acceptance. We are going backwards in that regard. Australia has worked hard to improve its level of acceptance in the region as the Anglo-Saxons of the south seas, but it has slipped in recent times. We are not thinking seriously about the future when we are gung-ho in our treatment of refugees and when we malign Muslim communities. We must do much to improve that situation.

**HON DEE MARGETTS** (Agricultural) [3.58 pm]: It is important to ask what is Australia's position on human rights and how other countries perceive us. Australia has from time to time suggested that improvements be made in other countries - for example, Myanmar, the countries of South East Asia and other countries in our region. We have taken moral and ethical positions on a range of democratic and human rights issues. However, most people can see through our double standards. We are in grave danger of destroying Australia's ability to act as an honest broker. It has played that role on a number of occasions. I am not sure that I entirely agree with the role that it played in Cambodia, but the fact that it could was to its credit. It has less credibility in Bougainville because of its support of some of the industries that helped to create the problems. At least Australia was not laughed out of court in that situation. In the not too distant future the ability of Australia to take an honest broker role in the region is very much at risk, if not beyond help in the immediate future.

A question that springs to mind is: what is the fundamental difference between refugees from Kosovo and refugees from Afghanistan? In both cases Australia's official position was to support the action in those countries of one group against another. One group of people from Kosovo were welcomed in some numbers to Australia but only until the conflict in Kosovo finished, when they were then repatriated. There were disagreements about whether all of those refugees should have been forcibly repatriated. However, there was bipartisan support across the national political spectrum to accept Kosovar refugees into Australia because we understood the difficulties occasioned by such a war and the necessity for the international community to play a part in avoiding an enormous humanitarian disaster.

That leads me to the next question: who is at war and with whom are they at war? It is not clear. Initially, statements were made by the United States to garner support for war against terrorism. I said in an adjournment debate on this matter that if there is war against terrorism, we must understand who are the targets. Information has been published that 15 out of the 19 hijackers connected with the World Trade Centre incident and the other important events of 11 September were in fact from Saudi Arabia. It is clear that the people involved in those events could not have reached the level of organisation that they obviously had without some official or non-official bureaucratic assistance or other assistance from the powers that be in Saudi Arabia. Australia is not bombing Saudi Arabia and no other country appears to be at war with Saudi Arabia. I am not suggesting that we should be but, unfortunately, I have heard statements on a number of occasions that the United States and some of its allies are at war against the Taliban. Most people believe that definite evidence exists of human rights

abuses by the Taliban. However, if Australia is in this alliance, is it also at war against the Taliban? Has Australia in fact declared war against the Taliban or is it still at war against terrorism?

This issue has not been overlooked by other countries in the region. Many people are concerned that a country like Australia, which is regarded as having taken a position on a range of issues in the past, is now going along with the concept of a war against the Taliban. If we are at war with the Taliban, we are not at war with Saudi Arabia or a number of other countries that may have been involved in some way with terrorists or groups of terrorists. Australia is in fact connected with a war against the Taliban, which was never blamed - even by the United States - for the initial actions on 11 September. The Taliban may have been blamed for harbouring terrorists; however, other countries such as Saudi Arabia might say that we as Australia and as a region are simply jumping on the coat tails of someone looking for a way of taking action. Taking action against Afghanistan might be regarded as much easier economically and socially and in other ways than taking action against a country such as Saudi Arabia. Therefore, if this is no longer a war against terrorism, what is Australia now engaged in and when can it say that the action has been won or lost? Again, where does that place Australia's standing in the region? Do people in the region now believe that Australia's actions, if they ever made sense, no longer make sense?

I have mentioned before that many people and I have deep concerns about the total inability to target bomb, especially using cluster bombs. What does that mean to Australia's standing on human rights or its standing in the region? What does it mean when we attempt to deal with crimes against humanity, internationally and in the region? What does it mean the next time that Australia takes a stand against clear human rights abuses in its region, the South Pacific and Asia? Will people ever take notice of Australia again? What do we have to do to regain the respect of the people in those regions?

