

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 1 May.

HON M.D. NIXON (Agricultural) [5.36 pm]: I support the motion moved by Hon Ken Travers. I thank His Excellency the Governor, Lieutenant General John Sanderson, AC, for his speech. I congratulate him on the way he conducts his tasks and I extend my best wishes to him and Mrs Sanderson.

Usually at this stage the Leader of the Opposition makes his speech, but kindly on this occasion Hon Norman Moore has stepped aside, because a number of members, for one reason or another, are retiring shortly and it is an opportunity for them to have their say. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that courtesy.

All members of Parliament must retire sometime. The lucky ones choose their moment of retirement and those who are not so fortunate have it forced upon them. As a member of Parliament and a servant of the electorate, I cannot criticise the electorate. However, I am human and I hope that members give me a little latitude to make a few comments about how this situation came about.

I believe the upper House was better served when it had smaller electorates and fewer members. Under the old province system, the people in the electorates had a better chance of knowing their members; certainly, members had a better chance of knowing the people in their electorates. Overall a better situation developed then than that which exists with larger electorates. In 1986, the National Party and the Labor Party supported the change to the current system. It is true to say that, although the electorates were larger, most people believed that with proportional representation the number of members would represent as near as possible the proportion of the electors that supported each party. One would expect that if one party had two-thirds of the vote, it would have two-thirds of the members, or as close to that as it was possible to achieve. Of course, that is not happening. It is interesting to note that in the recent state election, the Greens (WA) received 8 per cent of the primary vote, but that vote returned five members, or 14.7 per cent of the representation in this House. The Agricultural Region is even more disproportionate than that. In that region the Greens, with 4.57 per cent of the primary vote, received the same representation as the Liberal Party with 30 per cent, One Nation with 22 per cent, the Labor Party with 20 per cent and the National Party with 19 per cent. It is interesting to think about how this situation developed.

Another issue in the Mining and Pastoral Region is how the votes are counted, and I am sure Hon Greg Smith will comment on that at some stage.

Hon Tom Stephens: Wouldn't that be sub judice?

Hon M.D. NIXON: It is true to say that the system is not producing proportional representation and therefore it should be looked at. Some voting systems using proportional representation have what is called a "fairness clause", which states that before a party can be represented it must have a minimum number of primary votes. This is something that could be looked at. The surplus votes from the leaders of the team are handed down, and under that system more than one member can be elected from any party. That is fair and reasonable. The problem seems to be when it goes the other way and the preferences are distributed from the bottom up. It is complicated because, unlike the simple preferential voting system, the votes are transferred at different values and they go from one member to the other and back again. Unlike a normal preferential system where the votes are only counted once, under this system they tend to compound. If there are five candidates in an Assembly seat and there is no absolute majority, the one with the lowest vote goes out, his votes go to wherever, and at that stage they are not counted again. In other words, the next member out has his second preference distributed and so on, until one member has an absolute majority.

Of course, in the upper House it is a totally different situation with quotas, and candidates must get 100 per cent of a quota rather than 50 per cent of the votes. This makes the situation very complex and is one of the reasons for distortion in the system. One appropriate system could be to hand the surpluses down through the teams, more or less as they are at present, but at the end of that procedure perhaps it could become first past the post and any candidate who had more than 50 per cent of the quota would be elected. Under that system I do not think more people would have more than 50 per cent of quota than are required to fill the places because the quota would still have to be filled.

That was one little grouch I wished to voice. Obviously, that is the system under which this election was conducted. I am a three-way loser because I must admit that on three occasions I have lost and on two occasions I have won under this system. The odds are slightly against me, and it is something that should be looked at.

Another matter that disappoints me is that the One Nation party advised electors on the very day that it had to register its how-to-vote card with the Electoral Commissioner that the Liberal Party would be the beneficiary of

its second preferences. One Nation went on to say that its preferences should not go to the Greens (WA) and Australian Democrats because they were non-performing parties. That went statewide at two o'clock on the day that the how-to-vote card had to be registered with the Electoral Commissioner, but by five o'clock it had been changed and the Greens had been put ahead of the Liberal Party. That, of course, is the reason I am retiring. I think this is inconsistent. When a party registers its how-to-vote card, it is only fair that it indicate to the electors where its preferences will go. One Nation certainly had a "1" in the One Nation box. There is absolutely no doubt that that party received sufficient votes to have its members elected, but it is unfortunate that those who voted One Nation were not necessarily aware where their preferences would go.

Hon J.A. Scott: Were you aware that it was not the only party to do that?

Hon M.D. NIXON: The Liberal Party usually does that; it certainly does in our electorate, but I cannot speak for all electorates. It is the usual process. If we are to have this of voting above and below the line, or preference votes or party votes, it is essential in this very complicated voting system that the electors be informed of the effect of their votes. The Agricultural Region count has more than 400 pages of calculations. I suggest that nobody in the State understands the system, and that probably includes the electoral officers. It is a very complicated system.

Hon Greg Smith is an expert. I used to say I was the expert because I had been beaten twice before, but he has caught up. He has done a crash course and is probably better informed than I am, so I will give him credit for that. A voting system should be as simple as possible; at the end of the day the electors should have an opportunity to express their views, and those views should result in the election of the candidates of their choice.

My mother, who was a very strong woman with all sorts of principles, had a saying that I could not have my sweets until I had eaten my pumpkin. I am afraid that at this stage members may have to eat a bit of pumpkin before they get to the sweets.

I leave this Parliament with quite a bit of unfinished business, because I did intend to stay on for a while. One of the things I regret is that the B milkos received less than a fair go. I refer to those who distributed milk mainly to the supermarkets and shops rather than house to house. I believe, and reports from this House have indicated, that they received less than a fair go. Every indication is that their businesses were discounted. I believe they have received some compensation, but in my view and in the view of quite a few members of this House that compensation was inadequate. The previous minister commented that he had received legal advice that he could compensate only for those products which were licensed and which were controlled, but there is no doubt that individual business people, because of the deregulation of the system, lost enormous capital value from their businesses. I believe that injustice has not been corrected. I know that the third and sixth reports of the Standing Committee on Public Administration spelt out what the committee believed was a fair solution to the problem, and recommended that the undistributed funds in the Distribution Adjustment Assistance Scheme be utilised to pay former vendors. Of course, since then the farm sector has been deregulated as well, and that may create some difficulties. The reports stated that if the legal advice was that the surplus DAAS funds could not be distributed, for whatever reason, the rules should be altered or an ex gratia payment made.

The previous minister did agree to this matter going to an independent arbitrator, and claimed that the matter was in the hands of the Ombudsman. It is certainly true that it has been in the hands of the Ombudsman for a number of years and that vendors did approach the Ombudsman, but my understanding is that the Ombudsman would not comment because he could not overrule a ministerial decision. We will be waiting a long time for the Ombudsman to make a decision.

My question without notice to the Minister for Agriculture is: As a person with a good understanding of the situation, in his new capacity will he re-examine the matter to see whether justice can be provided to this small group of people who I believe have suffered a great injustice?

Hon Kim Chance: Yes, I will. I can tell the member that I now have the Ombudsman's final report.

Hon M.D. NIXON: Another piece of business which I leave unfinished is that of property rights. Members of the Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs, and quite a few people who have given evidence to that committee, have raised all sorts of matters about the inequities in relation to property rights. Sometimes in the public interest it is necessary for the Government to resume land. Unfortunately, that must be done from time to time, and the old argument "there will be no development in my backyard" probably arises from that. However, the important principle is that if somebody's individual property rights are interfered with for the common good, the community should pay compensation for any damage. There is a wide area of difficulty in respect of private property rights.

One person who gave evidence to the Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs said that more than 120 statutes contained the power to resume land for public purposes. That is a very complicated system, and the committee is looking at what can be done to overcome it. It is interesting that a few years ago Hon Mark Nevill

presented a report about the proposed reform of the process used by government agencies to resume land, and I believe it is still relevant today. One of the main recommendations was that all legislative provisions that had anything to do with property resumption should be in the one Act, and any other Act, whether it was within Main Roads or whatever, had to be in accordance with that one Act.

I believe something similar has been done in New South Wales. As I said, this is unfinished business. I will not be here to follow it through, but I implore the Parliament to accept that this matter will become more important because as the State develops more pressure will be applied to private land and property. Unless we are careful, the individual will become less significant as the community gets bigger. This issue must be addressed.

Another area that will cause immediate problems is planning. We all agree that planning needs to be done, that the community has to plan forward and that sometimes an individual's rights have to be set aside for the common good. However, this creates two problems, because until the planning process is completed, the Ministry for Planning does not have the opportunity to provide compensation. Private property rights are interfered with as soon as a line is drawn on a plan. A planning decision might result in an easement through the middle of a property to put in a power line, a water pipe, a railway line or whatever. While only a small part of the property might be resumed, it could create an enormous problem for the owners because the property may no longer be suited for the often legitimate purpose for which it was purchased.

Hon Barry House: Even a draft plan could cause this.

Hon M.D. NIXON: Yes; anything that signifies the Government's intention to interfere with someone's property rights can have an immediate effect on the value of a property. In all fairness, sometimes it works the other way: If the plan increases the value, the property owner will benefit. We need not feel sorry for that person. However, people who suffer an infringement on their property rights require some assistance. That needs to be looked at. Perhaps the Government should be prepared to buy the property for the current market value as soon as it draws a line on the map. That should happen if it is the wish of the landowner. Many landowners would not take up that option even if it were available, so it probably would not cost much. The most important thing is for the Ministry for Planning, when identifying future developments, to make an early decision so that the threat of resumption does not hang around for years. Obviously, decisions must go through the proper processes and there has to be community consultation. Overall, however, it is important that planning decisions be clear-cut and speedily implemented.

