

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural - Leader of the House) [4.50 pm]: I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

Fremantle Eastern Bypass - Adjournment Debate

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [4.51 pm]: I will not detain the House for long; however, it should not rise until I have placed on the record the following concern. It is getting past the time when the Government must seriously consider whether to appoint another minister to review the actions of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, particularly in light of the minister's dealings with regard to the metropolitan region scheme amendment No 1055/33. I make that suggestion on the grounds that the Government is hopelessly confused about the facts of the issue. It is unable even to give correct instructions to the consultants it has engaged, presumably at considerable expense. There are further grounds for my suggestion, some of which have been alluded to in this place on previous occasions. Other members and I will refer to those related matters in due course. Those grounds include the apparent disregard for lawful planning processes that the current minister is displaying by her actions in this matter. However, that is a matter for another day.

Today I bring to the attention of the House a matter that is unique in my observation of government foul-ups, of which I have seen plenty to enable me to make a comparison. Yesterday the Government distributed a number of documents produced by a series of consultants, including Connell Wagner Pty Ltd, Environmental Resources Management Pty Ltd and Clifton Coney Stevens (WA) Pty Ltd. Presumably the report was engaged by a government agency to do a specific job at considerable expense. The document I have with me now is a print-out off the net of the official summary and is about half an inch thick.

The consolidated documents of the consultant's reports include a road network analysis, traffic and social impact assessments, environmental assessments and economic impact assessments of some proposals for the Fremantle eastern bypass. The report compares and contrasts two options: the so-called Stock Road-Leach Highway-High Street option and the Fremantle eastern bypass option. That is fine. The documents contain some very interesting material. The traffic impact assessments include the assertion that if the former option goes ahead, all the residents of High Street will lose their houses, despite what the Government and the Fremantle mayor say. D'Orsogna Ltd, which once withstood a fire that gutted it, and neighbouring businesses will have to go to make way for government options. Although it is interesting to have those types of matters on the record, they are not the matters from the consultant's report that I wish to canvass on this occasion. Indeed, it would be easy to pick holes in such a comprehensive document if one were of a mind to do so. However I will not refer to that today.

The matter that must be brought to this Government's attention in the way I outlined in my opening remarks is this: in comparing the two road proposals, the consultants have based their report on looking at the wrong road system! There has been so much debate in this place about the Fremantle eastern bypass issue that when the matter is raised, regardless of the merits of the issues being raised, members on the government side say, "Oh, no, here we go again." The issue has been very well canvassed. However, I am staggered that consultants could have been instructed at great expense to compare the wrong road system. None of these comparisons were done before the decision to delete the bypass was made. That goes to the very lawfulness of the planning process, which I will return to on another occasion.

The consultants do not even know what the bypass is. They do not even know the road in question. In other words, it is a pointless exercise. The basis on which the minister has now extended the submission period is a pointless exercise. This Government's policy is a pointless and vacuous exercise, as is the minister.

Hon Norman Moore: Are you saying they did not assess the Fremantle eastern bypass route?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Yes. The Government has not got the road right. Despite all the exasperation and the know-it-all attitude of members opposite who said, "Here goes Hon Simon O'Brien again saying that the Government is doing something wrong with the eastern bypass," they do not even know where the flipping thing is!

Hon Jim Scott interjected.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: They do not know where it is.

Hon Jim Scott: Who had the document done?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I have already identified the document. It was commissioned by the Western Australia Planning Commission. The Government asked for the document to be prepared and it bears the logos of Connell

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Wagner Pty Ltd, Environmental Resources Management Pty Ltd and Clifton Coney Stevens (WA) Pty Ltd. According to Ian Patterson, the Secretariat Manager of the WAPC, in his covering letter -

The consultant's reports have not been endorsed by the Commission but have been approved for release for the information of the public and stakeholders.

That is a relief; at least the commission has not endorsed this document. As I said, the consultants received instructions but looked at the wrong road system. The road system in question extends from the point at which Stirling Highway currently terminates at High Street, Fremantle. From that point, the so-called Fremantle eastern bypass travels due south and runs from the point I just mentioned to Clontarf Hill. That part of stage 8 Roe Highway then goes east back to Stock Road. It does not include the Fremantle-Rockingham controlled-access highway, a major north-south freight corridor.