As has been clearly stated by a number of people, the situation is clearly linked to the concentration of illegal immigrants - or those people seeking asylum. What does it mean to Australia's credibility when it does not concentrate on the problem of visa overstayers? We do not send visa overstayers to Nauru, Fiji or Papua New Guinea or look for another island nation that desperately needs aid and pay it to have them. We concentrate only on the people coming from the region - in the case of Kosovo we put out our hands to assist - but, in fact, we are closing the gates. Will Australia ever be able to hold up its head and put pressure on other countries in the region on human rights abuses? This issue should not be argued simply on our ability to trade. Australia's moral, ethical and general standing in the region is very much at risk until we start to debate these issues truly and honestly. Is the action taken by Australia effective against global terrorism? Have we clearly defined what we are taking action against? Are we in serious danger of being regarded as having taken action for action's sake? Will we ever be regarded as having taken credible action if we cannot clearly state whether we have won? Are human rights abuses selective? Are refugees selective? Are illegal immigrants selective? Is this level of clarity beginning to cloud everything that Australia is doing for human rights?

I am very much afraid that the perception of taking strong action has put us in a corner and may leave us in a corner for a long period to come unless we can clearly enunciate what Australia stands for. If Australia stands for democracy, what does that mean? If it opposes crimes against humanity, yippee, let us do it and let us stand and support the world court. If it opposes human rights abuses, let us find out where they are and let us take moral, ethical and consistent action where those human rights abuses occur. However, if Australia is about taking selective action against easy targets and about doing that both with international military efforts and when dealing with refugees, then Australia must make changes to that action. If there is a clear call from the Australian community to make those changes, we must do that.

**HON KIM CHANCE** (Agricultural - Leader of the House) [4.07 pm]: I thank Hon Jim Scott for raising this issue. It is easy to take for granted our carefully developed and long-standing relationship with our Asian neighbours. He has referred to some issues of tension that have occurred from time to time, which issues have underlined the fact that we cannot take for granted the relationship that we have built up.

Many issues raised by both Hon Jim Scott and Hon Dee Margetts relate specifically to commonwealth issues. I am not about to comment on them, although I am able to provide further information on questions relating to defence relationships. However, it is important that we acknowledge there are two levels of diplomacy: the official level, which we regard as Canberra's role, and a less official level of trade diplomacy. In any Australian State the latter of those two forms of diplomacy is far more important.

I have looked at the list of overseas visitors that the Premier meets, which is different from mine although some on his list complement mine. The people I and my colleagues Hon Clive Brown and, I imagine, the Treasurer have met relate to an entirely different level of diplomacy. Indeed, sometimes the second level of diplomacy, the trade level, can be far stronger than the official level. Therefore, although there may be some sniping over the use of a particular word, for example, to describe the actions of a political leader in the region, and that may seem to be putting our relationship under threat, the underlying strengths of the State's relationship, based as it is

on a long-established trade relationship, are often entirely unaffected by what is happening on the front page of *The Straits Times* or in the Australian media.

It is also important to note that we cannot allow that level of tension at a political level to continue for an overlong period. Obviously, we will have differences of opinion. Indeed, often those differences of opinion are entirely healthy, and that is how we have an effect on standards of humanity in other jurisdictions. Provided we deal with the issues with maturity at a political level, the underlying strength of the trade relationship will continue. One example of that, albeit not in the Asian region, was when a number of Australians were in Baghdad as guests of the Saddam Hussein regime during the conflict in Iraq. It seemed impossible for the Australian diplomatic service to get those Australians out; yet when the Chairman of the Australian Wheat Board went to Baghdad, they virtually flew out with him. That was an expression of the long-established relationship and the great esteem that had been built up between Iraq and the Australian Wheat Board. It is an issue of which we should take careful note. However, we cannot take it for granted. For that reason, I am grateful for Hon Jim Scott raising those issues.

