

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Global Warming, Rising Sea Levels

HON JIM SCOTT (South Metropolitan) [3.47 pm]: It is difficult to keep up with the changing schedules. The issue I will raise today is of considerable concern and follows a question I asked today about the way in which the State was planning for sea level rise as a result of global warming. A significant number of coastal developments are being considered. If the wrong decisions are made, it could cost the State a fortune; for instance, the United States estimates that, by the next century, it will have lost approximately 14 000 square miles of land as a result of sea level rise. It estimates that the cost of protecting the existing infrastructure will reach \$475 billion. That is a significant sum.

I was concerned about the answers to my questions today because the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure is talking about using the sea level rise figure from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The minister should go back and examine the figures again because she is using the bottom-line figure. I will quote from a document titled "Anticipatory Planning for Sea-Level Rise Along the Coast of Maine", which I took from the United States Environmental Protection Agency web site. The executive summary states -

... the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ... predicts that by the year 2100, there will be a global rise in sea level in the range of 33 to 110 cm, with a most likely rise of 66 cm.

The level that the minister has quoted is about half the likely rise. This is a very dangerous situation. We must plan not for the minimum possible rise, but at least for the likely rise, and we should most certainly plan for a rise somewhere near the top level, because that is exactly what is happening in the United States. Rather than going for the 66-centimetre level, the United States is looking at one metre for the next 50 years. Therefore, basically, its planning provides for three times what we in Western Australia are planning for.

I believe that if the State allows and approves developments to be built in the coastal area on the basis of a wrong figure, the State will be liable to protect these developments. That could cost the State an absolute fortune. One other aspect of this is the way in which coastal developments that are built at a level that is too low to withstand the inundation of the ocean will be protected. We must remember that larger storms and heavier seas must be planned for. Many more areas will be eroded and washed over by stormy oceans. The sea level will be higher than it was previously, and the storms will be bigger. We must be careful about the way in which we plan. We are not doing it properly at the moment, and that should be of great concern to people in this House.

Another requirement when building these seawalls or levees is that they will need to be built not only on the ocean but also on estuarine environments, because basically there are sea levels in these estuaries. There are canals at Mandurah. I believe that already this year one house has collapsed into the estuary, or has started to do so. We must be very careful in any future planning that we do not end up with the State being required to build major levees around the estuaries to prevent inundation and the loss of houses.

We also need to look at another aspect. As soon as seawalls are built to protect one area, the sea expanse is pushed out to go somewhere else. It will go over the sandy beaches to other low-lying areas. The more seawalls that are built to protect infrastructure, the more inundation there will be of our sandy beaches. In fact, with the way planning is being done today, it is likely that in 50 years there will be no sandy beaches in Western Australia. I ask members to think about that, because we are just not thinking about it at the moment. We need to think about it and plan for it in a way that takes on board the likely and the possible sea level rises. Some estimates are much higher than any of those that I have mentioned because they are based on a lot of assumptions. Members who watched ABC television last night would have seen a program about a study done on the rainforests in Queensland. Unfortunately, I do not know what the program was called because I turned it on after it had started. The study found that, because of the change in climate, the level of carbon usage by the forest had reversed so that, rather than photosynthesis providing more oxygen and using up carbon, the forests were producing more carbon than oxygen. That is a very serious state of affairs. Members can imagine what would happen if that occurred around the planet. If this is happening in the tundra in Russia and Europe and in the equatorial forests around the globe, we are in real trouble.

Hon Norman Moore: Do you accept the findings of that TV program unequivocally?

Hon JIM SCOTT: I accept that program because it was a very thorough piece of research.

Hon Norman Moore: No, it came up with an answer that you like.

Hon JIM SCOTT: I do not like the idea that the earth is going to run out of oxygen. If Hon Norman Moore had been listening to my speech, he would know that I am saying that we have to plan -

Hon Norman Moore: I have been listening and, you'll be pleased to know, I saw the program.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Is the Leader of the Opposition not worried about that?

Hon Norman Moore: I do not believe everything I hear like that without question, as you seem to do.

Hon JIM SCOTT: No, on the contrary; the Leader of the Opposition disregards it and puts his head in the sand in the hope that it will never happen and will go away. However, some people would like to do something about it, unlike the Leader of the Opposition. This is a very serious issue.

Hon Norman Moore: This is all part of your scare campaign that the world is going to end tomorrow.

Hon JIM SCOTT: I did not even know that the program was on until last night. If the Leader of the Opposition had been listening, he would know that I have actually been talking about sea level rises, and I was pointing out that we are using the wrong figures in Western Australia. However, last night's program shows that the issue of calculation can change because all the different interacting elements of global warming and climate change can shift very quickly. I hope that the planning minister takes on board the statements I have made in this place, because she is using the wrong figures.

Genetically Modified Grains, Fear

HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral - Leader of the Opposition) [3.57 pm]: Earlier this morning while I was speaking to the nuclear waste legislation, I made the comment that Zambia had made a decision not to provide genetically modified grain to its citizens because of the fear of what it might do to them. My intention in advising the House why that happened was not to imply that the Greens (WA) caused the Zambian Government to come to that point of view. Members might have thought that is what I meant. However, the point I was trying to make was that the green movement around the world, not the Greens party in particular, generally has created a fear in people's minds about genetically modified products. If members can tell me that the President of Zambia made the decision for reasons other than his belief in what the green movement has been telling him, I would be interested to know it.

