

Speaker; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Mr John Hyde; Mr John Kobelke;
Acting Speaker; Mr Alan Carpenter; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Max Trenorden

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr F. Riebeling): I received a letter today in the prescribed time from the member for Kingsley seeking to move as a matter of public interest the following motion -

That this House condemns Premier Gallop and his Government for abdicating control of the workplace in favour of union bosses and failing to show any leadership in resolving the disputes involving police, teachers, public servants, power workers and construction workers and the subsequent industrial chaos confronting the State.

Specifically, this House calls on the Gallop Labor Government to support Western Australian police officers by granting a pay increase in excess of 13 per cent.

If sufficient members agree to this motion, I will allow it.

[At least five members rose in their places.]

The SPEAKER: The matter shall proceed on the usual basis.

MRS C.L. EDWARDES (Kingsley) [2.38 pm]: I move the motion. I take the opportunity to outline the motion again.

Point of Order

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I cannot hear the member for Kingsley, and I am sitting very close to her, because of conversations taking place on the government benches. Members opposite should be asked to be quiet or to go outside.

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure will stand still while I am on my feet. It is a fact that it is very difficult for members to make a reasonable contribution in this place if everyone else in the House is talking. Opposition members were also holding private conversations that should not occur.

Debate Resumed

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: An unprecedented level of industrial disputation is occurring. Although the Premier yesterday attempted to claim that the number of disputes has decreased, the level of disputation - that is, the number of strikes for each 1 000 workers - in the 1990s was less than half the level under the Labor Government of the 1980s. That is a fact. The Government is a couple of years into its term, and the level of industrial disputation is starting to increase.

To begin with, I will talk about construction sites. The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union claims that the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection is doing nothing about safety on work sites. The minister said that he was planning to work with the CFMEU to consider its issues regarding the level of safety in workplaces. However, the minister's industrial legislation gives the unions the ability to use the issue of safety as an industrial tool. He has only himself to blame for this. He has allowed the CFMEU and the Joe McDonalds of this world to abuse the issue of safety on work sites. The minister can say that the Government will appoint more industrial inspectors. He and I both know that that will not necessarily reduce the level of workplace accidents and fatalities. He and I both know that sometimes these things are a matter of chance. He and I both know that it is not the union's responsibility to deal with safety in workplaces. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Act, that is an issue between employers and employees. He knows that these strikes by workers on building sites will cause a lack of confidence in investment and a loss of jobs. He and I can dispute the number of fatalities, but it is irrelevant. The minister is missing the point. The Gallop Labor Government's legislation gave unions the ability to use the issue of safety as an industrial tool. It also said that its industrial legislation would create a level playing field. What sort of a level playing field do we have? The construction union called the workers off all the construction sites. They were illegal strikes, but the union used the name of safety to cover itself. The minister complained that such action would result in a loss of jobs and investment, but he gave the unions that tool through the same legislation that he says will create a level playing field. It is not a level playing field. The unions, including the CFMEU, are now demonstrating their muscle. The CFMEU has made it known that it wants to get involved in the work on the Burrup Peninsula. It has made it well known that it wants to get involved in the training work for the Burrup.

This Government's industrial relations legislation allows demarcation disputes. It allows unions to fight over the same turf. I expect that we will see the same demarcation disputes we saw in the 1970s and 1980s. I believe that, unlike 18 months to two years ago, the minister also now expects that to occur. The 1980s Labor

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Government introduced occupational safety and health legislation for a very good reason: to remove occupational safety as an industrial tool to be abused by unions. This Government has allowed a return to that.

Let us talk about the level of industrial disputation. The CFMEU is in a dispute with the Government over the number of fatalities in the construction industry. The Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union is in a dispute with the Government over job losses in the communications division of Western Power and the erosion of the employee bonus scheme. I bet the power workers who have lost their bonus scheme are angry about the bonus scheme for their boss. No wonder they are in dispute. The Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association of WA is angry about a three per cent cap on wage rises. Why should it not be angry? This Government cut the number of public servants. It gave redundancy packages to level one officers and then recruited level one officers through agencies. Goodness me! This Government has no idea whatsoever about managing funds or human resources in the work force. It got rid of workplace agreements. That resulted in a large number of workers in the public service having their salaries capped until the salaries of everybody else had caught up. Those people earned far more under workplace agreements than they earn under this Government. No wonder they are upset. The Police Union is also in dispute with the Government. It has taken the unprecedented action of not responding to anything other than emergency calls. It was reported that nothing like that has happened for 100 years.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Nonsense.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: The minister should tell us when the Police Union previously decided to respond to only emergency-type calls. I do not remember it. I do not think an earlier case has been reported. The union is asking for a 15 per cent increase. The Minister for Education and Training today talked about the teachers. I will return to the issue of the Police Union shortly. The teachers are planning to strike next week. The Government said that in the meantime it would offer the teachers an increase of 14.3 or 14.7 per cent. Today the minister said that the Government would contribute \$28 million towards programs to fight bullying. What he said was very important and relates to the reason for these disputes. The public servants are being offered three per cent. The police are being offered three per cent but want five per cent. Everybody is being offered three per cent. Unlike other ministers, the Minister for Education and Training recognises the concept of work value. No wages policy should apply one figure for all employees. The Minister for Education and Training has recognised that we must take into account working environment, workload and social impact. The minister said that the Government must take into account the fact that even primary school students are taking knives to school in their bags and that teachers are being bullied at an unprecedented level. Bullying among students may have been reduced, but the level of swearing and bullying towards teachers is appalling. They have no support. The Minister for Education and Training referred to work value and the need to take all those things into account. The Government needs to apply that to its negotiations with the police. It cannot say that every worker will get a three per cent pay rise over the next three years without taking into account matters such as work value. The police say that there is no comparative salary; that their job is not being equally compared with a like job. That is a very important factor in making sure there is a wage increase.