Another issue which needs to be considered and which is perhaps more difficult than legislation is the matter of regulations and policy. A matter in which I have become interested is a recent review by the Environmental Protection Authority of the Swan coastal plain lakes policy, a policy laid down in late 1993 that clearly identifies certain lake areas that should be reserved and protected. These areas represent 1 per cent of the Swan coastal plain - the area from Lancelin to Augusta. The report, which was supposed to be a review of the policy, roped in about 50 per cent of the coastal plain on the basis that it was necessary because the Federal Government is a signatory to the Ramsar Convention. There are a couple of things wrong with that. First, I consider a study that increases the defined area of wetland lakes on the Swan coastal plain from 1 per cent to 50 per cent to be a complete change of policy, not a review, particularly as such a suggestion was rejected by the previous Labor Government. I have copies of those proposals. The problem is ongoing. It is unfair because if a planning development or policy change is a burden on a property, there must be a consultation period for the recommended policy. Anyone driving past can submit an application to the effect that the land has great importance as a wetland. On the other hand, the property owner must defend his actions, as if he were guilty and must prove himself innocent. It would be grossly unfair if the proposal were to come into force. The worst feature of the review is that what it claims is in accordance with the Ramsar Convention is completely different from the definition of wetlands as spelt out in the convention. In other words, it is grossly dishonest. I suppose that these are the sorts of problems that are likely to develop when a department is given freedom without a great deal of responsibility.

A similar case is a memorandum of understanding agreed to by several agencies regarding the clearing of lands in the Agricultural Region. Supposedly, this is in accordance with a cabinet decision. One could argue whether Cabinet has the authority to override the statutes and whether something is legal if there is no regulation governing it. However, the MOU supposedly has the force of the law. The problem with this MOU is that it is not in agreement with the proposals agreed to by Cabinet. That is a tremendous worry. Once again, the bureaucracy has taken it upon itself to change the law outside Parliament. One of the great threats to come - I notice it was mentioned in the Governor's speech - is that the Environmental Protection Act is to be examined during this session. One of the changes to be made is that references to "environmental pollution" will be changed to "environmental harm". That is an all-embracing statement that will create a minefield because, as Hon Jim Scott can tell us, one of the greatest threats to the environment is cattle because they give off methane gas. Does this mean cattle will be prohibited from eating because they might give off methane? It is a catch-all term. It could prevent people from breeding cattle and it would certainly prevent them from driving cars. It is so

vague. Obviously the Bill will be considered when it is introduced but, once again, it is unfinished business. I will not be here, but I implore members to take an interest in this issue because the trouble, as I have mentioned, is that no compensation is payable for infringement and loss of property rights for the sake of the environment. That is something else I leave with the House.

Another area in which I have taken a great deal of interest is road safety. There is a need for greatly improved road safety. The current accident rates and death rates are unacceptable, and they have plateaued. The death rate fell from almost 350 deaths a year in 1979 to about 200 in 1990, which is a dramatic change. Since then it has fluctuated slightly. The latest figures are for 1999 and were published in a book that I know all members received. The figure in Western Australia is 218 deaths for the year, or 11.7 deaths per 100 000 people. Those figures are also presented according to the number of vehicles and kilometres travelled. Whatever system is used, there is no doubt the death rate has plateaued. Western Australia has had great difficulty in recent years trying to reduce the road toll. The reasons for that are interesting. The State with the best record is Victoria, with 8.1 deaths per 100 000 people. Not surprisingly, the road safety gurus in Western Australia use Victoria as a model. That is the reason for those horror advertisements on television. However, they have made no difference.

We have all seen the advertisements suggesting that if speeds were reduced by five kilometres an hour, the accident rate would be halved. The evidence in Western Australia is completely the opposite, because when we went from no speed limits on open roads to speed limits on open roads, the death rate increased by 20 per cent. It rose from 250 to 350 before it came down again. More recently, when the speed limit was increased on the freeway from 80 to 90 and then to 100 kilometres an hour, there was no difference in the number of deaths. I suggest that reducing speed limits will not make a great deal of difference. Now, of course, we see an advertisement in which a driver runs over a toddler on a tricycle. It is horrific and none of us would like it to happen. Interestingly, however, the statistics in this book indicate that in 1999 only one pedestrian was killed because of speed. I do not have the complete record, but I doubt that it was because the driver was doing 61 in a 60 kilometres an hour zone. It may well have been because it was somebody driving very dangerously. That is something that we need to look at.

There are many differences between Western Australia and Victoria. For example, Victoria generally has more winding roads and small towns. Therefore, there are more interruptions and people are kept alert. Also, there are fewer trees, particularly in the western districts, where there is not a tree standing. If somebody does leave the road, he has some chance of surviving. The official statistics say that of the people killed on country roads, 36 per cent hit an object, such as a telephone post or a tree. Twenty per cent of deaths were "non-collision", which means the cars ran off the road and rolled over. Head-on collisions accounted for 15 per cent of deaths. The majority of those accidents took place on sealed, straight roads. I suggest that very few of those were caused by speed for the simple reason that if someone is to have a speed-related accident, it will occur on a corner that is in excess of the vehicle's capacity to go around it. The other interesting fact is that in the majority of cases alcohol was not evident in the driver or motorcycle rider.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm

Hon M.D. NIXON: Before the House suspended for dinner I made the point that the majority of fatal accidents do not involve drivers who have consumed any alcohol. However, figures show that in 55 of 189 fatal accidents, some alcohol was present in the blood of those drivers. That is a high percentage - somewhere in the order of 30 per cent. Drugs other than alcohol were found in 43 of 125 surveyed drivers. The testing was mainly for illicit drugs, but it also included a small proportion of medicinal drugs. Of the drivers tested, 34.4 per cent had traces of drugs other than alcohol in their blood. I made the point that some of these were medicinal drugs; however, that was only a very small proportion. Often a cocktail of drugs was found, in which case only the major component was recorded. It is interesting that cannabis was the most common drug evident in the blood tests of the drivers involved in these accidents. Nearly 35 per cent of drivers in fatal accidents had non-alcoholic drugs in their blood. In other words, it is a major factor in fatal accidents.

It is obviously something that must be examined because no real study has been made of the effect of illicit drugs on the ability of people to drive. There are all sorts of difficulties with a study of that nature and I believe there is no simple way of running a test, as there is with the breath test for alcohol.

There is no doubt that we must improve the statistics on road accidents. At 218 deaths a year, Western Australia now has one of the highest rates of motor accidents. All attempts in the past 10 years to improve the situation have made very little difference to the number of road fatalities, and we must examine the situation again. Improvement will occur only when drivers learn to drive according to the conditions. We cannot create a police State in which people are told the safe speed at which to drive at any given time of the day under differing circumstances. In the end it comes back to responsible motorists driving according to the conditions.

A major improvement in road safety is due to an improvement in cars and I believe this will continue to make the biggest difference. Anyone who has watched accidents in motor sports will know that accidents that occur at speeds of 200 kilometres an hour very rarely result in fatalities. It is evident that much safer cars can be built to withstand crashes. It was found in Britain that the easiest way to improve road safety was to remove objects from the side of the road. I note my Greens (WA) colleagues are absent on urgent parliamentary business, but the matter requires their cooperation because there is a view today in the community that the best thing to do is to plant the roadside with trees. It may be difficult to remove the trees that are already on the roadsides. However, commonsense indicates that small plants like wildflowers could be planted on the verges - perhaps shrubs like Geraldton wax - and they would slow down any vehicle that left the road. Certainly, there should be no big trees anywhere near a major road.

It is obvious, but has not been recognised, that boredom is a major factor in road accidents. Only in the past two to three years has fatigue been recognised as a problem in accidents. Before that, any accident was said to be caused by speed but people are beginning to realise that fatigue is a major factor. Fatigue can be attributed very largely to boredom. Anybody who has driven for long distances on country roads knows that the most dangerous time is after lunch on a warm afternoon, as it is easier then to lose concentration. I have driven trucks in the past and have found it hard to maintain concentration when driving an empty truck without having to change gears. However, boredom and fatigue did not occur when I drove a heavily-laden truck and was busy constantly changing gears. In the almost three million kilometres I have driven, I have never gone close to having an accident because of speed. However, on many occasions I have suffered from boredom and fatigue, which was something I had to watch.

I have mentioned that when open road speed limits were introduced, the death rate went from 250 a year in the following two to three years to a peak of 350 in the next 10 or so years. It is now coming back to the order of 200 a year and has plateaued. Something must be done if this problem is to be solved.

One matter that causes me the greatest concern is the respect in the community for Parliament. We in Australia are used to 150 years of parliamentary democracy and we are about to celebrate the centenary of federation next week in Melbourne. It is interesting that Australia is one of the oldest parliamentary democracies in the world. I believe five other countries have had parliamentary democracies longer than Australia. We take it for granted; however, the rest of the world has a great deal of difficulty introducing it. The parliamentary system is not perfect; it is an ever-evolving system. However, it requires respect from the public. In my maiden speech I made the point that the respect for members very much depends on the performance of the members of Parliament. It has become fashionable for the media to criticise Parliament and parliamentarians in a manner that creates interest and destroys people's respect for the Parliament. One of the main problems is the media. I am not normally in the limelight very much. However, as I have been mentioned three times in the past fortnight, I believe it is fair that I make a comment.