Hon Jim Scott raised some specific questions about the defence relationship, and I have received some advice on that matter. In the past two to three years, Malaysia has sent military personnel to participate in exchange programs and courses at the Australian Defence College in Canberra. Although there was a lull in our relationship with the Indonesian defence force, military exchanges have occurred since then, and, more recently, officer-level exchanges between Indonesia and Australia have been resumed. Similarly, officers from the Middle East, Singapore, Thailand and Japan have all been on courses at the Australian Defence College. These military personnel are also given briefings in Western Australia about Western Australia's strategic interests and its relationship to Asia. I found that interesting and relevant to the motion. I understand those briefings occur on a regular basis, and include briefings on Western Australia's strategic planning and economic and trade interests in the region. I understand that regular joint exercises are conducted off the coast of Western Australia, and this involves a number of our Asian neighbours taking part. Of course, as we all know, Republic of Singapore Air Force pilots train in Western Australia, and Singaporean pilots, in particular, train at Jandakot.

It is fair to say that Western Australia, through successive Governments, has always led the way in promoting and extending a good trade relationship with its neighbours in the Asia-Pacific region. That goes all the way back to the 1960s and 1970s when we developed what was to become a long-term trading relationship with Japan. That good relationship was developed and extended during the 1980s and 1990s into China and South East Asia. What has developed from that relationship, and, quite often, from commonwealth foreign aid and service contracts from Western Australia, is an extraordinary degree of success in developing export markets. Those export markets have benefited our resource industries - that is, iron ore and other minerals, and more recently, of course, gas; agriculture and fisheries; and the service industries themselves, because we are now major suppliers of services in education, health and engineering in the Asian region.

Hon J.A. Scott: What about the cultural side of things, because at this time that is extremely important?

Hon KIM CHANCE: It is. I guess culture comes second. I have always seen trade as the beginning of cultural exchange.

Hon Peter Foss: I think it should be the other way round.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I do not. If we think about our personal relationships, often we strike up a friendship as a result of going into a corner store and buying a loaf of bread. I have always extended that to the question of trade, and, in particular, a fiery debate over whether we should trade with China. I recall the then Minister for Trade, Doug Anthony, saying that he would not sell his soul to deal with China - what he was fond of calling red China. The fact is that, in his terminology, Canada did sell its soul, and, with wheat, Canada has out-sold Australia in the Chinese market ever since.

Hon Peter Foss: The other alternative is that if people do not understand the culture, often their trade goes wrong. We had a lot of hard times in China because we did not understand the culture.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Indeed; and even more so in the Middle East, where a lack of understanding of Middle Eastern culture certainly defeated our early trade efforts in that part of the world. Certainly, the two must go hand in hand. I guess trade offers the means to open the door, but, in my view, culture follows trade. We must have an understanding of the cultural perspective of a nation to engage in trade successfully. However, once we have been trading with a country, it is easier to establish cultural and interpersonal relationships because they build off trade. Indeed, tourism, being a function of culture, almost always follows hand in hand with trade.

The State has a real role in export facilitation in a number of ways. The sister-state relationships have a trade, commerce and cultural direction. Trade missions are more focused upon trade, although it is during the conduct of trade missions that many of the interpersonal relationships are formed. I have just taken part in the Australia-China dairy conference, and I found that a fascinating experience.

**HON PETER FOSS** (East Metropolitan) [4.18 pm]: I am glad that the Leader of the House has spoken of the two levels of communications, because he is correct. There are probably more than those. There are the official measures taken by a country, the actual genuine feeling between two countries, the type of promotion that the federal Government undertakes on a national and truly diplomatic level; and, as the Leader of the House mentioned, there is the level of trade undertaken by both Governments and individuals in this country. They are all very important matters. Probably one of the most interesting combinations of them, however, was the genuine assistance given by Australia to the tiger economies when they had a serious problem. When we talk to people at the highest level from those economies, they assure us that that was probably one of the most effective moves by Australia to establish itself as genuinely caring for its Asian neighbours. It was seen by those economies as a truly collegiate attitude and action. The old saying is that a friend in need is a friend indeed. It was not mere window-dressing; it was significant assistance by the Australian Government.

Hon Dee Margetts: Did you see that federal legislation? It was a very stupid thing for Australia to sign.