The Government spends a lot of money on education and training because it does not want to lose police officers. That is a very important factor to consider. The Government must think about flexibility and productivity, and produce figures on which it can base an agreement before deciding the direction it will follow. The Government must consider the risk. The Minister for Education and Training talked about the working environment. What about the working environment of the members of our Police Service? We recently heard of an unfortunate case in which a senior police officer in Queensland left home to do an ordinary day's work and did not return that night. Every one of our police officers face that risk every day. Officers go home with blood on their shirts and are involved in melees. That must be taken into account in any assessment of their wages.

The Government must take into account in any wages policy the working environment of the police and the number of hours they work. Police officers in this State work 40 hours a week, which is more than any other public servant. The Government may want a flat wages policy, but it takes real leadership to sit down with every single group of people in the Police Service and determine their work value to ensure that police officers are paid appropriately and supported as the Opposition will support them.

MR D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN (Mitchell - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [2.50 pm]: As the member for Kingsley said, the State currently is facing an industrial relations crisis on five fronts, which is indicative of the lack of good management by this Government and a total lack of leadership by the Premier and his ministers.

I will focus on a matter that is causing considerable anguish to members of the Police Service in this State and their families. The first matter I want to stress - the Leader of the Opposition will underpin it in more detail later - is the wide chasm between the approach taken by the Labor Party and that taken by the Liberal Party to this matter. Today the Liberal Party came out very firmly in support of police officers and their families throughout

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the State. On one hand, the Labor Party has had an inconsistent wages policy in the past couple of years and, on the other hand, the Liberal Party has demonstrated the sort of leadership needed to resolve this industrial crisis in Western Australia today.

Imagine the thoughts of police officers, who only a couple of years ago did the right thing and accepted a three per cent per annum wage increase over two years. They had been told, "That's it; the Government has a tight wages policy; you can't have any more," only to find shortly afterwards that the nurses got a well-deserved 13.5 per cent increase over four years. The police officers had tightened their belts and accepted wage restraint, only to see the situation was different elsewhere in the public sector. Imagine now the thoughts of police officers who see the Labor Party adopting nothing short of bully tactics to convince the public that the Police Service is wrong in its request for a pay increase. As the member for Kingsley quite rightly said, the Government must consider work value when determining these sorts of increases. I go on record as saying that anything above 13 per cent is justifiable.

Dr G.I. Gallop: No wonder your budgets were in deficit all the time.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: The Premier is laughing. I will put on record that the Premier laughed at that.

Dr G.I. Gallop: At you, my friend.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: No, the Premier laughed at that. Does the Premier laugh at the fact that our police officers are the only police officers in this country who work a 40-hour week?

Mr J.C. Kobelke: Do you know that is not true?

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: They must maintain 24-hour availability. The minister is welcome to talk later on.

Mr J.C. Kobelke: I wouldn't have time to correct all your errors.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: I would love to hear more of the weasel words that the minister used in the advertisement.

Point of Order

Mr J.N. HYDE: Under the new code of conduct and the standing orders on inferences, the member is not allowed to imply that a member is laughing at something on which he has been verballed. If members return to speaking to the motion, they will be able to bring down the tone.

The SPEAKER: I do not think there is a point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: Thank you, Mr Speaker; that was rather incredible.

The Government must take into account that the police put a lot of their own resources into their work. Police officers running a station in the State who use a mobile phone must pay for the phone and its costs. They pay for their own additional training. Although some training is provided by the Police Service, a lot is not. They even have to buy their own statute books and so on. The point is that we must pay police officers appropriately or, quite frankly, we will lose them.

What is the Government's approach? When has it shown leadership? Let us look at the Premier. The Premier is supposedly in charge of public sector management, but we do not hear boo from him. We know now that the Premier deals only with good news. He does not want to get involved in this issue, although he is responsible ultimately.

I have no idea what the Minister for Police and Emergency Services is doing on this matter. She said that she met with the commissioner, or someone, but she has had nothing to do with the advertisement placed in the newspaper dealing with the matter, and she certainly has not had any in-depth discussion with the union. It appears that the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection has had to take over the whole matter; he will be Mr Bad News and he and his agency will run the show.