The West Australian published an article stating that members were off around the world at taxpayers' expense. I went to London to attend a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meeting, and I do not apologise for that. I put my name forward for the trip before the election. I would like to have been re-elected, but I was not, and it is not my fault that I was not. I was very pleased that when my good friend Fred Tubby was deemed ineligible to attend, the trip was offered to me. I am pleased that I went, I do not apologise for doing so and I believe that I made a contribution. At some later date I will provide a report on the very worthwhile seminar I attended. Do journalists from *The West Australian* believe that members of Parliament should not attend such meetings? My ticket to Italy was splashed across the front page of *The West Australian*, but the journalist who wrote the associated article did not bother to ascertain who paid for that part of the trip - which was private. My wife and I paid for it. I intended to comment and ask for an apology, but decided that that would be tantamount to pouring petrol on a fire.

A further editorial in *The West Australian* pointed out that members of the upper House brought the Parliament into disrepute when they travelled at taxpayers' expense after being defeated. The editorial stated that only two members were involved. I have every reason to believe that Hon Dexter Davies and I were the two members to which it referred.

Hon Norm Kelly interjected.

Hon M.D. NIXON: The member cracked a mention too.

Hon Norm Kelly: Yes, in one of the articles.

Hon M.D. NIXON: I am in good company. The only reason we read about it is that *The West Australian* decided to make an issue of it. The amount expended was not excessive. However, more importantly, it must be pointed out that members are entitled to undertake such travel. It is ridiculous to suggest that any member who utilises his entitlement is acting improperly.

It gets even worse. An article in *The West Australian* went on to state that members of Parliament destroy their credibility by voting themselves pay rises. Surely the journalist who wrote the article could have established the method used to set parliamentary salaries. Most members are not here for the money - we are here to do a job. However, if these are the conditions of employment for a member of Parliament, one cannot blame the member for availing himself of them once he has been elected. Everyone involved in the political system realises how difficult it is to get someone to stand for Parliament. Prospective candidates ask why they should destroy their family life and business. If they are elected, they might get thrown out at the next election and be faced with re-establishing their career. They also do not relish being criticised as a politician, so they refuse to stand. At the end of the day, unjust criticism will make it more and more difficult to get worthy members. Australia is a great country largely because of its political system. All members have a responsibility to ensure that respect for Parliament is upheld. More importantly, the media have a responsibility to criticise if criticism is warranted. However, when doing so, they must report the truth. In addition, journalists must do the appropriate research to ensure that what is published is correct, and must not misinform or selectively report. There was a time when reporters were reporters - they reported what people said and left the people to form a view. Today's reporters indulge in interpretive journalism; that is, they put a point of view that they believe the public should accept. I am very surprised about their selectivity. When members of their profession - such as John Laws and company - behave less than objectively, the criticism is very muted. Newspapers do have a responsibility to make profits and people always like a good scrap, whether it be at a football game or a boxing match. However, unless members of the media act more responsibly than they have in recent years, Australia will be the loser.

One of the things that I regret most is that I will no longer be able to represent the Agricultural Region. It comprises 65 shires and is Australia's biggest grain producer. It also produces livestock and wool and has tourism, mining, education, service industry and health services. It is a particularly interesting electorate.

The history of farming is based mainly on the theory of seven lean years and seven good years. Before Hon Bruce Donaldson and I came into Parliament, the Agricultural Region had suffered its seven lean years. Generally speaking, since 1992, the seasons have been favourable and prices have picked up. Until a couple of years ago, the Agricultural Region was probably as prosperous as it has been for a number of years. Since then there has been a run of misfortune, particularly in the south east areas. There have been frosts, droughts and locusts. Farmers have suffered a great deal of stress. Some members of the farming community, and particularly those who depend on the farming community, have been under tremendous stress. Anybody who has tried to operate a machinery business has had a very difficult time. One dealer I spoke to had 40 people on staff, so he was paying payroll tax. He was paying about \$35 000 a month in interest on his floor plan. The machinery he had bought the year before, which he thought he would sell last season, is still sitting there; nobody wants it. He must still pay interest and maintain as many staff members as he possibly can because if he lays them off, it will be hard to get them back to the country. That is a problem.

Although the Government has done much in the way of providing sporting facilities, the patient assisted travel scheme, new hospitals, new health facilities, improved TAFE colleges, the Esperance Community College, better airfields, better roads, deep sewerage, improved water supplies, uniform power and improved family services, there has been a view among many members of the Agricultural Region that the country has been neglected. If one looks at it objectively, it is a view that is hard to sustain. The Court Government did care for the rural sector, so I am not particularly ashamed of its record. However, as a practising farmer, I know that there has been a tremendous change in the terms of trade of farmers over the years. At a family function the other day we were talking about my uncles who bought a D4 tractor in 1948. It took 13 tonnes of wheat to buy a D4 tractor. If one could still buy a 42-horse power tractor that weighed about five tonnes, my guess is that today it would cost about \$120 000 or \$130 000; that is, one would need 600 tonnes of wheat to buy an identical tractor. This gives members an idea of the stress and cost pressures on agriculture. If that is true, we as a Government and as members of Parliament must ensure that no undue cost pressures are put on the agricultural sector. It needs a critical mass to survive. Every time a business is lost, a schoolteacher, a policeman or other support staff is likely to be lost. It is getting more difficult for people to survive in smaller towns. Generally speaking, the larger regional centres are doing very well. Obviously, Bunbury, Geraldton and Albany are still expanding. The Merredin electorate, which consists of a lot of smaller towns, is certainly suffering. There is stress on these businesses and it will take a tremendous effort to make sure that these country areas do not fall below a critical mass, which leads to a wind down of services which in turn leads to people choosing to go elsewhere.

Being objective, the problem is not confined to Australia; it is happening worldwide. The reduction in the value of the Australian dollar means that exporters will get a bit of an increase. If the dollar had gone down perhaps 10 or 20 years ago, it might have been of real benefit. Today, because we have lost most of our agricultural manufacturing sector, we now import most of our fertilisers for chemicals. At the end of the day, the extra money the wheat grower gets for his wheat will largely be absorbed by the extra costs of his inputs. At this stage, devaluation will not be much help. We will have to look at other ways. Every industry believes that the

Government will come in and help it. This is a false hope. The trouble with false hopes is that if people pin their hopes on them and they do not eventuate, they will die anyway. The Agricultural Region will survive only if it has industries that are competitive on the world market. That means it will have to use the very best methods and will have to have some of the best brains involved in the industries. Probably the greatest loss to the Agricultural Region in recent years has been caused by the brain drain. Many young people come to Perth to further their education. They find that they can get a job in other industries in the city which will pay more than those in regional areas, and they do not go home. I am only a young fellow but, believe it or not, mine is about the average age of the farmers in the Agricultural Region. Replacements must happen over the next few years or the agricultural sector will change for the worse. I have finished with pumpkin.

Hon Bob Thomas: I like pumpkin.

Hon M.D. NIXON: That is all right. I will now start on the ice-cream.

Members of this House are generally a hard-working group. Members may not always agree but that is the reason they are here. The parliamentary system is designed to sort out disagreement, so that wherever possible, we can come up with policies and laws which suit the majority of people. People cannot expect all of us to agree. At the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association seminar, an African delegate was extolling the virtues of the one-party State because he said that there was no corruption under such a system. At the end of the day, although we may not all agree, we must sort out our differences. We have done that very well.

Since I have been here, the House has tackled many controversial issues. One was the Industrial Legislation Amendment Bill, which was probably the daddy of them all. Although my good friend Hon Tom Helm and his comrades were in the Chamber for some time during that period, I was very disappointed that the media never reported to the people of Western Australia that for a while this House could not operate. I can forgive my good friend Hon Tom Helm for his behaviour. He was doing what he believed to be right, but the media acted very irresponsibly in never making clear to people that period when this House could not operate. That is unforgivable.

The abortion debate demonstrated clearer than anything else the need for political parties. Although everyone says that it would be nice if all politicians could agree, when there is no party structure with leaders and organisers of meetings - even worse, self-proclaimed leaders rather than elected leaders - it is difficult to conduct a proper debate.

As a member of Parliament I have visited places and met people, which would certainly not have been possible were I a private citizen. I am very grateful for those opportunities. I have been able to gain tremendous satisfaction from being able to help and represent individuals, shires and organisations to overcome their problems. I take credit through my intervention in the Veterinary Surgeons Act, for ensuring that stock owners were not burdened with unnecessary costs when conducting routine stock husbandry practices and obtaining veterinary supplies. Amendments to the Horticultural Produce Commission Bill prevented the minister of the day being able to impose levies on industry without its consent.

I believe that it is through the Constitutional Affairs Committee that I have had the most influence. I thank the members who have served with me over the past eight years. They include Hon Barbara Scott, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, Paul Sulc, who was a Labor member for a short period, Hon Muriel Patterson, Hon Ray Halligan, Hon Tom Helm and Hon Ken Travers. I thank them for their support. I thank particularly the staff, including Chris Richards, Kelly Campbell, Karry Smith, Penny Griffiths, Felicity Beattie and David Driscoll. As a small committee, it worked extremely well, based on the principle of trust which people developed. One of the greatest things about the committee system is that members get the opportunity to know each other in a manner which is not possible in the larger forum of this House.