Hon PETER FOSS: There we are. I will have to hear during the adjournment debate tonight why it was such a bad idea. Those economies thought it was a very good idea and they thought we had really shown our collegiate attitude. Whether or not it was silly for Australia to do it, I assure Hon Dee Margetts that the impact on those people was very positive indeed. It was seen as a very positive move by Australia.

Another area of underlying goodwill that Australia has throughout Asia, which goes back an awful long time, is the Colombo Plan. We sometimes underestimate the impact that that plan had on the people who came to Australia. Those people now hold considerably senior positions in many of those Asian nations and they look back to their time in Australia - particularly Western Australia - with considerable affection both for Australians and the country. I have had the opportunity to travel overseas promoting health services in Indonesia. It was amazing how many senior people I met within the health system in Indonesia who had had their training in Western Australia under the Colombo Plan, and their eagerness to express even to this day their appreciation for that assistance was quite clear.

Many people have come through our education system. As I went through the education system I saw many overseas people go through the Australian education system, and since that time the numbers have increased enormously. I have personal friendships with some of those people which have lasted, I suppose, 35 years. We have very close ties and still keep in touch. I am sure every single person who has been through our system has had exactly the same experience. People must not underestimate the power of that personal culture contact. Whether one believes in militarism or not, having military people come to Western Australia is extremely beneficial. If we wish to cut down misunderstandings and to establish the sorts of links that I believe are essential for international goodwill, bringing people to Australia who are involved on that side of things is obviously an excellent idea, because it increases the understanding and decreases the possibility of misunderstanding. That is one of the reasons I interjected on the Leader of the House to point out how important I thought cultural matters were, because it is amazing how easy it is to offend people even when one is trying to do the right thing, as opposed to not offending people even when one perhaps is being a bit critical. One must understand the underlying cultural meaning.

I was a bit surprised when we had 15 minutes of hand-ringing by Hon Jim Scott saying that we should get on better with our neighbours, and then Hon Dee Margetts telling us that we should tell our neighbours when they go wrong on human rights. Frankly, I do not think that is culturally likely to be very acceptable to those people. They might take that as being offensive, especially when they look at the position of Aboriginal people in our own country.

Hon Dee Margetts: I did not actually say that. I said that when Australia has taken that position in the past Australia has played a role, and will Australia ever be able to play that role again. You were not listening.

Hon PETER FOSS: I was listening to the member very carefully. I heard what she said. I may not have heard what she meant to say. We were plainly taken to task for turning a blind eye to some of the human rights violations in our region. There is no doubt that at times we did. Probably the one that we most feel shamefaced about was in 1975 when we failed to help the population of East Timor. That is something that we all, with successive Governments, feel a degree of concern about. I am pleased that we had the opportunity at least in part to right that wrong in the year 2000. There is no doubt that that did not endear us to the population of Indonesia. At times that creates a bit of a quandary. If we do what we consider to be the right thing, that may be the very matter that upsets our neighbour. If we look at the causes of some strife between us and Indonesia at the moment, we need look no further than our intervention in Timor. Some fundamental Muslims may also be upset about our involvement in Afghanistan, but I think people would find that the Indonesian Government is also a little upset about those fundamental Muslims.

Hon Dee Margetts interjected.

Hon PETER FOSS: I do not think the member would find that the Indonesian people as a whole are sympathetic to the fundamental Muslims, and I certainly do not think the Indonesian Government is sympathetic to them.

