

# Legislative Assembly

Thursday, the 7th September, 1978

The SPEAKER (Mr Thompson) took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

## ACTS AMENDMENT (PUBLIC SERVICE) BILL

### Second Reading

MR O'NEIL (East Melville—Deputy Premier) [2.18 p.m.]: 1 move—

That the Bill be now read a second time. This Bill incorporates amendments to the Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board) Act and to the Public Service Arbitration Act that are consequential upon the new Public Service legislation.

Arising from the inclusion of promotional appeal rights for public servants in the new Public Service Bill it is necessary to delete all references to such rights from the Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board) Act. The deletion is effected by clauses 3 to 10 of the Bill now before the House.

The amendments to the Public Service Arbitration Act are, firstly, a matter of updating all references to the Public Service Act so that those references relate to the Public Service Act of 1978; secondly, to ensure that rights of appeal for public servants against dismissal are preserved.

This is a long-standing right that was originally contained in the Public Service Appeal Board Act, now repealed and is currently included in the Public Service Arbitration Act.

I commend this Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Harman.

## HONEY POOL BILL

### Second Reading

MR OLD (Katanning—Minister for Agriculture) [2.20 p.m.]: 1 move—

That the Bill be now read a second time. The Honey Pool goes back very many years and had its origin in May, 1926, as the result of meetings of beekeepers who were dissatisfied with the marketing arrangements for honey at that time.

The resultant organisation of participating producers was offered financial support by the Western Australian Farmers Co-operative Ltd. which also assisted with the provision of premises for packing honey.

From those beginnings the Honey Pool has progressed successfully and is now the largest packer of honey in Western Australia, with modern packing facilities in Bayswater.

The Honey Pool was given legal status in 1955 through the provisions of the Honey Pool Act; and in 1977, the latest year for which statistics are available, the pool handled 66.6 per cent of Western Australia's production of honey and had a turnover of almost \$2 million—making payments to producers of \$1 110 000.

In addition to the local market the Honey Pool is the largest exporter of jarred honey in Australia. In 1977-78 the pool exported 28 per cent of all Australian exports of honey to world-wide markets.

Through its own efforts the Honey Pool has acquired modern equipment and packing facilities; and the participants in the pool now number 127, a substantial proportion of all Western Australian producers.

The Bill before the House has as its general aim the updating of the legislation in the interests of increasing the efficiency of the operations of the Honey Pool of Western Australia.

Participation in the pool arrangements will continue to be on a voluntary basis, but other aspects of the legislation will be repealed and re-enacted in updated form using as a basis similar provisions in the Grain Pool legislation.

An important amendment relates to the proposed election of trustees to the Honey Pool. The Act currently provides for an appointed trustee as chairman and three elected trustees. The trustees can also co-opt persons known as "associate trustees" who may attend meetings but do not have the power to vote.

It is now proposed—following a recommendation to this effect from the Honey Pool—to provide for an appointed trustee as chairman and five elected trustees; and to repeal the proviso to the Act which permits the co-opting of associate trustees. Trustees are in future to be known as "directors", and the governing authority of the Honey Pool will be the board of directors.

Provision is also made to appoint directors for a period of not more than five years; and by staggering the appointment of the elected directors this will ensure a continuity of experience among the board of the Honey Pool.

I commend the Bill to members.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr H. D. Evans.

## ACTS AMENDMENT (QUALIFYING AGES ALTERATION) BILL

### *Second Reading*

**MR YOUNG** (Scarborough—Minister for Health) [2.23 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time. This Bill is designed to effect a simple amendment to three Acts of Parliament. They are the Chiropodists Act, the Optometrists Act, and the Physiotherapists Act. Each of these Acts prescribes that a graduate seeking registration must have attained the age of 21 years.

Two factors combine to make this requirement unnecessary. Firstly, the Age of Majority Act confers full adult status on a citizen at the age of 18 years. The second factor has developed from advances in education which can now produce graduates in the three professions who have not attained the age of 21 years.

Thirty-six physiotherapy students are expected to complete their studies at the Western Australian Institute of Technology in 1978. Fourteen of these students will be under the age of 21 years on graduation.

If the law is not amended they will have to wait until their 21st birthday before becoming entitled to registration. They cannot work in their profession until registered.

The numbers are smaller in the case of chiropodists and optometrists, but the same situation arises.

Each of the statutory registration boards which is involved has requested that the proposed amendments be made. I trust that the House will support the measure.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Skidmore.