We members will not let our colleagues trespass upon certain patches or property, which is fair enough. The important thing is to know those areas on which members can agree to debate and those areas on which a person's mind will never be changed because for party, philosophical or whatever reason, their minds are made up. The committee system has developed an appreciation of this aspect. I am proud that as a committee we produced almost 60 reports, with only one minority report from my good friend Hon Tom Helm. He did not really disagree with the committee but disagreed with the Government for putting forward uniform legislation which he believed was unnecessary. I particularly thank Hon Ken Travers for his remarks yesterday.

I will mention some of the committee's achievements. The committee introduced voluntary fisheries officers, and enabled the loading of millions of tons of iron ore out of Esperance without a complaint due to the strict and sensible environmental controls that were applied. It prevented the establishment of a railway shunting yard in a residential area against correct planning procedures, and it gave time for the Denmark community to develop plans to save a heritage building of huge local significance. The committee presented reports which dealt with issues as diverse as attention deficit disorder, homebirthing and euthanasia in a manner that will enable informed

debate in the future. Many reports on uniform legislation were well received by the House and led to speedy passage of the Bills at a later date. The committee functioned well because it was small and operated on trust.

Perhaps one of the greatest achievements of the committee, of its own volition, was its recommendation that led to the Parliament going on the Internet. No doubt that would have happened eventually anyway, but people would be amazed at the resistance to change the committee ran into just five or six years ago. Parliament had always printed its documents on a certain size sheet of paper and it certainly could not be changed to suit a computer program because that was the way it had always been done. As time goes by that will perhaps be recognised as the committee's greatest achievement. I am not saying it would not have happened, because I believe it would, but we were able to give the system a bit of a needle and it happened a bit quicker than it otherwise would have.

The committee visited a number of regional centres and demonstrated that Parliament is accessible to the people. We were even greeted with a round of applause at one meeting, and that must have been the first time in history that a group of politicians was thanked that way.

I know that in my absence the House will continue to perform the tasks before it with vigour and conscientiousness. I am pleased to have had eight years in this Parliament; I have enjoyed them thoroughly. I would like to thank the Liberal Party for that opportunity and all those who made it possible. I was particularly pleased to be in Parliament during the Court Government, and I think history will treat that Government kindly. It restored financial and economic welfare but it will be remembered for much more: New hospitals and educational facilities; incredible improvements to roads; it was perhaps the greenest Government this State has ever had, and it provided huge new areas of national parks; it tackled salinity; expanded deep sewerage; beautified the city and its approaches; and it put Western Australia on the tourist map. Perhaps Hon Norman Moore had something to do with that with the assistance of Elle.

In particular, I thank my 42-year-old wife, who is in the gallery, for her support over so many years and for the way she has undertaken her duties, because members would know that their wives often have other duties to perform. I also thank the support group, some of whom are still here today. I have worked with people in the Liberal Party, such as Marcia Sullivan; I worked with Adrienne Bartrop for 15 or so years; my first electorate officer was Kath Wyatt, who gave me great support when I was particularly green, and she is a lady with tremendous experience who was able to guide me in those early days. Catherine Morgan, a long-time friend of mine who is also experienced in party matters, also came to assist. In more recent times I was lucky to have the services of Rosemary Rose - obviously, a rose by any other name. She had been farming in Esperance for a number of years and when they came to Perth I was lucky to have her services. We have been a great team and have worked well together, and I am sure friendships have developed that will last forever.

I congratulate you, Mr President. You have conducted yourself in your position with the greatest of decorum and before that, of course, as leader of the party. I extend my thanks and congratulations to Hon Norman Moore for tremendous leadership. Two great professionals. I also thank my good friend, the Whip, Hon Muriel Patterson. I make the point that that chair on the other side is one of the most polished in the Parliament and whenever I needed a day off I was able to draw on that to make a point.

I thank all my colleagues. It has been great working with them. We have been a very good team. I thank all the members in this House for eight wonderful years.

[Applause.]

HON TOM HELM (Mining and Pastoral) [8.00 pm]: I too find myself here by accident, and I follow on from Hon Murray Nixon and thank him for the work he has done. I begin my contribution by congratulating the Labor Party on its magnificent victory. It is great to be here for this short time on this side of the House and back in government again, albeit at the end of what I can describe as my paid working life, although I hope to continue working in an unpaid capacity. When I first came to this House in 1986 the Labor Party was in government. There is a great difference between being in opposition and being in government. I can be thankful for a number of things, one of which is that I was around to see the Labor Party victorious. I am sorry that I was not working for that victory, and I cannot share in that victory, although I can bask in the knowledge that we do not have conservatives on the government side of the House.

I congratulate all new members on both sides of the House, whether they belong to the conservatives, centralists, right wing, Greens or whatever, on winning their seats. I wish them all the best, with a couple of exceptions. Those people to whom I do not bear any goodwill know who they are. I would be hypocritical if I were to widely congratulate everybody. It will be a long time before I get around to wishing good luck or goodwill to a couple of new members.

Having stated the congratulations I go on to the thankyous. I have many people to thank, but the first group is those people who worked hard during my election campaign. I learnt the hard lessons about being an

Independent, and how much one relies on one's family. My two stepsons and their partners, their friend Matt and Katie his partner, worked tirelessly in the campaign to the extent that on election day they drove to the Pilbara and manned the polling booths for me. I really appreciate the work they did. Adam and Lucy went to the Gascoyne, and Liam and Clare and Matt and Katie went to Karratha and worked on the booths there. I thank them very much for the work they did, and enter it into *Hansard*. I thank the people in Kalgoorlie who helped me - Diana Mills and her husband, all the Williamstown mob and people like that. I did not do very well, but I would have done a sight worse except for those people who gave me a hand. I could not afford to pay them; they did what they did through friendship. I really appreciate them and the work they did. Some people who helped me are still members of the Labor Party, so I will not mention their names as I do not want them disfranchised from the Labor Party because of their efforts on my behalf. I also have to thank very much the rank and file of the union movement, particularly in Newman, who collected some money for me and also worked on polling day. They gave me a great deal of assistance and support in various ways.

The person I want to thank most of all is Debbie, my wife. I would not have attempted to do what I did without her full support. It goes to show where I would be without her help. She put the effort in, and there were times when I felt in so much despair that without her support and help I would not have continued. What she was able to do was marvellous. Many people in this Chamber know Debbie and know how vibrant she is. I experienced some dark days last year and at the end of 1999. She was able to pick me up and encourage me to get stuck in again, to give things the best shot and see how they went. I do not regret any of that, even though it cost us a few bob. I would have been lost without the hard work and sweat that she put into it, and I want it recorded in *Hansard* that I appreciate everything she has done for me. I can never repay her but I will certainly try, especially after 22 May, when I can concentrate on other things and have a life. I hope that goes some way towards repaying her for what she has done for me, both before and since we have been married and, most importantly, over the past 18 months. I do not think I have ever been so hurt, and I have been through a few things.

I have done a lot of looking back since the election and thinking about what I have done in the 15 years since I was first elected to this place. I have enjoyed the past 15 years, in spite of the anger and the disagreements that sometimes occurred. I have enjoyed working with most of the people who are in the Chamber now and who have been in the past. I have never had a job that has lasted so long. It has lasted five years longer than any other has. I am not surprised that I stuck at it, but I was surprised that I became a member of Parliament. However, having come into this place, I found that what I was doing was useful and that I enjoyed it. I also found that some Tories are worth talking to; that they are all right. That surprised me. I learned many lessons from the Australian Labor Party, but I learned a few more from my comrades on the other side of the Chamber. I have been back to Liverpool a couple of times since I was elected and my old friends are surprised by the attitude I have adopted. I go back to the docks and talk to my old shop steward comrades, and they see a different Tom Helm from the one who left in 1980. I am only too happy to explain to them why it is better to adopt what we do in Western Australia than to use the tactics that were employed on the Liverpool docks in the 1960s and 1970s and found wanting. I thank my comrades on the other side of the Chamber for those lessons.

That is one achievement. Another is that I put up a plaque in the Tom Price Police Station. I am proud of that. Generally speaking, my association with police stations is not about putting up plaques. My comrades in the United Kingdom will be pleased about that. That is something tangible. When I take people to Tom Price, we always visit the police station. It is a historic place in Tom Price. I do not know how long the town will last, but the plaque is still there. My other achievements are intangible, such as the work I have done on committees and the things we have achieved. My work outside the Parliament has also been very rewarding, such as the time I spent on the Deaths in Custody Watch Committee, of which I was an inaugural member. It was a strange situation for me to be in as I was only vaguely aware of the inquiry into black deaths in custody and the 300-odd recommendations that came out of it. However, I saw the work the watch committee was doing in trying to educate people, not only about the need to abide by the recommendations but also to take on board the thrust of the recommendations and to try to correct in a non-confrontationist way some of the wrongs that have been inflicted on our indigenous people over the years. The committee has had some measure of success, but only one arm - a very worthwhile arm - of the Australian culture has changed to accept the role that indigenous people play and have played in the past and the role that we, or the non-indigenous people, have played in the stolen generation and in other areas to which I have been exposed, having spent many years in the Kimberley and the Pilbara. That was a good experience.