Hon Jim Scott: It is the same road.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: No, it is not.

Hon Jim Scott: Yes, it is.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Hon Jim Scott thinks he knows it all. Perhaps he should belt up for just a minute.

Hon Jim Scott: That is a joke.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: He needs to understand that, via instruments already dealt with in this place, the process to delete parts of that highway was set in train and acted upon by the former Government. That was done so that Stock Road, rather than the Fremantle-Rockingham controlled-access highway, would be the north-south freight route. Hon Jim Scott also needs to understand that this Government has acted in concert with that decision by implementing the second part of the former Government's plans. There is no chance that the Fremantle-Rockingham controlled-access highway will be the north-south freight route as was once contemplated; it is therefore not part of the Fremantle eastern bypass issue. Indeed, in due course, the road - not that it exists - will not even be part of Main Roads' plans. It will be left in the hands of the City of Fremantle, and we know that it is not that keen on a Fremantle eastern bypass-type action.

What hope do we have with a minister who engages consultants to look at the wrong road system? This is one of the greatest controversies we have ever had south of the river, and that is why this Government needs to take that minister firmly in hand. Good luck to it.

South West Students - Adjournment Debate

HON BARRY HOUSE (South West) [5.01 pm]: I briefly raise a matter -

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am not quite sure where the tunes are coming from -

Hon Simon O'Brien: They are from the function for parliamentarians of Irish descent.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I am a descendant of the Higgins family.

The PRESIDENT: I did not realise the tunes were in order under the honourable member's auspices!

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I briefly raise a matter relating to equity - or, more importantly, inequity - for south west students accessing public transport for school activities. In addition to the orange school bus system throughout the south west, there is a limited public transport system. Westrail buses operate a good but limited service, and South West Coach Lines, a private operator, operates in some of the same areas. It does a very good job in providing the service that is required in the areas in which it is viable.

I can best illustrate my point by using an example. Students living in Augusta and attending Margaret River High School often wish to get to school at times outside normal school hours for school-related activities such as band practice or swimming lessons. They may wish to leave Augusta earlier and return later on the same day. If a Westrail service is available at a convenient time, the students will use it and get a concession. However, that service is often not available and they must use a South West Coach Lines service, on which they must pay full fare. Students do not receive a concession on South West Coach Lines services as it is a private service. It becomes very expensive for a family with two children attending the school when each child must access this service five times a week at just under \$8 a journey.

The issue of equity arises because students in the city receive a concession on all the train and bus journeys they use to get to school. This is a problem right across the south west. It does not apply to only that corner of the south west; it applies to all areas in which kids must access schools in the service centres. Negotiations are occurring with South West Coach Lines and the transport department. South West Coach Lines is sympathetic to the situation and wants to help, but it cannot perform a charity service.

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I raise this in the hope that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, who has access to the transport department, can register my concern. It is a very legitimate concern. School students in country areas need to be able to access this sort of service on the same playing field as that enjoyed by students in the city. I hope that the Government takes that on board and corrects the anomaly.

War in Iraq - Adjournment Debate

HON LOUISE PRATT (East Metropolitan) [5.06 pm]: Earlier this week we debated an urgency motion regarding the prospect of imminent war with Iraq. Unfortunately, the time limit on the motion meant I had to cut my comments short. However, the community interest in this issue is such that it is important we are able to speak freely about it.

On Tuesday I referred to nations such as France that have been waging a very strong campaign in the United Nations to prevent our going to war. I would like to see Australia play a similar role on this issue instead of sucking up to the United States of America.

Hon Peter Foss: America does not drop bombs on us.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: The majority of the 27 speakers who debated this issue in the United Nations Security Council supported strengthened inspections and opposed the use of military force.

One of the great many issues in regard to the prospect of war is so-called collateral damage. Hon Peter Foss, this is no laughing matter.

Hon Peter Foss: I am not laughing at that.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: A physicians' report forecasts a large death toll and long-term health and environmental damage from a war. According to the study by medical and public health experts, a US-led attack on Iraq could kill between 48 000 and 260 000 civilians and combatants in just the first three months of conflict, and post-war health effects could take an additional 200 000 lives.

Hon Peter Foss: How did they figure that out?