Members should compare that with what the Minister for Education and Training did. He told us yesterday that he was up to his neck in negotiations with the union to do with the teachers' dispute, that he had actually made an offer to the State's teachers and that he had met the union. He has not formed a joint team or passed the matter over to the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection. At least he stood in this place and had the gall to answer questions directly. He said that he, as the minister, is having ongoing discussions with the union about the matter. Instead of that happening in the police wages dispute the Government has produced a \$4 000 taxpayer-funded advertisement. The advertisement is misleading, it manipulates the truth and it uses weasel

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words to undermine the credibility of police officers in this State. It has been found that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services did not have the guts or the tenacity to authorise the advertisement or to verify its contents. She said that she thought the facts were correct; of course she would say that after the event.

Mr C.J. Barnett: She tried to blame the public service for it.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: That is exactly what the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection has done. When it was found that the Premier had not withdrawn the advertisement from the paper, his ministerial colleague the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection blamed it on public servants; he said that there were communication problems, or something, experienced by public servants. No-one in the Labor Party these days is prepared to say, "I am responsible, I am the minister, I made a mistake." We do not know whether the Premier, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services or the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection was responsible for this matter, but ultimately the buck stops with the Premier.

I will refer to the advertisement briefly and pick out two or three points to demonstrate how misleading it is. It states that the Government will deliver an additional 250 police on the street. That is blatant propaganda. Hon Derrick Tomlinson received an answer to a question recently in the upper House advising that only 38 additional police had been employed; in other words, the Government will not meet that commitment. There is no mention of that in the advertisement. The advertisement goes on to say that the WA Police Union's current wage claim would cost more than \$100 million. The Government is already offering \$70 million; therefore, the only matter in dispute is \$30 million. Why, therefore, does the Government use the figure \$100 million? It does so to mislead and frighten the public and to undermine the credibility of police officers in this State. The advertisement goes on to say that WA police are paid more than their counterparts in certain other States. There is no mention in the advertisement that the police in this State work a 40-hour week. An hourly rate comparison with other States indicates that our police officers are worse off; that is not contained in the advertisement. Clearly, the information in this advertisement is designed to mislead.

I will use some government information to demonstrate another point. The information states that constables can progress to a salary of more than \$59 000; yet a media release - not from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services or from the Premier, but from the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection - states that the maximum rate payable to a constable in this State is \$44 346. At senior constable level the maximum payable is \$52 317. Instead of using those figures, the Government has come up with another figure of \$59 000, which would be paid only to a constable who had been in the service for 15 years.

This Government is picking and choosing statistics to try to justify its case. There is no mention in this advertisement of the trade-offs that would be required by police officers to get the nine per cent that the Government is offering.

Mr J.C. Kobelke: There is none; that is why.

Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN: There are trade-offs. The contract states that the Labor Party wants to completely change overtime arrangements. The minister should read the Government's offer; if he has not read it, he does not know what he is talking about. The contract refers to a dramatic change in overtime arrangements. It deals with interference with rostering arrangements and so on, which will affect the lifestyles of not only police officers but also their families.

This is about more than money. This is what Labor members do not understand. This will affect the lifestyles of police officers and their families. The bottom line is that this is taxpayer-funded propaganda, as was much of the advertising for Ningaloo, and it is designed to undermine the police officers in this State. I leave members of the Labor Party with one thought: if they want to demonstrate their support for the Police Service in their individual electorates as well as throughout the State, today they have the opportunity to do it. They can toe the Labor Party line, support the Premier and oppose this motion, or they can support the Liberal Party's motion, support the Police Service in this State, give police officers a decent pay rise and do the right thing by their families.

MR J.C. KOBELKE (Nollamara - Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection) [3.00 pm]: I was waiting for the Opposition to make a case, but obviously it does not have anyone who can. The member for Kingsley suggested that there were unprecedented levels of industrial disputation. Where are her figures? Let us look at the official figures for workdays lost per 1 000 employees taken on a monthly basis and averaged for the year. In 1993, when the Court Government was in power, 61 workdays were lost; in 1994, again when a Liberal Government was in power, 44 workdays were lost; in 1995, 88.8 were lost; in 1996, 131 were lost; in 1997, 83 were lost; in 1998, 61.5 were lost; in 1999, 72 were lost; and in 2000, 76.5 were lost. In all those years the average was around 60 or 70 and increased to 131. In 2001 - the first year of the Gallop Labor Government - a monthly average of 33 workdays were lost over the year.

Mr N.R. Marlborough interjected.

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Mr J.C. KOBELKE: That is well below the previous levels. In 2002, an average of 35 workdays were lost.

Mr N.R. Marlborough interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.W. Andrews): I call the member for Peel to order for the first time.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The figures available for the first four months of this year indicate that 39.75 workdays have been lost. The number of workdays lost under this Government is well down on the number lost under the previous Liberal Government. However, members opposite claim that these are unprecedented levels of industrial disputation. They clearly have a problem with facts.