I was very proud of the role that I played in the abortion debate and in the decriminalisation of homosexuality debate. That was a good experience also, and I enjoyed doing those things. For the benefit of Hon Murray Nixon, the reason I did not feel any shame is that, as I think members have heard me say on a number of occasions, I believe we as a Parliament have a lot that we can teach people. Indeed, even the British Parliament has learnt from this House and its committee system and has adopted some of our standing orders. I am proud of

this Parliament and will defend it to the death. However, I believe that the debate on the second wave of industrial relations legislation was a demonstration of how the power of the Parliament was abused, in that we used that power to discriminate strongly against a section of the community that felt powerless. That is why I say it is so important to defend what we have and ensure it is safe, and to take into account and try to accommodate the needs of all people, regardless of whether they be right wing, left wing or whatever, because if we do not do that, people will feel frustrated and will want to take the law into their own hands. We can show the world that there is no future in that. Sure, the union movement took over the Chamber, and sure, the Parliament was largely unable to operate, but somehow the business was done and we found a way around that. We could not have done that - Hon Tom Stephens was the Leader of the Opposition then - without cooperating with each other, as reluctant as that cooperation might have been. Therefore, I do not apologise for that.

Another thing that I regard as an achievement, and of which I am proud, is my connection with the union movement, in the sense that the union put me where I am. I guess it did it by accident more than anything else. It certainly was not a union position that I took on. When I took over from Hon Peter Dowding in what was then North Province - which covered the Kimberley and the Pilbara - it was regarded as being not even a left faction position, and the only role that the union played was within the state executive of the Labor Party, and even that was done without adopting any sort of factional stance. Nonetheless, I was proud to be able to pursue my trade union ideals fully and completely; and I still do, but with somewhat less vigour than I did up to 18 months ago. What happened to me in December 1999 was something that I joined the union movement to prevent; namely, unfair dismissal. The union to which I belonged at that time, the Australian Workers Union, would never allow a person to be dismissed without notice and without recourse to an appeals procedure, and it would always allow the person to argue a case. However, none of those rules for which the union to which I belonged fought, and for which it fights to this day, applied to me when that happened to me. That was very traumatic for me, and it is taking me a long time to get over it; whether I will ever get over it, I do not know.

On the other hand, as good as it feels to be on this side of the Chamber at the end of my working life, it is also good to be part of a dispute in the Pilbara - the BHP dispute with the unions - that the unions will win. When the dispute first started, it had all the hallmarks of another glorious failure. I said, "Here we go again, but I will be in it; do not worry about that. If the leadership decides we will do this, we will do it." However, I must tell members: I was wrong, and this dispute will be won by the unions. BHP, despite its best efforts, has been unable to convince over half of its work force that it would be better off on workplace agreements. Members have probably read about it in the newspaper. I have been to Newman. One of my offices is located there - I suppose it could be called my home town - and I have seen the videos and the letters that have been sent out. I have been told of the stop-work meetings called by foremen, supervisors and anybody else to discuss the finer details of the workplace agreements. Out of the 507 people that BHP wants to sign contracts, only 15 have signed. Some of those are train drivers who have been promised fly-in, fly-out incentives and various other things. Many incentives have been offered. At one of the meetings in Newman, I was asked to give a prize to an electrician who was offered \$56 000, which was the balance of his accumulated sick leave that he did not take. He was also offered a pay rise of \$20 000 per annum to sign a contract, which he refused to do. That is at the high end of the scale - he got a prize for that - and an example of the incentives that people have been offered to sign contracts. Harassment is going on and a number of people are getting upset. If the union were to harass people and try to entice them to join the union as this company is trying to entice workers onto workplace agreements, there would be a huge uproar and it would be considered a disgrace. However, the company is exercising its ability to use television advertisements and is giving each employee the videotape. It is also writing to them and talking to their partners by way of a doorknock when they are at work. When will the companies learn that the people whom they are trying to entice on to workplace agreements will not sign them?

That is the victory I am describing. The dispute is about those people who are left who do not want to sign a contract and who still feel they want to be represented by unions. The latest position is that the contracts have been accepted by the work force as long as they contain a provision for a modified type of union recognition. The company falls down on that provision and says that will not happen and, yet, it argues that its position is not anti-union. The union has said that the contracts offered are acceptable to the union and the work force but they must include some provision for an independent arbiter who will determine whether people are entitled to various bonuses and the level of their work skills so that fair pay levels can be assessed. The unions will win; there is no doubt about that. At the end of my working life it is a great feeling to say that I have been a part of a dispute in which the worker was a clear winner. I have been involved in a lot of disputes, as members can imagine, although I have probably lost more than I have won. However, this will be a good victory.

One thing that I would describe as an achievement was to follow Hon Fred McKenzie as Opposition Whip. I enjoyed those days. In the four years that I was Whip, I felt that I was making some sort of contribution constantly. I always felt I had a role to play in the Parliament and I played it. However, I also felt that my best work was done in the constituency, in the bush, the mines or on the stations. I do not like Perth or the Parliament

very much, but I suppose I have been lucky through my working life to have had very few jobs that I did not like. In this job, coming to Parliament was the worst part, except when I was Opposition Whip. I was lucky to follow Fred McKenzie who, through his activities, gained a lot of respect from both sides of politics. Working with Hon Muriel Patterson made my job as Whip so much easier. We had to trust each other and I do not think we made many slip-ups. We got on with the job, and that was good, too.

It was also good to have leaders like Hon Kim Chance and Hon John Halden. I do not want to do in Hon Kim Chance's pocket what I should not do, but when I look back on Hon Kim Chance's time as leader, he was a leader with a vision. He shared that vision and took all of us with him. I was like the sheepdog. I always thought that I was a good backroom boy, and that was the role I was given. Hon John Halden and Hon Kim Chance were great people with whom to work. One could get a handle on what was going on and feel part of it, which was good.

I must tell the story about the most significant thing during my time as Whip. When I was Whip, it was hard to get three people to understand that we were a team. We were not like a team of stars, but I reckon we were a star team. I had a problem with three people. They were Hon Mark Nevill, Hon Alannah MacTiernan and Hon Tom Stephens.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Fancy that!

Hon TOM HELM: Yes. Hon Alannah MacTiernan just could not understand that when I said she was on her feet in five minutes, I did not mean 15 minutes. If she were a man, I would have punched her more times than enough because she was so frustrating. She knew that I was frustrated, because I think for at least three years at Christmas time she gave me a bottle of champagne to apologise for the trouble she caused me. However, at the end of the three years she understood.

Hon Tom Stephens was another one who did not understand that the role the team played was dictated by the leader through me. He went off on his own. However, after three years or so Hon Tom Stephens also understood the way the game was played and that I was not the captain, just the enforcer.

The person who never changed was Hon Mark Nevill - he could not. There was nothing disagreeable about what he did. I used to look him in the eyes and say that we had to be at a certain place at a certain time or that there was a meeting at a certain time, or I would ask him to make a speech on a particular matter. He would look at me, and either it did or did not happen. There was always that uncertainty.

I remember on one occasion that Hon Alannah MacTiernan had to speak on the Stamp Act. She had not had a briefing, and it was to come on as the next matter of business. She asked me whether I could speak on the Stamp Act. I did not have a clue about the Stamp Act. All I knew was that a stamp cost 45c! She explained the matter to me, and members will remember that I made a 20-minute speech on the Stamp Act. It had something to do with not paying stamp duty on properties that were passed between members of a family. Hon Alannah MacTiernan received a briefing and then she gave a proper speech on the matter. When that sort of thing happens, one feels alive and vibrant and that one is making a contribution.

I guess that being the Whip was the pinnacle of my parliamentary work. The ordinary slug was the committee work. I was very proud to serve on the Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs with Hon Murray Nixon. We understood that we left our political caps outside the door when we went into committee. We looked at and discussed the merits of each matter presented to us. We tried to do the best we could in the interests of those people whom we either discussed of our own volition or whose cases were brought to us by way of a petition. There is no doubt that I love the committee work.

I also enjoyed my work on the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation. I was lucky to be on the inaugural committee, with Bob Hetherington as chairman. With the help of the clerk, it was interesting to find our way through the aspects of the job we were required to undertake. I enjoyed being deputy chairman of that committee, as well as being chairman for four years. Some of the matters contained in those reports will be remembered for a while.

I ask myself what I have done in 15 years and what it all means. If a person is a rigger, he can say that he has built this or knocked that down. One therefore analyses the situation.

Perhaps another important aspect is that when collectively and individually we speak up on various issues, that can prevent bad things happening. Sometimes our role lies in the fact that we are made aware of a particular situation about to occur and so we are able to speak out, and prevent that situation from coming about. How we can sheet home things like that to ourselves is unclear, but we just have to take other people's word for it, which is another way of judging our achievements.

The worst change that I have seen in 15 years is the advent of fly-in fly-out work forces. I am a very proud Labor person, but why we ever brought in the fringe benefits tax is a mystery to me. Fringe benefits tax

destroyed us, and we are paying for it now. I do not know how we will ever get out of it. There are vast tracts of land in the Pilbara and the Kimberley, and large resources, but fewer and fewer people. I understand there are 300 empty houses in Newman, Tom Price and Paraburdoo. Pannawonica might close down as a town soon, because Rio Tinto has indicated it may put the whole Pannawonica work force on fly-in fly-out. It is madness, particularly since the federal Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Phillip Ruddock, says that we cannot take any more refugees. I hope that my sons never see this, but I am afraid some future generations are going to see an invasion of the north of our country. There is no space left in Indonesia or South East Asia. We have the resources in that area, and we have the water. There are second and third generation non-Aboriginal people in that area, but there is no incentive. In fact the incentive is the other way now - to take people out, and use the fly-in fly-out method. I hope that one day we are able to do something about that.