Hon LOUISE PRATT: These projections come from studies of the ramifications of the first Gulf War. The estimates of collateral damage in this report were calculated using figures and projections from the 1990-1991 Gulf War, which resulted in nearly 200 000 casualties.

Hon Peter Foss: Who started that?

Hon LOUISE PRATT: We are not debating -

Hon Peter Foss: I thought we might.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: As my honourable leader, Hon Kim Chance, acknowledged in this place the other day, the 1991 war with Iraq was an entirely different matter as it had invaded another country, Kuwait. That is not the scenario we are facing at this point. That war led to nearly 200 000 casualties. An analysis of current US combat scenarios concluded that a new conflict would be much more intense and destructive than the Gulf War. Of course, there is always the prospect of nuclear weapons being used.

Hon Peter Foss: By whom?

Hon LOUISE PRATT: By either side in the conflict.

Hon Peter Foss: That is an interesting statement, because they should not have any.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: The member is right; of course they should not have any, and that is what the weapons inspections are about ascertaining.

Dr Michael Christ, the executive director of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, has said -

Neither Iraq's suspected weapons programs nor Saddam Hussein's tyranny provide moral or military justification for risking the lives of massive numbers of innocent civilians. We urge all nations to spare the innocent in favour of full and effective inspections.

The Australian Medical Association for the Prevention of War has delivered a similar message. Its convener, Dr Gillian Deakin, has said that doctors were the witnesses to the horror and bloodshed associated with war, and she had no doubt that Australian involvement in Iraq would lead to terror threats on home soil and Australia was not medically able to cope with the fallout from such an attack.

Hon Barry House: You used to be an adviser to Carmen Lawrence, did you not?

Hon LOUISE PRATT: I was a dutiful electorate officer, and I am proud of that fact.

Some of the projections from the collateral damage report are: Iraqi combat deaths, between 2 000 and 50 000 people; Iraqi combat wounded, between 6 000 and 200 000 people; and Iraqi civilian deaths, between 2 000 and 50 000 people. Baghdad is a city of 4.5 million people. These are innocent people going about their daily lives. Imagine if that were to happen in Australia without just cause. The Iraqi people's mental and physical health and wellbeing were seriously impacted on by the Gulf War. They have been further weakened by the indirect effects of the conflict in a variety of ways that stem from the consequences of economic collapse, and from the widespread infrastructure destruction and damage to services and facilities such as food production, energy supplies and health care that are key influences on morbidity and mortality in a society. That is the overflow, quite apart from any casualties, from a war.

I will touch on the comments of Prime Minister Howard when he reflected on the tragedy of the 88 Australians killed in the Bali bombings and the outcry at his using those deaths as a justification for a war in Iraq, which is something that I condemn. Iraq has possessed weapons of mass destruction for nearly two decades. It is one of 29 countries around the world that possesses chemical weapons and one of 19 countries around the world that possesses biological weapons. If Mr Howard is aware of any evidence that establishes that over the past two decades Iraq has provided any of its weapons of mass destruction to terrorist organisations, he should tell us.

I support the peaceful disarmament of Iraq, and that is what the report of Dr Blix has indicated is possible to achieve. We need to put our good faith in the weapons inspections process. The weapons inspectors have reported substantial progress. There are still activities that the Iraqis have to comply with - that is important - and they must comply fully, but if progress is being made, we should let the work continue.

Fremantle Eastern Bypass - Adjournment Debate

HON JIM SCOTT (South Metropolitan) [5.15 pm]: I cannot let the comments of Hon Simon O'Brien go through to the keeper. Hon Simon O'Brien is obviously a bit upset that the report that he has been waiting for did not come down with the findings that he had hoped it would come down with. In fact, the report showed that the Roe Highway eastern bypass linkages would have a greater social impact on the community than would the alternatives. Secondly, the report showed that the economics - which the Liberal Party is not very good at, it seems - are weighted heavily against the proposal that the Liberal Party is favouring in order to save its seats south of the river. Thirdly, the report found that the proposals that the Liberal Party is backing would be considerably more environmentally damaging than the alternatives.

Hon Simon O'Brien: They looked at the wrong road!