The member for Kingsley also spoke about the building and construction industry being out of control. During the eight years of the Liberal Government an annual average of 484 days per 1 000 employees was lost in the construction industry. In the first two years of the Gallop Labor Government, that figure was down to 342, yet members opposite describe this as unprecedented levels of industrial disputation. What an absolute nonsense!

Several members interjected.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I gave members the figures for the eight years of the Liberal Government; I did not pick its worst year. All the figures are absolutely correct.

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan: Did you design this?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: No. I supported it. I will take responsibility for it. It is correct.

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan: You say that all these facts are correct.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I asked them to double-check and they are correct.

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan: Why didn't you ask them to put all the other information in?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: There has been a whole lot of utterly false information in this campaign. Obviously some people in the Western Australian Police Union follow the trait of the Liberal Party - they cannot speak the truth. We placed a small advertisement to correct some of the fallacies to give a clear picture and members opposite are up in arms.

Mr C.J. Barnett: For \$4 500? It was not a small ad.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: We have come to expect that from the Liberal Party. It cannot stand the spotlight of truth. It cannot stay in the spotlight of truth. It gets up in arms when the truth is laid out before people because it cannot deal with the truth of matters. For the member for Kingsley to call it unprecedented levels of industrial disputation clearly shows how free and loose members opposite are with the truth.

The Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party spoke about the inconsistent wages policy under the current Government. The previous Liberal Government allowed a range of different agencies to have totally different wages policies. It was put out to the local level and people on the same level in different agencies who were doing exactly the same job were paid totally different amounts of money. The previous Government had workplace agreements. A person on a workplace agreement was paid a different wage from someone employed under an enterprise bargaining agreement. It was the previous Government that had an inconsistent wages policy. This Government has a very consistent wages policy and it applies it consistently. The suggestion that there is an inconsistent wages policy has not one skerrick of truth to it. It is absolute nonsense.

I now turn to the advertisement, which I have touched on briefly. There was a need to put out some factual information to ensure that people understand that this is a fair and reasonable offer, and it certainly is. The figures in the advertisement are absolutely correct and no-one has been able to pick a hole in them. Members opposite do not like the truth; that is their normal form. However, they cannot pick a hole in the advertisement because it states the truth. The issue is whether the current negotiations are being delayed and that somehow they should have been resolved quickly. The Police Union's EBA expired at the end of June, so we have had two and a bit months in which to deal with it. The teachers' EBA expired on 31 July, so we have had a month and a bit since then. What was the record of the previous Liberal Government? In 2000 it took more than six months to conclude the teachers' EBA. This Government is well short of that at this time. I am sure that the very active role the Minister for Education and Training is taking will ensure that we beat that mark by a long way. The 2000-01 EBA for workers in the Department of Education was concluded in January 2001; it took 10 months to complete that agreement. In 1998 the previous Government took more than six months to conclude the police officers' EBA. The previous Liberal Government deliberately delayed a range of negotiations with the Civil Service Association of Western Australia. It took more than a year before many of those EBAs were concluded. In fact, one EBA for workers at the former Department of Productivity and Labour Relations - I am not sure whether the member for Kingsley was the minister at the time; it had a number of ministers - was three

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years out of date before the previous Government got around to putting in place a new one. However, what is the Liberal Opposition saying? Because the whole thing has not been packed away in one or two months, somehow we are dragging the chain and are not being efficient in dealing with it. We will certainly deal with these matters in a lot less time than did the previous conservative Government.

I will be fairly brief because I want two of my colleagues to speak on this matter. There is a level of concern and agitation in a number of public sector unions at the moment. We certainly do not want that. We are seeking to negotiate in good faith so that those matters can be resolved in a way that ensures that those people get a very genuine and fair outcome that is resolved quickly and, hopefully, they will be back paid to the start of the period. Under many of the previous Government's agreements, people were kept waiting for six or 12 months and were not back paid. We have committed to back pay people to the conclusion of their last EBA, because we started negotiations on many agreements before their expiry date, as we rightly should. We are making a genuine offer. It is an offer of three per cent. Inflation in Perth is currently 2.1 per cent on an annual basis.

This offer does not require trade-offs. Under most of the agreements negotiated by the previous Liberal Government, people had to give up their long service leave or have it reduced, or they had to give up a whole lot of conditions or work longer hours, otherwise they would not get their pay increase. There is absolutely no trade-off required for the straight three per cent offer. It is three per cent per year without trade-offs with back pay to the start of the period. It is a much better offer than public sector employees received from the previous Government. However, the problem is that there are unrealistic expectations. I can understand why there are unrealistic expectations. When the Liberal Party lost power, the economy was shrinking by 1.2 per cent. We now have economic growth of four to five per cent and better. That fuels expectations. People find it hard to understand that when we create that economic growth, the money goes into federal coffers and does not always flow through into state government revenue. Good economic growth is good for the State, but it creates expectations that people can have a lot more.