I worked in Paraburdoo for a year when I first came to Australia. I visit there now and it resembles some of the bombed areas in Liverpool after the war. I am old enough to remember that it took a long time to repair the war damage. The whole morale of the town is affected. Having people live and work in the area where the resources exist is something we really need to look at, and it hurts me to see those communities being diminished. I was the last person to ring the bell at the Goldsworthy club, on the Sunday before they had to knock down the club. There were only about six people in there, so I rang the bell. They knocked down Goldsworthy, and about a year later they knocked down Shay Gap. We were travelling from Port Hedland to Shay Gap to do the closing ceremony, and on board the bus was the man who had been the mine manager at Goldsworthy for 14 years. We stopped the bus where Goldsworthy used to be, and the former mine manager was asked where his house used to be. He could not find it. The area had been rehabilitated so well that all of the non-native trees had been taken away. It had cost a fortune. Those towns were really nice towns; they were nice to look at and nice places to live in. They were situated, unlike Port Hedland, which is on a flat plain, in areas surrounded by hills, and they were well built and well looked after, but we bulldozed them. A couple of ideas were floated, but nothing of any substance, and the money was spent to destroy those towns. I think the whole structure of the north west will be destroyed if we do not find some way of putting a stop to fly-in fly-out. As a result, there are fewer services in those towns. The guidelines for the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme are rigorously imposed and it is very difficult for people to access the scheme. I hope that the new Labor Government is able to look at those sorts of things. It is now costing a heap of money. I can remember the time when PATS was being used for its original purpose, which was to help people to see specialists in either Perth or Port Hedland. The Labor Government and the coalition Government stated that they would try to get more specialists in Newman. That is not the case, and people who want to travel by public transport from Newman to Port Hedland experience difficulties because of the bus service schedule. Most people need to see specialists on a Tuesday or Wednesday but the bus arrives on Thursday and does not leave until the following Thursday. People who attend specialists for a half-hour consultation end up staying a week. That means people lose a week's work. Mothers may be away from their children for a week. It is a crazy situation. That problem needs to be fixed. They are the changes I have seen that make me sad.

Like Hon Murray Nixon, I feel that I may have had a role to play, particularly now that the Labor Government is in office, if only for a short time, in helping to restore some of the services that used to exist in the Kimberley and the Pilbara. The Pilbara ward of the Country Shire Councils Association had a clear position that fly-in fly-out arrangements should stop and that there should be more people in those towns providing a revenue base. The association has since changed its mind and is now talking about obtaining more royalties. Asking for more money is a pointless exercise. Why do we need better swimming pools, libraries or anything a shire council provides if there are no people? What is the point? I would like to have argued the point with them. It is a continuing problem that needs further attention.

The thing I regret most is that I was unable to work for the Labor Party in the latest election. I feel some responsibility for Labor not regaining the seats of Pilbara and Ningaloo, and not retaining Megan Anwyl in Kalgoorlie. I believed that I had a role to play; but it was not to be. The party decided on the direction it wanted to take. I regret that I was not part of the team, as I believe Megan Anwyl did a good job. She was finding her feet and she would have continued to do a good job as the local member. People such as Graeme Campbell and others who were supposed to be Labor Party people - but whose names I will not mention - just wanted to work against her and they decided that she did not fit into the Kalgoorlie mafia. They preferred to see the seat go to a conservative. Megan and I were very disappointed.

There was a good turnout for the Labor Party at Newman and I never made any bones about the fact that if people elected me as an Independent, I would support the Labor Party. People asked me what would be the point as they might as well vote for the Labor Party as for an Independent. That was their position and that is cool, but it was not cool at the time! It was a real lesson. I hope the lesson learnt is that the Mining and Pastoral Region needs more attention paid to it rather than lip service. I do not agree with the argument that there should be the same number of members of Parliament from the bush as we have now. The quality of the members has

always been more important than the quantity. The quality of the members can be enhanced by providing more resources. I am not saying which party they should belong to. I am sure Hon Norman Moore would agree that the Mining and Pastoral Region requires more than one office if the area is to be properly represented. At the very least, a full-time research officer is needed rather than a 0.4 position.

I hope that the Labor Party takes on board the fact that I was dumped because I showed disdain for Perth issues. Whenever I was in Kalgoorlie or the Mining and Pastoral Region, I did what I needed to do and enjoyed it, and I did not pay attention to what was going on with the factions in Perth. I hope the actions of the Labor Party and the unions will not discourage others from standing for election to Parliament. It will be hard to attract quality members to represent rural areas, as they must keep an eye on what is going on within their own group, whether it be a conservative or Labor party. That is the problem. More resources are needed, both in the lower House and in this Chamber, particularly for members from the Mining and Pastoral Region and maybe the Agricultural Region. I cannot speak about that. I only know what I went through. It is difficult to get a handle on what is going on when staff numbers are limited. We started out with nothing and we made some great gains. The major parties must look at the Mining and Pastoral Region because the margins will be slimmer at the next election, and slimmer again at the next, until the Mining and Pastoral Region will be an important electoral area for those who want to gain government.

I mentioned the time I was Opposition Whip when Hon John Halden and Hon Kim Chance were Leaders of the Opposition in this House and I will dwell on it a bit longer. I cannot say too much about that time because it was really good. The question now is where my future lies. It is a good feeling to leave my working life on the winning side. I am not a member of the political party that is in power; nonetheless, members on this side know where their feelings lie. I know how good it is to be on this side of the Chamber, rather than on the other side.

Hon Ken Travers: Where your mates are!

Hon TOM HELM: Yes, my mates! Yes, it is good. It is also good to look back and think that after 40-odd years I will go out with a group of comrades who will win an 18-month-old dispute, which has been run with discipline and precision. Those people have stayed together despite the length of time that it has taken and the amount of brains that BHP could buy, and has employed, in trying to win the dispute. Their partners are also organised. Funds are available to cover solicitors and other costs. The union side will be victorious. I will be there for the victory parade, no matter what happens. That is good.

I have a bit of time so I will tell the House a story about one of the things that softened the blow of the defeat - the destruction - at the election. My wife Debbie arranged a surprise cruise for my sixtieth birthday. I paid for it myself, not from my imprest account. I was not around when the -

Hon Ken Travers: I hope you are not going to tell the whole story.

Hon TOM HELM: Yes, the whole story. I was in Kalgoorlie the Saturday before my birthday and flew back to Perth that night. My son and his wife, my stepson and his partner, and Debbie met me at the airport. I thought it was great that they had come to meet me at 8.00 pm on a Saturday. It was wonderful. We went and had a drink and then the children and their partners left. I told Deb that it was getting late and that I wanted to go home because I was tired. However, she said I could not go home because I was flying to Sydney at 12.45 am. No-one goes to Sydney at any time unless they have to, but especially not at 12.45 am on a Sunday! However, Debbie told me I was going to Sydney. I asked her whether I had to attend a meeting or whether it was a birthday surprise and that she was going to buy something in Sydney. I told her that I would not go, but that she could go to Sydney if she wanted. I started walking out of the terminal and asked Ansett staff whether they would go to Sydney at that time of the morning. I told them that I would have gone if my birthday had not been on Thursday and this was only Saturday. The Ansett staff would not say anything because they knew about the surprise. I was about to catch a taxi home, and was planning to divorce my wife, when she pulled out two tickets to go on the *Pacific Sky* cruise boat. I could have crawled under a bus ticket with a top hat on. I felt very small. In any event, we flew to Sydney. I was not concerned about the cruise itself, but I had worked on cruise ships during my stint at sea. I worked for 14 months on a 22 000-tonne cruise ship called the *Corinthia*, which sailed from Liverpool to Montreal. I also worked on the *Queen Mary* for six trips from South Hampton to New York. It was natural for some of the crew while working on those ships to observe the wealthy people wearing fur coats and smoking cigars. However, we were not envious because we never expected to be in their shoes. When Debbie told me that I was going on a cruise, I thought it was marvellous. We sailed into a force 11 cyclone while on the way to Vanuatu and Noumea. Our cabin was 10 decks high and the waves were breaking over our deck. It was great to be back in that situation. It was the best birthday present I could have had. That was the beginning of my retirement, although I am officially a member of Parliament until 22 May.

I have not yet come to terms with the future being a blank canvas. I once spent 14 months unemployed, which was probably the worst time of my life. Although I will be unemployed very soon, I am not concerned; I have

good feelings about my retirement. I have opted to take a pension that will keep me comfortable until I pop my clogs and I can do what I want, with whom I want, when I want.

Hon Ken Travers: Not with Debbie as your wife you can't!

Hon TOM HELM: That is true. I will be circumspect about that. I should say that with her agreement I can do what I want, and I do not need to be paid for it. I thank everyone in this House for their friendship and for allowing me to learn a great deal from many experiences. I thank the Labor Party and the union movement for allowing me to do this job for as long as I have done it. I am grateful to have visited many places and to have met many people. In spite of the pain I felt initially about not being selected for another term - a pain that has all but gone - I know I am a very lucky person and I thank everyone in this House.