Hon JIM SCOTT: That is it - the wrong road story! It is interesting, because the Liberal Party is very confused. It has moved the route of the western suburbs highway so often that it has forgotten where it has put it! Hon Simon O'Brien is like his predecessor, known fondly as Reckless Eric, whom we in this place all remember, who said this road never existed, yet it appeared on all the Main Roads maps as the western suburbs highway, which in fact was what it was all about. The only problem was that in those days Main Roads operated as an agency out of control, because rather than have planning run Main Roads, Main Roads ran planning. Rather than admit that it was building a highway that would stretch from the northern suburbs all the way to Garden Island, it pretended that it was building discrete bits of road. It is interesting that Hon Simon O'Brien says that the Fremantle eastern bypass was not the same road as the Fremantle-Rockingham controlled access highway, because they ended in a paddock and did not actually join together.

Hon Simon O'Brien: I did not say that.

Hon JIM SCOTT: I am not sure where people would have got to on that road. Hon Simon O'Brien is a bit like the people in the good old days when all the States had different gauge rails and people had to get out of one train and get onto another train if they wanted to go to Sydney. The Liberal Party was building roads that did not meet up, so people would have had to have a second car waiting in a parking lot next to the other road so that if they were driving south they could jump out of their car and get into the other car to get home. They are like that with Leach Highway too. They are trying to say that, goodness gracious, there are all these problems on High Street, Fremantle, but they do not seem to understand that the roads are actually the same road. Just because they have put a different name on one section of the road does not mean it is not the same road. A different name does not make it a different road. People sometimes call Hon Simon O'Brien by a different name, but he is still the same person; he still gets it wrong. The reality is that Hon Simon O'Brien has got it wrong again. He did not get the report that he wanted. The report showed clearly -

Hon Simon O'Brien: I did not know the report was coming! It should have been done months ago!

Hon JIM SCOTT: Is that so?

Hon Simon O'Brien: What sort of report do you think I would expect to get from this shonky government? Of course, it is one that sanitises and is self-serving!

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! Some members may need to leave and regain their composure.

Hon JIM SCOTT: It is interesting that the submission period for the eastern bypass came about only because people had complained about the level of assessment, and the then Minister for the Environment, Cheryl Edwardes, accepted that there should be submissions and that they could look at whether the eastern bypass was causing significant environmental damage. The proponent, Main Roads, was saying that this was not an important regional road, just a bypass. This is Hon Simon O'Brien's argument. Main Roads did that because, by cutting up each little section and saying that it was not part of the western suburbs highway, it could play off one section of the community against the other, and pretend that it was for the benefit of the local community, when, in fact, it was nothing of the sort. During that submission period, I spoke to the officer who was dealing with it - I think it was Derek Carew-Hopkins. We discussed this non-importance due to its not being a regional road. I pointed out to Mr Carew-Hopkins that the road did join with major roads at either end, and eventually created a highway that was of regional significance. Strangely enough, he agreed with us, and said that it did indeed have regional significance, and the eastern bypass was part of the same road as the Rockingham to Fremantle controlled access highway.

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

Hon JIM SCOTT: When the Opposition was in government it was part of the same road, and now suddenly Hon Simon O'Brien is saying it is not even the same road.

Hon Simon O'Brien: You haven't got a clue what we are on about. What planet are you on?

Hon Peter Foss: You have the wrong end.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Hon Peter Foss has had the wrong end for a long time, and the sooner he realises that, the better it will be. What this is all about is Hon Simon O'Brien's trying to beat up the situation, despite report after report showing that the eastern bypass is not necessary, and in fact is an economic disaster. It will lead to significantly greater problems for the city in the future because it encourages more and more private car use.

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

Hon JIM SCOTT: That is the story all over the world, and it is a pity Hon Simon O'Brien did not sit down and read a little bit about the problems larger cities than Perth are having because they tried to rely on more and more highways to get out of their problems. He should get real and listen to the community.

Hon Peter Foss: That is a bit rich - a Greens (WA) member telling us to get real. You have never been anywhere near reality in your life. The one place you can never claim you are anywhere near is reality.

Hon JIM SCOTT: It is strange that Hon Peter Foss should say that. He still does not believe that global warming is happening, yet all the scientists in the world do, and we have been telling him that for a long time. He has a bit of a problem. He does not think people will be killed by the bombs in Iraq. He thinks all those bombs that fall on Iraq do not kill people, and he is telling me to get real. These members are basically about saving their own seats. That is what Hon Simon O'Brien is on about. Forget the nonsense, I say to the honourable member. He should think about the community instead of his own seat, and give this a rest.