Hon Kim Chance: I think it is fair to say that opposition to GMs, although it includes the Greens, is a much broader front than simply the Greens.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: It may well be.

Hon Kim Chance: There is a lot of scientific opposition.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Let me put it this way: the green movement and all those other people who have come to the view that genetically modified grains are not a good thing need to ask themselves what is better - dying of starvation or eating genetically modified maize.

Hon Kim Chance: I will not take issue with you on that.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Of course the Leader of the House will not, and the same applies to the matter I raised earlier today; that is, if people had a choice of no energy or nuclear energy, I suspect some people would choose nuclear energy; although, with the attitude that has been developing around the place, they might sooner not have any. However, 60 per cent of France's energy comes from nuclear power stations. Of all the countries in the world, that is the number one tourist destination. We have to start asking some questions about those sorts of things.

Hon Jim Scott: And France tried out its bombs in the South Pacific.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Yes, and it was not appreciated. I do not believe that a country should be setting off nuclear bombs. However, the honourable member saw a television program last night, which, incidentally, I saw as well, and he has instantly come to the conclusion that it must be right. Now he is saying to the House and the broader community that the rain forests of Queensland are causing a problem with greenhouse gases, and it is somebody's fault. This morning he was telling us we are all going to drown because of the rise in sea level, and just before that he said we are all going to be irradiated because of the nuclear power industry. We are going to die three different ways in one day!

Point of Order

Hon JIM SCOTT: The Leader of the Opposition is misrepresenting entirely what I have said. I have never said any of those things that he just stated.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, member! You have the opportunity, when the Leader of the Opposition concludes, if you wish to make a comment in respect of misrepresentation. That is the procedure.

Debate Resumed

Hon NORMAN MOORE: This is the strategy of the Greens (WA) and their fellow travellers; that is, to create fear in the community by exaggerating what are, in many cases, legitimate environmental concerns. This morning the member came into this place and accused me of lying, which I have now corrected to the member's satisfaction, I hope. However, the member and his colleague then talked about the effect of nuclear energy, the

disposal of waste and how we cannot go anywhere near it. Yeelirrie is now verboten; if a person goes near Yeelirrie he will die. The member then asked a question about global warming and its effect on the rising sea level, creating again the impression that if a house is built too low, it will be swamped. In the next five years we will all be under water! That is the sort of message the member is trying to create. Now the member has seen a program on television and has accepted its conclusions unequivocally, without any argument and without checking it out. He has told us in Parliament that we now have a serious problem in respect of greenhouse gases because of a program he saw on television. He would love people to believe that unless we all sit under a tree and contemplate the meaning of life forever we will destroy the planet and everything on it. It is time he came up with some alternative propositions instead of simply saying that everyone is going to die unless they change their minds on everything we talk about. He should start being positive and recognise that vast numbers of people in the world live in abject poverty and need energy to be created, crops to be grown and water supplies to be provided - all the sorts of things that are basic to a reasonable standard of living. There are millions of people in that situation, and, yet, the member sits back in sunny old Western Australia, with every possible and conceivable benefit that mankind has ever had, and makes sure that nobody else gets any of it. I find his attitude appalling. He pretends that somehow or other he has concern for the underprivileged of the world, and, yet, he is trying to make things happen in such a way that they get no benefit from what the modern industrialised world has provided to people who live in western society. He cannot have it both ways. He likes to live in, benefit from and enjoy what a modern democratic and industrial society provides for him, but, at the same time, he is going out of his way to make sure that nobody else gets it.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Earlier, Hon Jim Scott rose on a point of order and I indicated that if he wished to make a personal explanation, it would be at the conclusion of the Leader of the Opposition's speech. A personal explanation, as Hon Jim Scott would be aware, is not able to be debated and must be a statement of fact, as he sees it, on the alleged misrepresentation.

Misrepresentation by Leader of the Opposition, Personal Explanation

HON JIM SCOTT (South Metropolitan) [4.05 pm]: I have been misrepresented by the Leader of the Opposition, who stated that I said that everybody would be irradiated or radiated - I am not sure whether he put an "ir" in front of the word or not - if the State were to have nuclear energy. I never said that at any stage during my earlier statement. That is completely untrue. He also stated that as a result of seeing a single program I had arrived at the conclusion that the Queensland rain forest produces more carbon than oxygen and that it is, therefore, a net carbon producer. I did not reach that conclusion from a single program. I have read extensively on the issue and heard many scientific reports. The comments of the Leader of the Opposition are simply not true and he should be more careful when making statements.

Gnowangerup District Hospital

HON BRUCE DONALDSON (Agricultural) [4.06 pm]: I have learnt in the past couple of days some information about Gnowangerup District Hospital. The Leader of the House is also the Minister for the Midwest, Wheatbelt and Great Southern, which is part of the State's agricultural region. I would like him to make some inquiries to find out whether it is a malicious rumour or whether moves are afoot to close Gnowangerup District Hospital. The news came as a bit of a surprise to me, because I understood that the Minister for Health had made a statement in which he said that no hospitals would be closed, although their role might change. That commitment was given by the Government. I was therefore surprised during the past couple of days to find that it might not be the case. I raise the issue because I understand that a rally is to be held at Gnowangerup in the near future. I urge the Minister for the Great Southern to make some inquiries and maybe next week make a short ministerial statement on behalf of the Minister for Health to quell the fears that have arisen in that area.

House adjourned at 4.07 pm