[Applause.]

HON MURRAY MONTGOMERY (South West) [8.44 pm]: Mr President, in standing before the House and supporting the motion moved by Hon Ken Travers, I take the opportunity to speak on several issues and make some final personal comments in this place. I thank those who have allowed me to do this, particularly because I believed it was something I would not be able to do because most departing members made their farewell speeches last November. I recollect that when I came into this place some 12 years ago the House sat for three weeks in April prior to new members coming in. That allowed some members who were leaving this place to make final speeches, and I can remember one or two of them.

I congratulate the Governor on his address to the Parliament. It was a pleasure to meet him and to see how he has taken on the role of Governor in a very fair-handed way.

During the past 12 years I have been proud to serve the people of the south west as their elected member. I have calculated that over my working life, those 12 years represent about 25 per cent, which is a reasonable chunk of one's working life, particularly when I consider what else I have done and where else I have worked. I have to say that 50 per cent of it was farming in my own right, and working for other people for the other 25 per cent, which included a number of jobs related to agriculture.

I have been considering some of the highlights of my past 12 years and reflecting on my time as a member of Parliament. I have seen how the South West Region has grown and developed in that time and how vibrant are the communities that I and other members of the south west represent. The region, as well as the State, is well placed to tackle some of the challenges of this millennium into which we have now moved. I believe there are many attitudes in the community of embracing innovation, and they will determine the responses to the inevitable changes that will take place. As the south west grows, more and more people are attracted to the lifestyle there.

During my and my colleagues' time as members of the Legislative Council, two new cities, Mandurah and Albany, have been created in the region. It will not be long before the Shire of Busselton reaches that milestone. The Shire of Busselton has experienced dramatic growth that has outstripped most local governments in Australia. In fact, this year, for the fourth year in a row, Busselton is the fastest-growing area in Australia. When one considers what the south west represents, and how it has developed, it certainly has a host of first-class sporting and recreational facilities beyond those of Walpole and Denmark. It has the Treetop Walk. Denmark claims it as in its shire, which it is, and Walpole wishes to claim it because it is the closest town. It is a fabulous and attractive facility for people to visit and I believe in its first 12 to 18 months it had 200 000 visitors. Obviously that number is constantly increasing.

The Albany Golf Club has just completed a new clubhouse that has dramatically enhanced the club as a sporting attraction. The previous Government can take some credit for having assisted that development. In highlighting the establishment of these facilities and developments in recreation and sport, I am not suggesting that they were achieved without problems which were created and identified by the Government and which it has had to overcome.

In that context, I mention the thorny issue of dairy industry deregulation and the ramifications that were almost impossible to predict. Many producers in our electorate are questioning their future in that industry as a result of the restructuring. Despite these challenges, the coalition Government was always committed to doing the utmost for the people of rural and regional Western Australia. We should be proud of those achievements. Within the coalition Government, the National Party always sought to advance the interests of those living in country Western Australia. In more recent times, coalition ministers with responsibility for the agriculture, regional development and transport portfolios worked tirelessly to ensure that our resources were allocated equitably across the State.

I will expand this discussion to include six areas in which I was involved while serving my electorate. I have contributed to the development of the south west during my time in this place. In my maiden speech I stated that

I have always believed that education is vital in country areas, particularly in the south west. I spoke of the need for a tertiary campus in Albany. Since then, an Edith Cowan University campus has been constructed in Bunbury, and in the past 18 months a University of Western Australia facility has been constructed in Albany. The establishment of those institutions will result in benefits to the entire community and the regions that those campuses serve. Obviously, those facilities are being brought closer to country people. Even though there are some difficulties, the education and training of rural youth must continue to be of high priority.

One of the highlights I saw was the resurrection of the Denmark campus of the Western Australian College of Agriculture as it was about to be closed. I give credit to the then Minister for Education for the important role he played. The current Premier, Dr Geoff Gallop, in his role as Minister for Education in that earlier term of government, saw the long-term viability of the Denmark campus, and he gave the college a second chance. From that position of near-closure, he ensured the appointment of a young principal, Andrew Castle, who went on to become the principal at Narrogin. Since that time, the college has gone from strength to strength. The interesting part about it was how it was achieved. Funds of about \$10 000 were set aside to establish a piggery. He went to the College of Agriculture advisory committee and said, "I have \$10 000. We can spend it on the pigs and have no college, or we can use it to advertise that the college exists." It was spent on a television campaign and within the six-week period in which the campaign ran, the college had more students than it could poke a stick at. It sent a lot of the students to other colleges.

Hon Barry House: That is called pork-barrelling!

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: In the truest sense of the word, I am sure. That was the innovation Andrew Castle brought to the college. Obviously, as anybody who has been to Denmark in the past few months will have seen, its education facilities have grown and been enhanced. With the recent capital works program that was initiated by the previous minister and now Leader of the Opposition, Hon Colin Barnett, the students of the Western Australian College of Agriculture at Denmark now have some of the best technological and accommodation facilities that are required to assist agricultural education.

I turn now to the Harvey campus. It is shifting its facilities to the Wokalup research station, which will be its new campus. Agricultural education is going down the right path and showing young people who wish to take up a role within agricultural facilities the capability for agricultural education to move forward. As people know, the reason for the shift at Harvey is the Stirling-Harvey redevelopment scheme undertaken by the Water Corporation. During the recess I took the opportunity of attending a conference in Victoria. It was a regional food, wine and tourism seminar, workshop or conference - it depends what one wants to call it. Its objective was to look at those opportunities presented to our State and Australia. Representatives from every State in Australia and New Zealand attended. Although the links between food, wine and tourism may be obvious, the need to promote the industry and educate not only the industry but also the general public became very evident. Food plays an important part in all our lives. However, the combination of wine, in which I have an interest -

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: So do I!

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: The more interest Hon Derrick Tomlinson shows in it the better. Just as long as he partakes of the right label, it is okay by me.

It was very evident, because of the number of restaurants opening in the south west, that this seminar was very appropriate; so much so that the keynote speaker, a restaurateur from California, saw the need for Australia to market itself regionally as a complete tourism experience, encompassing our superb food - obviously a green and clean food - wine, and of course the environment in which we live.

However, we were cautioned by one of the other speakers. He showed how his operations in food and wine tourism needed more skills than possibly he and his management had. He related to the conference that his average restaurant patronage for a week was 1 000-plus people. However, over a trading year he ran at a loss. The only thing that propped him up was his cellar sales. Having gone, after the conference, to look at the area he came from, I can understand why people would probably be a little reluctant. It had an idyllic setting. It overlooked a lake with various wildlife and birds. The problem from my point of view was that when people went to the restaurant, they walked passed the wine tank farm, which was obviously strewn with various parts of grapes and everything else that lay around on the concrete floor. Also, the water tank farm, which was seated on a concrete pad, ran across the paths which people walked upon. The area was wet, mucky and slushy. People walking through that area were already turned off before they got to the restaurant.

I saw as part of the problem the risk of disease transfer. People could fly in from another State or overseas into Melbourne, go down to the Mornington Peninsula and walk past the tank farm where two people at arm's length could touch the tanks on one side and the vines on the other. I draw to the minister's attention that that is something about which we must be ever vigilant, for not only wine grapes but also all parts of agriculture in which disease can spread so quickly. Once it is here it is here forever. Towards the end of the conference of

between 150 and 200 delegates, a unanimous resolution was passed that a steering committee be set up to draw the industries together so that they would have a strong voice to govern and to see how small food, wine and tourism ventures in the regional communities around Australia - not metropolitan communities - could promote themselves to the rest of the world. One of the speakers stated that it needs to be driven by the private sector from the small end of town to focus on regional areas, rather than by the Government and the larger end of the industry.

This committee is working on a proposal - and Western Australia has a representative on that committee, along with every other State, as well as the Northern Territory and New Zealand - that may assist regional organisations in the food and wine areas, such as Margaret River and the great southern. I congratulate the marketing organisations that have been set up in those areas, particularly as they relate to the food, wine and tourism industries.

The wine industry continues to grow at a phenomenal rate. Western Australian exports have increased by 50 per cent for the 12-month period to the end of June 2000 when compared with the previous 12 months. We export a quality product, and the average net value to the Western Australian wine exporters during the same period was \$10.56 a litre compared with a national average of \$4.70 a litre. That shows the value of our premium product. The prospects of increasing exports to our major markets in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Japan and Singapore are good, with the estimated Western Australian crush for vintage 2000 at 39 000 tonnes, which is expected to increase to 60 000 tonnes by 2005.

The recent announcement by wine producer Evans and Tate of its plans to establish a large vineyard in Manjimup indicates the importance of viticulture to the south west in the long term. It is providing an important alternative industry for those areas that have suffered a decline in the fortunes of traditional activities, particularly those industries based around timber.