## SMALL CLAIMS TRIBUNALS ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

### *Second Reading*

**MR O'NEIL** (East Melville—Deputy Premier) [2.25 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time. In November, 1976, Mr R. H. Burton, SM, was appointed as a referee to constitute a small claims tribunal. At that time he was considered eligible for appointment in accordance with section 7 of the Small Claims Tribunals Act, which provides that any person who is admitted and entitled to practise as a barrister, solicitor, attorney, and proctor of the Supreme Court may be appointed and hold office as a referee.

However, as a result of action in the State Full Court, the validity of Mr Burton's appointment was queried by the Chief Justice, as section 7 (3)

of the Stipendiary Magistrates' Act provides that no stipendiary magistrate shall practise as a legal practitioner, barrister, or solicitor.

This has now given rise to the situation that all orders made by Mr Burton are probably invalid, and on the advice of the Crown Counsel, amendment of the Act is necessary to validate decisions made by Mr Burton since his appointment.

The Bill now before the House will achieve that purpose. In fact, this amending Bill validates clause 3 since the 24th January, 1975, when the Small Claims Tribunals Act first came into operation.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Skidmore.

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

### *Membership: Motion*

**MR O'NEIL** (East Melville—Deputy Premier) [2.27 p.m.]: I move—

That the appointments of the Member for Scarborough (Mr Young) and the Member for Merredin (Mr Cowan) on the Public Accounts Committee be terminated and that the Member for Albany (Mr Watt) and the Member for Moore (Mr Crane) be appointed in their place.

I think it is important we trace the history of the Public Accounts Committee which is in fact a reasonably recent innovation so far as this Parliament is concerned.

It was on the 11th November, 1970, that the then Premier (Sir David Brand) introduced a motion into this House to amend the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly. Those Standing Orders purported to establish a sessional committee of the Legislative Assembly to be known as the Public Accounts Committee.

The motion moved by the then Premier inserted a new chapter 30A into the then Standing Orders. Members will realise that since then the Standing Orders have been amended and reprinted as at 1977. That new chapter was inserted with the concurrence of the House. In our current amended and reprinted Standing Orders these amendments stand as chapter 30, Standing Orders Nos. 411 to 416.

Following the establishment of a sessional committee of this House—I repeat, a sessional committee of this House—the Governor gave assent to the appropriate amendment to the Standing Orders. The Legislative Assembly was advised on the 25th November, 1970, by Speaker Guthrie, in these terms—

I have been advised by His Excellency the Governor that on the 24th November he did approve of the amendments to the Standing Orders in relation to the appointment of a Public Accounts Committee.

So the committee, as a sessional committee of this House, came into being as a result of that statement read to Parliament by Speaker Guthrie.

Between the time that decision was made and conveyed to the House a general election occurred. In 1971 the State Parliament under the leadership of the then Premier (the Hon. J. T. Tonkin) further considered the appointment of a Public Accounts Committee.

I can recall the situation quite well because the then Premier (the Hon. J. T. Tonkin) invited the leaders of the parties which comprised this Legislative Assembly to submit to the Government their nominees for appointment to that particular committee. Following that, and communications having ensued between the various political party leaders, the then Premier (the Hon. J. T. Tonkin) pursuant to notice on the 20th July, 1971, moved in this Chamber that for the session the Public Accounts Committee shall consist of Mr Bickerton, Mr Lapham, Mr Harman, Mr O'Neil, and Mr W. A. Manning.

An analysis of those people would indicate that Mr Bickerton, Mr Lapham, and Mr Harman—the inaugural members of the Public Accounts Committee—were representatives of the Labor Government. The other two members comprised myself, as the nominee of the Leader of the then Opposition in this House, the Liberal Party, and Mr W. A. Manning, as the nominee of the Country Party.

So it is quite clear in everyone's mind, and it was accepted from the very start, that each of the political leaders of the parties which constitute this Legislative Assembly were given the right to appoint their nominees to this particular committee. Following that, in *Hansard* of Wednesday, the 21st July, there appears a statement again made to the House by the Speaker who said—

I also inform the House that the Public Accounts Committee had its first meeting today. The member for Pilbara (Mr. Bickerton) was elected Chairman and the member for Narrogin (Mr. W. A. Manning) Deputy Chairman.

So came into being the first Public Accounts Committee elected by this Parliament.