Hon Dee Margetts also referred us to her argument about why we were bombing the Taliban. Rather than go through it again, I refer her to my response, which she seems to ignore. The fact is that the Government of Saudi Arabia jailed bin Laden - which was the main reason he left Saudi Arabia. He had been a fundamental Muslim critic of the Saudi Arabian Government. He decided that Saudi Arabia was not a good place to be because of the lack of sympathy that the Saudi Arabian Government had shown him, so he went to a country where he did get sympathy, where there was a fundamental Muslim Government and where he would get some form of refuge. As Hon Kim Beazley rightly said, the people who caused the events of 11 September committed an act of terrorism. The country that gives aid and sanctuary to those people commits an act of war. People are perfectly entitled to disagree with whether we should get involved in that war. I do not have any problem with people condemning any war, but do not try to pretend that there was not an act of war by the Taliban Government of Afghanistan. There was. That Government has refused to hand over bin Laden. It has given sanctuary not only to bin Laden, but to a large number of people guilty of terrorism. Whether that meets with the approval of fundamental Muslims around the world is another question. As I said, I am glad I am not President Bush and I am glad I do not have to make those decisions. These decisions are not easy. It is easy to criticise the decisions when one is not the person making them. I am prepared to say that I recognise that Australia is not defensible without the assistance of the United States, and we as a nation can hardly call upon America to defend us, if we were to have some problems, if we were not prepared to give America at least moral support.

I will now refer to the question of our near neighbours. As has been illustrated by the Leader of the House, we have very good relationships with our neighbours. We have good and cordial trading relations with those neighbours, including Malaysia. The interesting thing is that, while it might suit the Malaysian Government to criticise us for the mere fact that somebody in Australia happened to describe Mr Mahatir as recalcitrant, it was probably not all that bad politically for Mr Mahatir. It was probably quite supportive for his political ambitions, but I do not think it would have affected those people who wanted to trade with us.

**HON TOM STEPHENS** (Mining and Pastoral - Minister for Housing and Works) [4.29 pm]: I will take up the theme currently being addressed by Hon Peter Foss. Some work has been done by our predecessors, the coalition Government, in developing good quality relations with our near neighbours. In particular, the former Premier, Richard Court, did some quality work concerning our trading relations with China. The difficulty for us as an incoming Government trying to take up some of that quality work arises in this way: we have the opportunity to build on those good relationships, we have a consciousness that our near neighbours have a keen interest in price, a keen interest in competitiveness, but they also watch the tone of our national debate. For those of us who are committed to the prosperity of our communities, we have an absolute obligation to make sure that we temper our debates, temper the way we deal specifically with issues of race, so that we do not cut off our nose to spite our face.

As we try to build solid economic relations with our nearest neighbours, those sections of our community prancing on the domestic stage and looming larger on this stage than they should by right, do enormous damage to the prosperity of our communities. We run the risk of damaging the economic prospects of our communities, our children and their children.

Hon John Fischer: I do not think you know what you are talking about.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: I know precisely what I am talking about and I have deliberately pitched my remarks to the corner benches. As members can appreciate, I have been very restrained in my response to the contributions made in this Chamber on a variety of issues. By and large, a lot of restraint has been shown by the new members from that bench. This is my first attempt to say in part to those members that the contribution of their colleagues specifically in this area damages the economic fabric of our nation. As we try to engage our nearest neighbours in trading opportunities, of which there are many, those of us who occupy the government benches from time to time, whether it be the coalition or the Labor Party, are faced with the damage done by the domestic debate fanned by people including those belonging to mainstream parties who should know better and who, too often, fall into this debate and cause difficulties with trading opportunities. I guess Hon John Fischer has excuses.

The hard work and efforts of the likes of former Premier, Richard Court, comes at a huge personal toll to those individuals. Our Government is now working hard in the same pursuit, and that work is too easily undone by intemperate debates that are waged by a small number within our community. I presume that we are all committed to the economic prosperity of our families, our communities and our State and nation. To the extent that we do not learn the lessons that are regularly presented to us as we try to engage in trade opportunities with our near neighbours, then we do a disservice to our collective goals. If narrow political advantage is pursued on the domestic stage by intemperate debate, let us hope that it will at least be short-term political advantage. I hope that any political advantage will come unstuck during this coming weekend, and that the expressions of ill-

tempered, intemperate contributions to the race debates of this nation will be driven from the national stage for many reasons, although I want to take up the specific economic theme that was embarked upon by Hon Peter Foss.

I was unsure whether I would be at a polling booth this Saturday so I have already cast my vote. I filled in the boxes below the line on the Senate ballot paper to make sure that the numbers were exactly as I wanted them to be. There are a number of names at the bottom of the ballot paper, which make it hard to decide who should be put last as an expression of how one wants to drive from the national stage, intemperate remarks that damage not only the economic fabric, but also the moral fibre and character of our society.