Horticulture is obviously another important industry in the electorate with a positive future. One of the success stories of recent times - and I note that, when a product is developed, sometimes the time frame for development can be in decades - was the creation of the Pink Lady apple. The trials for developing this apple indicate how much benefit it has been to the south west. Valuable royalties have been returned to Western Australia as a result, because it is now licensed around the world, and this provides funds which may lead us to develop further apple varieties. That industry is a precious commodity and must be protected at all costs. As I indicated to the Leader of the House earlier, I applaud the decision of Hon Warren Truss, the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, to protect the fruit industry in Australia by not allowing New Zealand apples into Australia because of the possible introduction of a disease such as fire blight. The establishment of the Manjimup Horticultural Research Institute which was opened by the then Minister for Primary Industry, Monty House, will ensure that successes similar to that of the Pink Lady apple can be developed for the benefit of all Western Australians. The current research activities focus on developing an internationally competitive Western Australian potato industry, with particular emphasis on seed exports. Also in that area is the development of cauliflowers for export and other fruit breeding.

Further south is that other important infrastructure development which took place at the Fletcher International Export Pty Ltd (NSW) abattoir. Fletcher's abattoir provides a market for mutton producers right around Western Australia, and that has provided the impetus for many other local jobs. That obviously has boosted the economy of the great southern region.

I was interested in the comment the Leader of the House made about the decimation of the south coast pilchard industry that took place a few years ago. As a result of disease coming into that fishery along the south coast of Australia, most of the fishing boats in that industry moved out of the industry. The industry virtually collapsed. It will be interesting to see whether that fishery is reborn to allow those boats that had left the industry to come back or whether only a few come back along the coast, particularly at Albany and Bremer Bay, when that resource is being used again. The fishing industry at Esperance has been cranked up over a period of time. The interesting part is that the fish are used for recreational fishing around Australia. Mulies from the south coast have found their way into the Northern Territory, Queensland and all along the east coast. I note that the salmon season this year has been very successful. It has been interesting to find that the salmon have been full of pilchards as a food source, which I hope indicates a resurgence of that industry. The tuna industry has had a major plateauing effect on those areas that have been involved in the pilchard industry. Tuna has allowed people to diversify. It has highlighted the fact that the Albany port needs a boat marina to allow for the bigger boats; that is, up to 140 feet. Prior to the election, the previous Minister for Transport, Hon Murray Criddle, was considering a proposal for a marina in the Albany port. The new Government must seriously consider that proposal, and I trust we will see it developed over the next year or so.

When I came into this House, I indicated that I believed that conservation and its relationship to the environment was of a great deal of importance. I indicated the attitude should be not of preservation but rather of

conservation of the environment. I still hold that view and see no reasons to change it. If we preserved everything, we would end up with nothing, or the environment itself would determine how much is retained. I am proud of the National Party's record on the environment, particularly on the logging debate. The Nationals have always sought to bring a balanced approach to this issue, and our aim has been to promote and develop a sustainable timber industry. Prior to my entering Parliament, Gordon McLean, who owned sawmills at Denmark, identified the need for a plantation timber industry. It was a number of years before that suggestion was taken up. It was unfortunate that he could not secure the necessary financial backing. During my time in this place we have seen the development of a plantation timber industry. It will be interesting to watch the harvesting of those plantations and to see the first shipment leave Albany later this year as the development of the port and the woodchipping facility at Down Road takes place. I believe we will soon see the importance of developing other parts of that area, including the roads. That issue will need to be addressed by this Government, particularly as the roads from Mt Barker through to Manjimup and Boyup Brook will be the main feeder roads for the industry.

Another important issue relating to the environment is the management of our water supply. Our country is reliant on a reliable water supply for many things, including food production. We must guard our water resources at all costs. The problems that have been demonstrated in the Murray-Darling basin, where the water resource has been allocated by up to 600 per cent, will result in the long-term degradation of not only the land but also the water within that basin. The previous coalition Government in Western Australia acted responsibly by introducing water reform to ensure reasonable guidelines were in place for the use of our State's water resource. It is now up to the new Government to ensure that Western Australia does not go down the path of allocating the water resource to such an extent that it will cause degradation.

With regard to the environment, it was disappointing that earlier this year or late last year fires occurred on the south coast. However, congratulations need to be handed out to those volunteers who came from Perth and the surrounding regions to fight those fires, particularly given the devastation that occurred around Mt Barker, in the Two Peoples Bay area at the water pumping facility for Albany, and at the Mindijup silica sands facility. An amount of plantation timber was burnt. In the Robinson estate close to Albany, and also in the fire at Kalgan, three or four houses and a number of other buildings were destroyed. I can relate to one of those houses that was destroyed, because it was owned by Mr and Mrs Ernie Williams. It was sad enough to see the loss of that building, but they also lost the property around it, which included a stone fruit orchard that Ernie had made his life after retiring from school teaching. I have known Ernie all of my life, and sad as that was then, it was even more sad to hear that Ernie passed away last week after having fought illness for a number of years. That fire demonstrated the need for country Australia to have better access to communications and technology. That access should not be restricted, and we need to fill those gaps in country Western Australia. A federal parliamentary committee visited Walpole recently. That committee was chaired by Paul Neville, the member for Hinkler - a Queenslander - and it examined the problems that are associated with communications in that area of the south coast. Walpole has little television coverage unless people have a satellite dish. Mobile phones do not work there -

Hon Bob Thomas: They have CDMA.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: Yes; they pick it up from Denmark.

Hon Bob Thomas: The South West Development Commission gave them a grant, and they now have a tower on North Walpole Road.

Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY: Yes, that is true. However, the radio reception throughout that area is very poor, which is the point I was trying to make. I thank Hon Bob Thomas for that comment about telecommunications.

I am pleased that the Federal Government has now broadened its view on SBS television for country Western Australia. It is interesting that Albany got SBS a few years ago when people such as John Cecil, the ABC regional manager, and local community members John Walters and Dudley Dreyer put in their efforts to get SBS to Albany ahead of the current push to get SBS into those communities around Australia that do not have it at this stage.

Although some comments have been made opposing the construction of a wind turbine farm in Albany for the generation of electricity, it has generally been accepted by the community. I understand that the 12 18-kilowatt wind turbines will be connected to Albany's grid system in July-August this year. They will provide between 75 and 80 per cent of Albany's electricity on those days when the wind blows. The area that has been looked at is one of the best sites in Australia - certainly it is the best in Western Australia. It is good to see how that will be developed in ensuing years as an additional source of electricity.

One of the disappointments in my time in this place is that the Muir Highway has yet to be widened and developed as an important link between the great southern and the south west. However, I trust that the current Government will not shy away from the fact that the allocation of funds for that road program should continue, because that road will be required for the timber industry. Because of the demands that freight transport and tourism will create, another area of development that may be required in the future is the further widening of the Albany Highway between Armadale and Albany.

I congratulate Skywest Airlines Pty Ltd for bringing larger aircraft into the State. Those aircraft are flying around the State, including into Albany. I was pleased to assist in the inquiry that took place, which ensured that the services to the regions were not reduced. At the time, it was questionable whether it would remain viable for aircraft to fly into Albany and Esperance. It has remained viable, and the services into those areas are extremely well patronised at this time.

I was extremely pleased that the Anzac Day ceremony in Albany was televised to the nation. Albany is the place where the Anzac tradition started. The convoy of Australian and New Zealand forces met in Albany before it left for Gallipoli. It was interesting to see how the committee that was formed two or three years ago conducted itself. I extend my congratulations to the Returned Services League president in Albany, Digger Cleak, for the commendable effort he put in to ensure that the Anzac Day commemorations went off without a hitch. There was a huge crowd on the foreshore at Albany, including the Governor, and that in itself is a commendable effort.

I believe that the south west is one of those exciting areas to live in. It is an area which will continue to develop and grow. We have some challenges ahead, and the Labor Party must take up those challenges. I can only urge the Government not to reduce the representation of country people, but rather to encourage the metropolitan area to move to the country, to prevent Perth from becoming overpopulated.

I will now make some brief comments about the committees that I have worked on here. I found it very rewarding to chair the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations during the first term of the previous Government, and I am interested to see how it has developed and moved on since I was on it. My first committee of this House was government agencies, as it was called then, which was my induction into committee work. If I recollect rightly, Hon Tom Stephens was the chairman of that committee and Hon Norman Moore was a member as well. At one point Hon Norman Moore became the chairman of that committee. I then served on the Joint Standing Committee on the Anti-Corruption Commission. That had some interesting activities, on which we have reported at length to this House.

Other committees that I chaired outside of this House, as ministerial committees, included one that looked at the problem of footrot in this State, and how we could get people out of quarantine. Another committee I thoroughly enjoyed was an inquiry into industrial hemp. I understand moves are afoot to have hemp regulated as a crop, and for *Cannabis sativa* to be given approval for use for industrial purposes. I was interested, when I was in the eastern States, to be told of a person who is growing hemp for seed to feed to mutton-birds so that they can be placed on dinner tables around the world. Hemp seed has a particular enzyme that allows the fattening of mutton-birds to the right fat thickness and tenderness. The other committee on which I served was a select committee of this House, chaired by Hon Bill Stretch, on the subject of dieback in the forests. I found it very interesting working with the people who served on that committee, including Hon Bob Thomas, and handing a report to this place.

I place on the record my thanks to my wife, Pam, for all she has done in supporting me, and for all the driving she has done during the time I have been a member of Parliament. I thank my daughters and son-in-law and my staff. Although my staff often job-shared, they all contributed. I thank Louise, Yvonne, Denise, Kerry, Kerryll and Monica. They have all contributed well towards what I have done. Thanks also go to the members. I thank the Hansard staff and the Clerks of Parliament; they have given me good advice and made my time in this place memorable. I support the motion.

[Applause.]

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon Mark Nevill.