War in Iraq - Adjournment Debate

HON PETER FOSS (East Metropolitan) [5.23 pm]: I would like to speak about the impending war in Iraq, because I have not had the opportunity to speak about it yet. Unlike everybody else who has contributed to the debate, I actually do not know who is right. Only history will tell us who is right. I can remember studying the history of the Second World War and the League of Nations. After the event, everybody was able to tell us what was wrong. The League of Nations was ineffective; it did not have the power of sanctions, or any capacity to act against people who acted aggressively. We all, with great knowingness, learned that the League of Nations was a failure. Woodrow Wilson had the right idea, but it was a toothless tiger and it was useless, so the Second World War happened. We sometimes do not realise how rapidly the Second World War followed on from the First World War, which finished in 1918, a bare 20 years before the Second World War broke out in 1939. Two massive wars followed rapidly one on another. We have now gone for 57 years without a war, which is really quite remarkable. I can remember in my youth people belonging to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament marching up and down, particularly Lord Bertrand Russell, telling us we should get rid of nuclear weapons, because they were the cause of war rather than a deterrent. History has shown that the atomic weapon has been a deterrent, whether people like it or not. People do not like to be told that, but it has worked as a deterrent. Nobody could guarantee that it would work out that way, but it has. We can argue about the situation in Iraq, but

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there is a very good reason for the United States taking action against Iraq, and not against all these other people that pacifists seem to be suggesting they should go and bomb.

Hon Simon O'Brien: They are all warmongers.

Hon PETER FOSS: That is right. Iraq invaded Kuwait, and as a result of that invasion, a war led by the United States came about, with the capacity to be carried on until such time as everything demanded by the Americans was obtained. That war came to an end because an armistice was signed, under which Iraq guaranteed that it would fully and frankly do certain things, mainly disarm. As part of that process, Iraq allowed in weapons inspectors to ensure that that happened. Do members remember what happened to the weapons inspectors? They were eventually thrown out of the country by Iraq.

Hon Jim Scott: No; they had to leave because of the bombing.

Hon PETER FOSS: The bombing?

Hon Jim Scott: Yes, the Americans and British resumed bombing.

Hon PETER FOSS: They had to leave because they were getting no satisfaction whatsoever. The Australian inspector said it was hopeless dealing with Iraq because there was no cooperation whatsoever with the process. Members may recall another person who took an armistice and started tearing it up, and that was Adolf Hitler. Admittedly, many people felt some sympathy with Germany because the terms of the 1918 armistice were very strict; probably excessively so. For many years, Hitler got away with throwing away the terms of the armistice, because people had some sympathy with him. The time came when he began doing things that were a little bit beyond that, and a debate started about whether something should have been done to stop him. We all remember the picture of Neville Chamberlain returning from Munich proclaiming "peace in our time". No doubt, the majority of people supported him. Everyone wants peace. Where the trouble comes is that people cannot agree on how to achieve it. Is it achieved by Neville Chamberlain's method of constant appeasement, or does some pressure need to be applied? Occasionally, it needs some teeth. Do members honestly think that weapons inspectors would be back in Iraq if not for the threats made by the United States? There is no way Saddam Hussein would have made any concessions if not for the brinkmanship shown by Bush. Do members think that the United Nations would show any guts and say that Iraq must do this if it did not know that the United States was prepared to take it to the wire? Unfortunately, the United Nations is very much like the old conciliation commissions. They always gave in to the one who was the most resolute and bloody minded. I can remember, for instance, that for years the unions in the north west got away with the most amazing things, because Robe River and all the other people were prepared to give way. Even Hon Tom Helm admitted to us that the unions got away with amazing things. The whole process was geared to giving in to the bully. If we are not prepared to stand up to a bully like Saddam Hussein, to match him foot-to-foot and say that he must comply with the armistice that he signed, there is no way the United Nations will ever stop him. I do not want a war, I am sure John Howard does not want a war, and I am sure Bush does not want a war. What they do know is that Saddam Hussein will take advantage of every single weakness we show. It is one of those unfortunate things. Who is right? We will probably know in 10 years, but we do not know in advance, and I do not have the confidence to bet on which way it will go.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.28 pm.