Hon John Fischer: Who did you vote for?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: In the end it was a toss-up, but I made the decision and perhaps I will share that with the member in a private moment. However, his colleague was in there right to the end; it was a Tweedledum and Tweedledee scenario.

Hon John Fischer: Was it the person you usually work for?

Hon TOM STEPHENS: That is right and to whom I am partly indebted for my political career.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: He is last on my ticket.

Hon TOM STEPHENS: It was a toss-up between him and Ross Lightfoot as to who does the most damage on these issues.

Work needs to be done with our near neighbours and the trading relationships are important. They are relationships that will also build our future as a moderate, multicultural community that can learn from and respect what is best in other cultures, religions and communities. We must build on the lessons learnt from an appreciation of that which is different, and find ways of improving our own ways. Much of that process has already happened in our country, but more can be done for the betterment of us all.

We will continue to have good trading relationships with Singapore. The Premier's first visit outside this State was to Singapore, and he then went to China in order to build those relationships. Work still needs to be done with Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. Quality work can be done in the Philippines in the agricultural area, and in other sections of its economy that will be of use to that country and to us as we build our own economic base. We also have opportunities with India.

It is no secret that when we examine commonwealth parliamentary situations around the world, we gain an understanding of what is going on in our community with regard to race issues and the race debate. These questions and domestic debates have done untold damage. The simple message I send to people who engage in debate in that way is that they should pull their flaming heads in, wake up to themselves, and understand that the damage they do affects not just themselves but also the rest of the community. It affects those who are genuinely interested in solid economic growth and opportunities, and those who deserve them. We are blessed by a well-mannered, egalitarian, open-hearted and generous society. I hope we will always keep heading in that direction not just for our own sakes, but also for the sake of the international community. We can be a beacon representing the best of our community, as a wider lesson for others.

**HON J.A. SCOTT** (South Metropolitan) [4.38 pm]: I appreciate the contributions of members and that they recognise that it is important to maintain a good relationship with our neighbours to the north. The only thing I am disappointed about is that I have not heard of any new measures to be put in place to deal with the current circumstances, which are sending our relationship backwards at the moment.

Hon Kim Chance: I have some more information in writing that I will provide.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: That is good. I am pleased the Leader of the House has indicated that things are afoot, which he will show me later, because this is of vital importance. We have got ourselves into a situation without thinking about how we will extract ourselves from it and where we will be at the end of it. When will that period be? We seem to be in an open-ended escalation of events without any planning; it is mostly reaction on top of more reaction.

As members indicated in debate, the prosperity, peace of mind and wellbeing of this whole country is dependent on our ensuring the wellbeing, peace of mind and prosperity of our neighbours. The more we do to help them, the more we help ourselves. One of the unfortunate aspects of the current economic climate - the economic rationalist period that we have been living through - is the emphasis on competition rather than cooperation. I have no doubt that cooperation with our neighbours, within our nation and with each other will achieve a lot more than slinging off at each other and, basically, behaving like a mob of hillbillies in our response to recent events. The appalling events that occurred have created reactions - obviously I speak of 11 September.

However, we need to take stock of where we are today and make some plans for the future, rather than to allow the day-to-day reaction that is occurring.

Hon Kim Chance: One of the plans you will read in this paper includes the bilateral free trade arrangement between Thailand and Australia. That is indicative of some of the things we are moving towards.

Hon J.A. SCOTT: Where I disagree with the Leader of the House is that he sees trade coming before understanding. I see culture in its broad sense as understanding the philosophical underpinnings of a society, and understanding what things might offend people, the way in which people do business and how people perceive themselves and wish to be perceived. Those sorts of things are extremely important and should come before trade at a really high level. I understand that these things bounce off one another. However, we must first have a good enough relationship to talk to each other and to understand each other and what are each other's motives. If we can develop a much better relationship than we have ever had in this region, we will be a much safer, more prosperous, environmentally cleaner and better part of the world in the future.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.