I have made several references to the fact that this is a sessional committee of the House. It is a requirement under Standing Orders that at the beginning of each session of the Legislative Assembly during the period of the Parliament, the Public Accounts Committee must be appointed by way of a motion traditionally moved by the Premier of the day.

In fact, the situation we now have before us is that that committee was appointed in such a way when the Premier stood in his place in this House, probably on the first working day after the official opening, and amongst a number of other things and the appointment of members to the House Committee, the Library Committee, the Standing Orders Committee, and so on, he also nominated those members who were to comprise the Public Accounts Committee. I recall too, because I am in a position so to do, that the leaders of the political parties who comprise this Assembly were invited by the Premier to submit to him their nominees to serve on that committee and it was the then Leader of the Opposition who nominated, I think, the member for Swan and the member for Melville to serve on the committee, the Leader of the National Country Party who nominated the member for Merredin to serve on the committee, and the Premier of the day who nominated both the member for Karrinyup and the member for Scarborough.

Recently we had a situation before us where one of the members of the Public Accounts Committee was appointed to the Ministry. This has occurred before, and it is traditional again that the leader of the political party from whom the nominee came had to replace his nominee on the Public Accounts Committee. I again quote from *Hansard*, although I do not happen to have the date on it. Mr J. T. Tonkin, who was then the member for Melville and the Premier, moved in this House at 5.49 p.m. on the date of which I am not certain—

That consequent upon the Member for East Melville (Mr. O'Neil) being elected by his Party as Deputy Leader of the Opposition he be released from his duties as a member of the Public Accounts Committee and that the Member for Wembley (Mr. R. L. Young) be appointed in his place.

That was taken as a purely formal motion and followed the resignation of Sir David Brand, as Leader of the Opposition, the election of Sir Charles Court as Leader of the Opposition, and my election as Deputy Leader of the Opposition. It was deemed that I would be kept reasonably busy and therefore I should surrender my position

on the Public Accounts Committee and it should be allocated to a member of my particular political party.

In the motion before the Chamber there are two things. The first relates essentially to the situation which obtained when the Labor Party was in Government and when, at the request of the Leader of the Opposition, the then Premier (the Hon. J. T. Tonkin) moved that I be released from my duties and that someone be appointed in my place and precisely the same thing has happened in respect of the member for Scarborough who has been a member of the Public Accounts Committee representing my political party, nominated by the Premier to replace me some time ago. He has served that committee exceptionally well and, in fact, was its chairman for some time. So there can be no question concerning the propriety of the move to replace the member for Scarborough (Mr Young) on the Public Accounts Committee by a nominee of the same political party to which Mr Young belongs.

Reverting to what I said in the beginning when I gave a history of the establishment of the Public Accounts Committee, it has been perfectly clear and has been understood as a convention of this place that political parties have the opportunity to nominate people to various committees of the Parliament whether they be standing committees, the Public Accounts Committee, the House Committee, or whatever, and even in respect of Select Committees it has been traditional that the mover of the motion for the appointment of a Select Committee, if the move is successful, is appointed as a member. In fact, I think he must be under Standing Orders, and traditionally he becomes the chairman.

In respect of the second proposal, it was moved as an amendment to the original motion proposed to be moved by the Premier. It was not in fact in the hands of the Speaker. There was a notice of motion on the notice paper indicating a change because the member for Scarborough had been elevated to the Ministry, and traditionally he should not serve on the Public Accounts Committee. More importantly and specifically when he was appointed to the Ministry he became Minister for Health and Minister for Community Welfare at a time when one of the subjects then before the Public Accounts Committee related to the administration of the departments which now fall within his portfolio. There was no question that it was the right thing to make that replacement.

Under the provisions of our Standing Orders if a motion has not been read by the Speaker—in other words it is a notice of motion not in

the hands of the Speaker—it is competent for any mover, under Standing Order No. 103, to alter that particular motion. Standing Order No. 103, which appears on page 29 of our Standing Orders, reads—

After a Notice of Motion has been given the terms thereof may be altered by the Member reading aloud and delivering at the Table, at the usual time of giving notices, an amended Notice, any day prior to that for proceeding with such Motion, or may seek postponement or withdrawal of the same when called upon . . .

In case there is any doubt about the propriety of my moving the motion on behalf of the Premier in his absence in Newdegate I suggest members read the balance of that Standing Order.