We have put in place a much better industrial relations system which returns fairness to the workplace. We have increased the minimum wage in this State by over \$80 a week. In two and a half years of the Gallop Government the minimum hourly rate has been increased by 28 per cent for the worst paid in this State. That creates expectations. Those expectations unfortunately have become unrealistic and are not sustainable. As the Premier said in question time, the Opposition is happy to adopt the cause of any group. It is not interested in governing and putting forward a package it can pay for. It ran five budget deficits in eight years. The Opposition is not interested in economic management or making sure that it will make an offer it can deliver on.

I do not know whether the Minister for Education and Training will speak to the motion, but he has pointed out how the last enterprise bargaining agreement was not funded because an election was coming up and the coalition did not care about delivering on it but merely wanted to sign it off. The difference now is that we value public sector workers. We will not sell them a pup. We will give them a fair wage outcome, which we will deliver - not false promises - and we will maintain a surplus budget, which is something that in five out of eight years the coalition found impossible to do.

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan: What is the maximum percentage increase you will give the police? What is the bottom line?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition wonders why we laugh. He opens his mouth and inane comments come out. When we are seeking to give a good deal to public sector workers and protect taxpayers so that the offer can be met, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition wants me to say in the Parliament what will be the maximum amount. He is an absolute joke. It just shows how flimsy this motion is; it is totally without substance.

The Opposition does not seem to have any thoughts of its own. It has taken opposition members two days to work out that quite a big political issue is happening out there. After it had been running for two or three days they thought that they had better get into the Parliament and rehash it all, but they do not have the ability to do the hard work so that they can come in with anything new. We get silly, inane comments, as we did just now from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, expecting that we will say what will be the final outcome. The offer is three per cent. We think that three per cent is a very reasonable outcome and a real increase in salary. It is considerably above the current rate of inflation. It is being offered without any trade-offs and will be subject to back pay. In some areas it is being offered along with an enhancement of conditions or the fixing up of the career structure. It is therefore a very reasonable offer. We wish to conclude it through good-faith bargaining as soon as we can. At the end of the day, if it drags out too long, we may seek to go to arbitration, but we would prefer to resolve the issue through consultation and reach a consent agreement.

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We have here from the Opposition a whole lot of nonsense. When opposition members were in government they did not make offers upon which they could deliver and they ran five deficit budgets out of eight budgets. We have run two surplus budgets and at the same time have been able to increase the minimum wage in this State by over \$80 a week. I think that is an accomplishment of which any Government would be proud. The downside is that it has created an unrealistic expectation that we are now attempting to deal with.

MR A.J. CARPENTER (Willagee - Minister for Education and Training) [3.15 pm]: I feel as though I am duty bound to speak on this motion because it mentions teachers. Obviously an enterprise bargaining agreement negotiation is going on at the moment. There is some tension and subsequent publicity relating to that negotiation between the Government, the Department of Education and Training and the State School Teachers Union of WA. Quite frankly, it is almost hard to take this motion seriously. The notion that is propagated in it is absolutely fanciful. Even those members who were not in the Parliament at the time will remember when tens of thousands of ordinary Western Australians were out on the streets of Perth marching to Parliament House, occupying Parliament House, confronting members of Parliament and preventing them from entering and leaving the building because of industrial relations issues. Industrial chaos, such as that referred to in the motion, is still fresh in the memory of nearly all Western Australians. It was initiated by the previous State Government. The very member who used to occupy this seat, Graham Kierath, was a key person in engendering industrial chaos in Western Australia, if that is what one wishes to call it, and he subsequently lost his seat in Parliament because of that. The idea that there is in any sense industrial chaos in Western Australia at the moment is ridiculous. The Government is going through some EBA negotiations with two public sector unions. There is an industrial disputation of a very low level involving the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union. To describe it as chaos is absurd.

In the wording of the motion the Government and the Premier are accused of abdicating control of the workplace in favour of union bosses. For heaven's sake! On the one hand the Government is attacked daily by *The West Australian* and by the Liberal Opposition - not often by the National Party - for being subject to the whim of the union movement; that it is controlled by the union movement; that it is here as a result of the union movement. At the same time as they are putting forward the concept of industrial chaos with the union movement, we are accused of handing over control to the union movement. The two concepts are mutually exclusive. The wording of the motion is absurd.

I have only a few minutes because the Minister for Police wishes to speak. I want to speak specifically about the teachers' EBA process. It is a very interesting process. It is the first teachers' EBA process that I have been through. We successfully concluded one with the TAFE lecturers, over which there was no conflict whatsoever. There is a bit of tension because I am impatient and I want the matter to be brought to resolution immediately. I believe that the Government has done a good job in trying to restore faith in the public education system in Western Australia. Quite frankly, it was a monumental task. We have made some considerable improvements. I do not want to see all that work demolished because of the tension and arguments that occur during an EBA negotiation period. Let us face it, the previous EBA expired on 31 July. Today is 10 September. We have had one or two meetings. At one meeting I suppose one could say there was a bit of heat. That was on Monday night in my office. We will meet again tomorrow. I am hopeful that we will come close to a resolution tomorrow.