It is perfectly true—and I think members must accept it—that traditionally, even though the tradition goes back only to 1971, it has been the prerogative of leaders of political parties to nominate their representatives on the Public Accounts Committee. When the current sessional committee was appointed at the beginning of this parliamentary session—not years ago but only so long as this parliamentary session began—

Mr Skidmore: We can read Standing Orders.

Mr O'NEIL: I want to make it perfectly clear because certain objections were raised by members of the Opposition when notice of the motion was given. When this committee was formed at the beginning of this session the nominee of the coalition party in government—namely, the National Country Party—was the member for Merredin, who is no longer a member of the party in coalition with the Liberal Party in government.

Mr Skidmore: That is an established fact.

Mr O'NEIL: That being so, we are not departing from any tradition when we suggest that the leader of the political party who has nominated his representative on the Public Accounts Committee should have the opportunity to nominate a replacement in the event of something occurring whereby that member is either no longer eligible or ceases to be a member of the party or of the Parliament.

That is precisely the situation which obtains. The member for Merredin is no longer a member of the political party which forms the other part of the Government of Western Australia, and as a result it is entirely competent for the leader of his former political party to nominate

his representative on the Public Accounts Committee, just as it was competent for the then Premier (the Hon. J. T. Tonkin) to nominate someone to replace me on the Public Accounts Committee when, through pressure of business, it was decided I should no longer be the representative of the Opposition on that committee. This motion does no more than that and I commend it to the House.

Mr OLD: I second the motion.

MR STEPHENS (Stirling) [2.42 p.m.]: I am rather amazed that the Government has been prepared publicly to show its contempt of Parliament by bringing before the House the motion that has just been moved, and equally I will be disappointed if members of the House allow this procedure to succeed. Standing Orders clearly say that the Public Accounts Committee is a committee of this House. As has been pointed out, Standing Order No. 411 of this House clearly outlines that it is a committee of this House and contains no reference whatsoever to party representation.

The Deputy Premier has said it is quite competent for certain people to move certain motions. There is no argument with that, but it is equally competent for this House to disagree with those motions, and I hope that is what will happen this afternoon.

The member for Merredin is a most experienced member of the Public Accounts Committee and has shown considerable ability. He has shown not only ability but also independence of mind, which would indicate he is quite prepared to make his judgments on the facts and not by direction. I believe it is possible the move that has now been sparked off stems from a fear on the part of the Government that he will make his judgments on the facts and cannot be manipulated or directed.

I remind members that if this Parliament is ever to regain its prestige and standing in the community it will have to earn it. Here is an opportunity for the Parliament to assert itself over attempts at domination by the Executive. I have said in a speech on a previous occasion that it took several hundred years for the Parliament of Westminster, on which this Parliament is modelled, to assert itself over the domination of the Kings of England. Regrettably, since the time the Parliament did assert itself we have had the system of Cabinet and Executive government, and slowly the power of the Parliament has been eroded because, by default, the members

of Parliament have allowed the Executive to dictate. Because of that Parliament has become purely a rubber stamp of the Executive. Therein lies one of the reasons for the low standing in the public mind of Parliament and politicians.

Mr Hodge: You must have been reading my maiden speech.

Mr STEPHENS: I would not say that, but if the honourable member said that in his maiden speech he must have read one of my previous speeches.

Here this afternoon we have an opportunity for Parliament to assert itself, if it is to be effective. I also believe that if the Public Accounts Committee is to be really effective and act as a genuine watchdog over the Government and the way in which it expends public moneys, it must be competent and efficient and a committee which cannot be directed.

The Public Accounts Committee which we have instituted—and the history of it has been outlined by the Deputy Premier—was modelled on a committee which was originally introduced into the British House of Commons, and the records of that House will show that a member of an Opposition party has frequently been the chairman of that committee. Even at this moment the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee in the Westminster Parliament is a member of the Opposition.

It is therefore clearly erroneous to try to manoeuvre the member for Merredin out of the Public Accounts Committee purely and simply because he has changed his party allegiance. He has not really changed his philosophical thinking at all; he has simply realised he is no longer prepared to be in a party which is dominated.

#### *Amendment to Motion*

I move an amendment—

Delete the letter "s" from the word "appointments" in line 1.

To clarify the matter for members, if the amendment is successful I intend to proceed to bring the motion effectively back to what it was originally before a substituted motion appeared on the notice paper. In other words, it is my endeavour to ensure that the member for Merredin remains on the Public Accounts Committee. I do not, of course, challenge the Government's right to replace the member for Scarborough, who has now become a Minister. I think that is probably clearly understood, and there is no argument with that. However there is quite a deal of argument with the manoeuvre by the Government to remove the member for Merredin.