Members should cast their mind back a short time to the year 2000, when the resolution of the new EBA took something like eight months under the now Leader of the Opposition. I think the Leader of the Opposition, as I do now, regularly had members of the teachers union camped at his electorate office door. I will guarantee that our negotiation period will not last for eight months. Nobody was suggesting industrial chaos in the year 2000. The previous EBA negotiation of 1998 was resolved much more quickly. It took about two months. Does anybody who was involved in education recall what happened in 1995, when for the entire year the town was on fire? Hon Norman Moore was then Minister for Education and Mr Greg Black was the chief executive officer of the Department of Education. Both of them were subsequently removed from those positions because they were unable to bring to resolution a conflict that lasted the entire year of 1995. I remember it well because I covered the events as a journalist. At one stage, teachers in Western Australia convened a meeting at the Entertainment Centre under the leadership of Brian Lindberg. Eight thousand teachers took the day off work and vented their wild fury at the situation that had been allowed to develop in that year. It was the only time in the history of the State, apart from one year during the war, that Country Week was cancelled as were school balls and school excursions. It was a bit like the 1968 Paris riots. School children were busing themselves to silver city and camping outside to demand that the Government resolve the issue. It was 1995; I remember it well - I spoke to them as a journalist. Is there any comparison between the situation in 1995 and the present situation with the teachers? Of course not. I understand that there were difficulties in 1995 and I see glimpses of them now. However, as far as possible, within the realms of what is acceptable, I am being proactive in trying to bring this

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matter to resolution. One thing I have stressed to the State School Teachers Union of WA is that this is a fiscally responsible Government. I will not do what the previous Minister for Education did to resolve the year 2000 enterprise bargaining agreement and commit the Government to vast expenditures that have not been accounted for, costed or funded. When the Australian Labor Party took office in 2001, commitments made in the previous EBA for tens of millions of dollars were unfunded. It was up to this Government - we were told they were funded - to fund those commitments of class size reductions, supplying lap-tops and various other things as well as our own election commitments. I have told the teachers that the Government will not run the education system in a cavalier fashion. It will be financially responsible.

Teachers are now acknowledging that we inherited very significant unfunded commitments and that this Government has funded and delivered those commitments. Every single commitment that I make in this present EBA and in the run-up to the next election will be funded. They will not be the usual hollow promises from politicians that someone else can fund somewhere down the track. I would never survive as Minister for Education - I would not want to and I would not be allowed to - if I oversaw the Department of Education budget overrun by \$100 million in a single year. It is unthinkable. It would be economic madness and fiscally irresponsible. It is almost beyond belief that the person who was responsible for that has put himself forward as the next Premier of this State. He presided over \$300 million worth of cost overruns.

We are involved in very serious negotiations with the teachers union, and I hope a resolution will be arrived at soon. The offer on the board is fully funded. It is a very powerful step forward for the development of public education in this State. I believe that once it is explained to the teaching community it will be accepted. There is no industrial chaos. We are working progressively with good leadership to resolve these issues in education. The Minister for Police and the Minister Assisting the Minister for Public Sector Management is doing the same. We have good leadership. This is the first Government in Western Australia for a very long time that has managed the budget properly. At the end of the day, these matters will be resolved. The people of Western Australia will say, "Yes, that Government delivered; it showed good leadership and was financially responsible."

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland - Minister for Police and Emergency Services) [3.23 pm]: I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss these issues this afternoon. The Opposition has been rather two-faced in this matter. Its members are sitting opposite saying they would show better leadership in these areas than the Government. To hear them say that about the Police Service is simply laughable. All we need do is examine the Opposition's record when it was in government and what it promised it would do. It has always claimed to value police officers and that it would do everything for them. What did it do during the eight years it was in office? It said it would resource police properly, but it failed to do so. It said it would give occupational health and safety coverage to police officers, but it failed to do so. It said it would provide police officers with the right of appeal to the Industrial Relations Commission, but it failed to do so. It said it would recognise the efforts of country officers and provide country incentives, but it failed to do so. It said it would equip our police officers with appropriate firearms, but it failed to do so. It now says it would pay police officers at least 13 per cent more as part of a pay offer. My guess is, with a record like that, it would again fail to do so. The Opposition simply cannot be believed; it is big on talk and very small on action. It continued to make those promises for its eight years in office. I have the *Hansard* which contains answers the member for Darling Range gave me when he said he would do each and every one of those things. The previous member for Albany, who is no longer a member of Parliament, said he would do all those things and he did not do them either.

If members opposite want to talk about leadership, they should look at the leadership this Government has shown in policing. In two short years this Government has implemented policies that the previous coalition Government promised to do for more than eight years but never did - policies that were part of its election platform prior to the 1993 election. Members opposite like to say that they provided the Police Service with a great budget. The last budget the coalition Government allocated to the Police Service was \$440 million. What is it this year? It is \$550 million - a massive increase.

Dr G.I. Gallop: Hear, hear!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We have already delivered the first 115 extra police officers of the 250 promised over and above attrition. We have delivered the first 20 of the additional 40 Aboriginal police liaison officers over and above attrition. We have implemented best practice DNA legislation, which is the envy of other States, and we have allocated \$20 million to ensure that the community can benefit from that. It is very different from the \$1 million the previous Government offered. We have also made a multi-million dollar investment in an information and communications system. Members opposite left the Police Service with a clunker of a communications system. The coalition Government did not budget for the new technology; there were differences of more than \$100 million between the cost and what it showed in the budget. The coalition Government left the Police Service with 1960s-style communications technology.

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In comparison, this Government has provided country incentives, occupational health and safety coverage, the right of appeal to the Industrial Relations Commission and delivered on the new guns, something that members opposite were not going to do. Members might like to be reminded of the situation on 10 March 1998 when I asked the then Minister for Police, the member for Darling Range -

- (1) Can the minister advise what type of hand gun has been chosen for future use of the Western Australia Police Service?
- (2) What difference in price is there between the Sigma branch and the Glock hand gun?

He replied -

- (1) The current general issue hand guns are the Smith & Wesson .38spl calibre revolver and the Smith & Wesson .40S & W calibre Sigma pistol. There are no plans to replace these with other hand guns, at this time.

The fact is that the Government of members opposite would have left the police with guns of up to 30 years old. When this Government took office, the Police Service was faced with the nonsensical situation in which officers who were transferred from the city to the country who had been using new guns needed to be retrained.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Andrews): When a member has only a few minutes left until the end of her speech I will not let three or four members interject to drown her out.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Members opposite have tried to make something of the fact that the Government highlighted the fact that under the new wages arrangement a senior constable would earn \$59 000. The Opposition has claimed that would apply to only a very few police officers. Senior constables make up a very large proportion of the Police Service. A total of 1 679 police officers are senior constables. That pool will grow by 2005. The current salary rate for a senior constable is \$50 577, and members opposite fail to recognise that by 1 July 2005 we will have approximately 704 of those senior constables progressing to that salary of \$59 194. We are not talking about a handful of people who will benefit; we are talking about 704 senior constables who will rise to that maximum salary of \$59 194. The most junior of those senior constables will be on a salary of over \$55 000. Members might validly ask: how many of our constables do not progress to the level of senior constable? Less than one per cent of our constables do not progress to the level of senior constable. Some 704 senior constables will benefit.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the Opposition) [3.30 pm]: The most significant aspect of this debate so far, from the Government's point of view, has been that the Minister for Public Sector Management has failed to speak. That minister is also the Premier of this State. Once again he is missing in action, staying away from the hard issues, failing to accept his responsibility both as minister and the Premier over government employment, whether public servants, teachers or police officers. That is the reality. It is not missed by this Parliament. It is not missed by the Premier's backbenchers, because they will be confronted with this issue in their electorates.

When this Government came to power, it foreshadowed what it described as a period of harmonious industrial relations.

The Premier is going! The Premier runs from the Chamber! Here he goes again: the non-performing, non-accountable Premier of Western Australia. Raise any hard issue or any issue to do with his employees and he runs from this Chamber like a scared rabbit. At least the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection has the courage to stay in the Chamber; at least he has a little bit of backbone, enough to stay here.

In a press release on 18 January 2002, just after the election, the now Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection said that Labor's planned landmark reforms in industrial relations would prove a springboard for harmony and greater productivity. What sort of harmony do we have today? We see disputes with power industry workers, police, teachers, public servants and right throughout the construction work force for an extended period. Immediately after the election the no ticket, no start signs went up, and we saw bullying, intimidation and threats on building sites across this city and into resource project areas. That is the reality of what happened immediately. What about these new industrial relations reforms? Employers and their employees voted with their feet. The Labor Party in opposition said that it would introduce employer-employee agreements and that that was going to be its brave new world. How many were put in place? Seven! At the same time, 19 000 federal workplace agreements were registered in this State. Employers and employees voted with their feet to the tune of 2 714 to one. For every one employer-employee agreement under this Government's legislation, 2 714 federal agreements went out of Western Australia. By any standard it was a spectacular failure. What did the Premier have to say? On the television news last night our absent Premier - the missing Premier - said that his Government's record on industrial relations was absolutely outstanding.

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Outstanding? I can accept an outstanding failure. There has been a lack of leadership from the Premier - the Premier who is not here, who is missing in action. He has made stupid comments to the media about outstanding success - by any measure it has been an outstanding failure - and he does not even stay in the Chamber for the debate.

Let us talk about the police. In my view and in the view of the Liberal Party the police are the most deserving group of government employees right now. It was unprecedented for 5 000 police officers to take the industrial action they took earlier this week. They did it reluctantly and they had the support of the community. What did this Government do? This Government used \$4 500 of taxpayers' money, when it said it was not going to waste taxpayers' money on political advertising, for what the Premier described today as a small ad. It is a three-quarter-page advertisement. It is hardly small. It was a waste of taxpayers' money, it was provocative, it was inaccurate and it was designed to discourage the public support for police officers. It was designed to counter the strong public support for police officers in this State. It insulted our police officers. Michael Dean said that the Premier has insulted the 5 000 men and women police officers in this State. Today when the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party confronted the Minister for Police, she pretended she did not know about it. The Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection took responsibility for it. I commend him for saying -

Point of Order

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I believe the Leader of the Opposition is deliberately misleading the House. I did not say I did not know about it. I said I knew about it, that I understood the information was correct and that my officers had checked the information was correct.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.W. Andrews): There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection said he would take responsibility for the advertisement. From where did it originate? This advertisement came from the Premier's office, it was part of the media spin from the media group, the dirty tricks department in the Premier's office. That is why the Minister for Police was struggling to identify with it. I am sure she tried to check it, but it came from the Premier's office. It came from the media spin people, the dirty tricks department in the Premier's office.