**MR SKIDMORE** (Swan) [2.49 p.m.]: I support the amendment moved by the member for Stirling which, if carried, means only one appointment to the Public Accounts Committee will be needed and we will revert to the situation which pertained previously.

The Deputy Premier went to a lot of bother to explain the intricacies of our Standing Orders. Had he consulted me beforehand, I could have assured him that I understand everything he was talking about. There is no point in arguing sheer technicalities, because that is not the basis of our objection at all. Mention has been made of the fact that if this amendment is accepted we will have to show that the word "appointment" can be substantiated and left in the singular form as distinct from the plural.

I would like to refer to the proceedings of the Conference of Commonwealth and State Public Accounts Committees, of 1977. I am quite sure you would be aware of the proceedings of that conference, Mr Deputy Speaker, because you attended it as a representative of Western Australia. At that conference, a Mr David M. Connelly, who was the then Chairman of the Federal Public Accounts Committee and the convenor and chairman of the conference, after thanking Mr Renshaw for opening the conference, went on to say—

We have come together, not only as members of different political parties, but also as the representatives of all the Parliaments of Australia. We have a shared purpose to give substance to Parliament's traditional responsibility for effectively reviewing the financial activities of the executive government so as to ensure that funds are spent as Parliament intended and that taxpayers do, in fact, get value for money.

He then went on to say—

I need hardly remind you that the overriding duty of Parliament is to represent the interests of the electors and to ensure that the Executive makes and administers policy through the Public Service in a manner responsive to the needs of the community. The proper and efficient expenditure of public funds and the collection of revenue should therefore be of major concern, not only to Parliaments but also to committees of this type.

The conference then debated the merits and demerits of certain functions and administrative actions that could be taken by committees such as the one we are discussing today, and it arrived

at a conclusion regarding what should occur. I would like to quote again from the report as follows—

There was agreement that it was the unique function of Public Accounts Committees to assert the right of Parliament to scrutinise the Executive on the one hand, and the Public Service on the other, in order, as an ultimate objective, to improve "value for money" performance in the various expenditure, revenue, and regulatory activities of Government. This role was seen as requiring a very close working relationship with the various other bodies concerned with accountability.

So the scene was set for a committee to be set up which obviously would have great responsibility attaching to its deliberations. So far in no way has any mention been made in the proceedings of that conference of the political colour of members of committees. The report goes on to say—

There was much discussion on the ostensibly apolitical role of Public Accounts Committees. Delegates, without exception, accepted and strongly endorsed the view that Public Accounts Committees are responsible to Parliament and not to Government.

We, as participants in that conference, made it abundantly clear through our representative that we accepted that. So it would appear that when one considers the matter of the entitlement of members to be appointed to the Public Accounts Committee, they should be people who will place their thoughts and actions in respect of the committee above their thoughts and actions in respect of themselves as party men.

So whilst it may be true, as the Deputy Premier has said, that leaders of parties in the Parliament in the past have appointed members to this committee, it does not naturally follow that a member of Parliament has no right to make a contribution to the committee merely because he does not belong to a party. In no way at all did the conference say that; in no way at all was it implied by the conference. The conference did not mention in any way the political persuasion of members of committees.

The Deputy Premier has made mention of the fact that, traditionally, the leaders of parties in this Parliament have nominated members of the committee, and he says that has created and established a precedent to which we should adhere. Might I suggest that when I look for

practice and precedent I first of all study Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*, to which I shall refer in a moment. However, when considering the local scene surely we must take note of the activities of the conference to which I have referred. The conference went on to say—

It emerged that the Public Accounts Committee in Tasmania, following the British example, chose the Committee Chairman from the Opposition, and that in Victoria the majority of members of the Committee were from the Opposition.

The Deputy Premier has tried to say that merely because we have followed a certain practice, that is the practice that would be followed possibly throughout the other States.

Mr O'Neil: I didn't say that at all. I said "in all other committees".

Mr SKIDMORE: The point I am making is that by that statement the Deputy Premier implied to the House that that situation may or may not be the case in all other States. If we are to say that precedent has been created here, we must surely look at the precedent in other places. I am arguing that a precedent has not been created, because the conference to which I am referring had before it the proposition that in Victoria the majority of the members of the committee were from the Opposition. That gives the lie to the Deputy Premier's claim of a precedent being set. It dashes his hopes of establishing that the member for Merredin could not remain on the committee merely because he does not belong to the National Country Party.

Mr O'Neil: I did not say he could not.

Mr SKIDMORE: From the motion moved by the Deputy Premier it appears he is quite firm in his convictions that the member for Merredin should not remain on the committee.

Mr O'Neil: That is your assumption.

Mr SKIDMORE: The only reason I can find for that is that the member for Merredin is not of the right political persuasion. Yet the whole feeling of the conference was that politics do not come into it and that it is a matter of members being the custodians of the people's money, working on a committee of the Parliament. The report goes on to say—

It was also made clear that although no formal attempt had been made to structure the apolitical nature of the Commonwealth Public Accounts Committee, the tradition of that Committee had been and remained strongly apolitical.

Several examples were given where frank statements by Public Accounts Committees . . .

It goes on to set out the stresses and strains that committees found themselves in when they had to throw the spotlight upon the affairs of government.

Those Government instrumentalities which, for various reasons, were not keeping proper accounts and were not accounting for those things which they should have been accounting for had the Attorneys General in all of the States looking at their affairs, their balance sheets, and their accounts. The Attorneys General were saying in strong terms that their affairs should be investigated.

The point I am making is that at that conference—I am repeating this because I think it is worth repeating—there was no mention of what party a person belonged to.

During the conference there arose a question of the criticism of Government policies. I just mention that in passing to show the broad ambit of the conference.

The report continues—

Several participants indicated that there was a tendency for members of committees to pick their own special interest areas perhaps to the exclusion of areas which could have been examined in a wider perspective.

I think this brings me to the point that if I wished to laud the members of the committee in any way, I would say that the member for Merredin, with his knowledge of rural industries, would be very valuable on that committee. He would be the only one on that committee who would have a rural background, and would be able to advise the committee on rural matters in a way which I believe would be helpful to the committee. That in itself is above politics.

It would not matter who was the member who had the rural knowledge. He is the person who should remain there, notwithstanding his political colour.

I think what happened last night was evidence of my concern about committees. That was a committee of the Government I served on. None of the members were denigrated or brought down to the level of pure politics. I do not happen to work that way.

The report continues—

Finally, it emerged that Public Accounts Committees were taking a view in Australia of efficiency which went far beyond the traditional question of financial propriety, and

stretched explicitly into "value for money" considerations. It became clear that Public Accounts Committees in this area were ahead of the scope of the various Auditors-General, and the hope was expressed that the likely extension of the role of the Commonwealth Auditor-General, and ultimately his State counterparts into efficiency auditing would provide the information which would enable Public Accounts Committees to discharge their "value for money" inquiries more effectively.

That of course substantiates what I have been saying, that the person's political colour should not affect his judgment on such an important committee where he is looking at and validating those accounts of instrumentalities.

I tried to find some ruling in relation to the question of standing committees, Select Committees, and other committees. I went to May's *Parliamentary Practice*, and I looked in vain. I looked in vain for the traditional legal or accepted practices and precedents that over the years would establish the tenor of feeling and thinking that it is right and proper for leaders of Government parties, leaders of Opposition parties, or leaders of any parties in any Parliament to have the sole prerogative of electing the people to those committees. There is no reflection on any of the committees I have sat on that we had to look for guidance.

Mr O'Neil: It has been a matter of common courtesy for leaders to request other leaders to nominate the various members of committees.

Mr SKIDMORE: That might be the Deputy Premier's recollection, but that is not what he said in his address when he moved the motion.

Mr O'Neil: It is a matter of common practice and common courtesy—

Mr SKIDMORE: I believe it is a matter of courtesy. That I would agree with, and would have no quarrel with. However, that is not what the Deputy Premier said prior to this.

In support of the deletion of the word "appointments" so that there will be only one appointment made by the substitution of words at a later date, I want to reflect briefly upon the Deputy Premier's remarks in his address in support of this resolution put forward by himself. He said that each of the leaders was given the right to nominate members. There was an instance where the Hon. J. T. Tonkin moved that the Deputy Premier be replaced on a committee because of his private and business workload. That

was done. I know that created a precedent over the period of eight years. I would not argue with that. That is practice and precedent.