The Liberal Party supports the police and places on the public record that the police should receive a pay increase of at least 13 per cent. The Premier laughs. His Government offers three per cent a year. All we are saying is that the increase should be four and one-third per cent per year. They deserve 13 per cent. I just want to quote one figure. Western Australian constables earn \$19.75 an hour based on a 40-hour working week. The average hourly rate in all other States is \$23.55. Western Australian constables are worse off by a differential of 19 per cent as of today. What is wrong with rewarding our police, who put their lives at risk and protect our community, with something that is more in balance with the rate in other States? If the Government offered 13 per cent, it might get a settlement. The police officers in this State deserve at least that. The Premier has failed to protect his police officers, the people who protect our community.

MR M.W. TRENORDEN (Avon - Leader of the National Party) [3.38 pm]: What we have learnt today is that industrial relations is certainly not the strong point of the current Government. One would have to say it is abysmal. I agree with what Stephanie Mayman said yesterday that at the very best the Government was floundering. That is from someone I would expect to be on the Government's side.

Mr A.J. Carpenter interjected.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: What difference does it make? That is part of the problem. If the minister had read the editorials in the past few days, he would have seen that they were about his Government. He can can the previous Government as much as he likes, but one thing the minister tends to forget is that in 2001 we got defeated in an election - QED. The public did not like us; we went. It is now the turn of the current Government.

Labor's industrial relations election policy states that Labor's new direction will see a commitment to improving job security and reversing the growing wage disparity. We have seen that! The public sector employment section of Labor's industrial relations election policy states that a Gallop Labor Government will restore morale and improve the effectiveness of the public service. We have seen that! Do government members remember that section of the policy? Have they read it? It seems that members opposite put the policy out two years ago, and then it went straight into the bottom draw. Of all Governments, a Labor Government should not take such action with industrial relations. Members opposite were going to improve morale and the effectiveness of the public service through their industrial relations policy. However, the Government has been an abject failure; at the very least, it has not been a startling success. I was going to list all the people who are unhappy with the

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Government's industrial relations policy, but I have only two minutes to go in my speech. I thought I would list people who are happy with the Government, which should not take long, but I could not find anyone. That is where the Government stands. Members opposite have got themselves into a fair amount of difficulty.

Government members pride themselves on their industrial relations policy, particularly with the public service, yet they have the entire public service up in arms. Where will this take the Government, which cannot win the argument with spin? If the Premier wants some advice from me, I suggest that he have a photograph taken with Kevin Reynolds at Ningaloo. That would be an excellent snapshot of his industrial relations. This issue cannot be run on spin. The Government must deal with it. The Government cannot have people like Stephanie Mayman, who it cannot be said is a great supporter of anyone on this side of the House - I do not dislike her as a person; in fact, I quite like her - making such comments. She is meant to be on Labor's side. When she makes such public comments, members opposite are in a fair bit of strife.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (19)

Mr R.A. Ainsworth	Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr R.F. Johnson	Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr C.J. Barnett	Mrs C.L. Edwardes	Mr P.D. Omodei	Ms S.E. Walker
Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan	Mr J.P.D. Edwards	Mr P.G. Pandal	Dr J.M. Woollard
Mr M.F. Board	Ms K. Hodson-Thomas	Mr R.N. Sweetman	Mr J.L. Bradshaw (<i>Teller</i>)
Dr E. Constable	Mr M.G. House	Mr M.W. Trenorden	

Noes (25)

Mr J.J.M. Bowler	Mrs D.J. Guise	Mr J.A. McGinty	Mr D.A. Templeman
Mr C.M. Brown	Mr S.R. Hill	Mr M. McGowan	Mr P.B. Watson
Mr A.J. Carpenter	Mr J.N. Hyde	Ms S.M. McHale	Mr M.P. Whitely
Mr A.J. Dean	Mr J.C. Kobelke	Mr M.P. Murray	Ms M.M. Quirk (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr J.B. D'Orazio	Mr R.C. Kucera	Mr J.R. Quigley	
Dr J.M. Edwards	Mr F.M. Logan	Ms J.A. Radisich	
Dr G.I. Gallop	Ms A.J. MacTiernan	Mrs M.H. Roberts	

Pairs

Mr E.S. Ripper	Mr M.J. Birney
Mr A.D. McRae	Mr B.K. Masters
Mr A.P. O'Gorman	Mr A.D. Marshall

Question thus negatived.