One must recognise that there has been a change in the coalition of the Government—that is, of the National Country Party-Liberal Party coalition. There emerges out of all the ruckus and squabbling that took place the fact that the National Country Party has become nothing more nor less than the toadies of the Liberal Government. There emerges another group of people who broke away from the National Country Party and desired to indicate to the people of Western Australia that they had the guts to get to their feet and declare their interest over and above the interest of merely being members of a coalition party.

A party the Deputy Premier wants to ignore is emerging. He does not even want to recognise it. He wants to say it is of no consequence.

I suggest the same courtesy might be extended to these two people who sit in this place, having declared themselves of the independent country party, to have the right to nominate somebody to the committee. If the Government is prepared to extend that courtesy to all parties—and I agree it should—it should also extend it to the independent country party.

Mr O'Neil: There is not one.

Mr SKIDMORE: There is still the right of an Independent in this place to be nominated onto the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr O'Neil: You want to sit in this place as an Independent to learn what rights you have.

Mr SKIDMORE: I am not talking about the aspect the Deputy Premier referred to. We know all about these things. We are not politically naive.

If an Independent member sat in this place, he would not be able, in the view of the Deputy Premier, to sit on a Public Accounts Committee because he is one person, shall we say—he himself is the leader. Would the Deputy Premier extend to him as the leader of an independent party the right to sit on the Public Accounts Committee?

Mr O'Neil: I wonder whether the Leader of the Opposition, at the beginning of the next session, will nominate one of the two gentlemen referred to.

Mr SKIDMORE: The Deputy Premier is getting back to the principle of drawing red herrings across the trail. What the Deputy Premier is saying is that an Independent member does not



have the right to be nominated to the Public Accounts Committee. It may be practice and precedent, but I do not agree with it.

Mr O'Neil: The Leader of the Opposition can nominate him.

Mr SKIDMORE: I believe he has the same rights as anyone else. The Deputy Premier is speaking in a sanctimonious way about the leader having the right to nominate members, but he conveniently forgets a minority party.

Mr O'Neil: There is no minority party. It does not exist.

Mr SKIDMORE: There they are, in this House.

Mr O'Neil: There is no minority party. It does not exist.

Mr SKIDMORE: I do not care whether it is a majority or minority party. Every member has the right to sit on a committee of this Parliament. He is not sitting for this Government, or for the Labor Government, or any other Government. That is the very point I wish to make.

We have had a committee which was untouched by political contamination until such time as the Premier became aware that the person he wanted to have nominated as chairman was not going to be the chairman of the committee. He very smartly placed the notice of motion at the bottom of the notice paper. That happened when his nominee was not going to be chairman. He removed himself by removing his membership of the National Country Party, and that is when everything fell into place. That is when the innuendo began.

The Government denies this matter was brought forward in a political sense. If it was not brought forward in a political sense, why was it brought forward? Why could not the member for Merredin remain on the committee? What difference does the political colour of the member make?

Mr Laurance: It is a conspiracy.

Mr SKIDMORE: This is a sessional committee which was appointed at the commencement of this session. I see no reason for change merely because one of the sessional committee members is no longer of the political persuasion of the Government. If that is not playing politics, I would like to know what is.

I support the amendment that has been moved by the member for Stirling that the letter "s" after the word "appointment" in line one be deleted.

The SPEAKER: I will state the question. The question is that the member for Stirling has moved and the member for Swan has seconded an amendment which has the effect of deleting the letter "s" from the word "appointments" in line 1.

MR O'NEIL (East Melville—Deputy Premier) [3.10 p.m.]: Needless to say, the Government opposes the proposal. Unfortunately for the member for Swan he let the cat out of the bag in his last few words. He said when the Premier became aware the Government nominee on the committee would not be the chairman, he decided to take that action. How did the Premier become aware of that fact? How did the honourable member know that a committee which had not met was going to appoint other than a member from the Government side to be the chairman of that committee?

Mr Skidmore: You are not that politically naive.

Mr O'NEIL: He has let the cat out of the bag. He has seen the intrigue. He saw it immediately. No member of this Chamber was unaware of the movement about the Chamber on the part of certain members who were involved when the first motion appeared on the notice paper, which apparently is acceptable to the Opposition. But the Liberal Party part of the Government is fully entitled to do what it has done before; that is, to replace its own nominee on the committee with a member of its own party.

Mr Pearce: Not against his own will. Which member of that committee has come off that committee against his own will?

Mr O'NEIL: It would not matter.

Mr Pearce: It makes a massive difference.

Mr O'NEIL: It would not matter at all. I have never before heard such pious humbug. The proof of whether the Opposition is sincere about making it an apolitical committee will be evident at the beginning of the August session of this Parliament when the Leader of the Opposition nominates other than two members from his own side to serve on this committee. I am not a betting man, but I will bet my bottom dollar that that will not happen and that is the proof of the insincerity of the Opposition.

This committee was formed in 1971. Since that time it has been traditional for the leaders of the recognised political parties in this place to nominate of their own free will members to serve on the Public Accounts Committee. It has

always been that way and it is remaining that way. Do not tell me, Mr Speaker, that if the member for Swan decided—

Mr Wilson: Now we hear the truth.

Mr O'NEIL: —to become an Independent member, as has the Hon. R. Thompson, he would expect to be allowed by the members on that side of the House to remain on the committee. I say that because the member for Swan is a member of the committee. If the Labor Caucus determined that a serving member of the Public Accounts Committee was no longer a member of the Labor Party or a member of the Caucus, and if they were to determine that that man should be replaced—and I think they should—would the member for Swan be up on his feet squealing his head off?

Mr Skidmore: That is a hypothetical question that will never come to pass.

Mr O'NEIL: Never in my life have I heard such political humbug. The amendment indicates simply that perhaps those in opposition to the motion accept that it is all right for the Liberal Party to replace its nominee on the committee, but it is not all right for the National Country Party to take precisely the same action.

Mr Skidmore: You are wrong. I was not talking about the nominee. I was talking about the existing member of the committee.

The SPEAKER: Is the member for Swan quite finished? Could I say to the member for Swan that he has kept up a consistent barrage of interjections during the speeches which have been made in the course of this particular debate. I call upon him to desist from that practice.

MR HODGE (Melville) [3.14 p.m.]: I support the remarks of the member for Stirling and the member for Swan. The member for Swan summed up the situation very well when he harked back to the battle between Charles I and the Parliament of Westminster, and, of course, the situation in regard to Cromwell. Perhaps Cromwell did not have such a bad idea. He certainly knew how to deal with people who tried to interfere with the independence of Parliament and people who tried to steamroller over Parliament.

In fact, when Cromwell became the Lord Protector of the United Kingdom he also then tried to interfere with Parliament. He actually tried to force members of Parliament to sign an agreement that they would not disagree with him or challenge him. Something very similar to that situation is happening here today. A member cannot serve on the Public Accounts Committee unless he guarantees always to serve the Government. This is one of the few Parliaments in the

world that operate under the British Westminster system that does not have a proper system of standing committees. We have one small, weak committee, which is the Public Accounts Committee. It has the potential to be a very vital and very important committee. At the moment it struggles along. It has no permanent staff allocated to it; it does not have a permanent home; and it has no permanent secretarial staff or facilities.

Nevertheless, due to the hard work and the constructive attitudes members of this House have taken over the years, it has done some reasonable work. I have been a member of the Public Accounts Committee for approximately 18 months only, since I was elected as a member of Parliament; but I have been very impressed with the work which has been carried out, bearing in mind the conditions under which members of that committee work. We do not have any proper research facilities, we do not have adequate research staff, and we do not even have a room which we can be sure of using when the committee meets.

Mr Sibson: It is the intelligence of the members of the committee that counts and not the room in which they meet.

Mr Pearce: That is why he is on the committee and you are not.

Mr HODGE: I believe the Public Accounts Committee has done a very good job. The members of the current committee have spent many hours of their time at committee meetings and involved in research and interviewing witnesses. I believe the committee has the potential to save the taxpayers of Western Australia millions of dollars if it fulfils its role and scrutinises properly the operations and expenditure of Government funds and finance.

Recently we all know the chairman of the committee, the member for Scarborough, was promoted to the Ministry. The Deputy Premier was speaking about tradition and convention. It has been traditional, I understand, that as soon as a member is promoted to the Ministry or to an equivalent position he resigns from the Public Accounts Committee. That convention and tradition has been broken. It has been at least a month or may be longer since the member for Scarborough was promoted and yet today he is still Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

The reverse situation applied when the member was promoted previously to the position of Secretary of the Cabinet. On that occasion changes were made very quickly. He resigned and was

replaced by the Government very quickly. At that time some pious speeches were made by both the member for Scarborough and the Premier advocating that the course of action they had taken was the correct one.

I refer members to *Hansard* of Wednesday, the 30th August, 1975. At page 1969 the member for Scarborough said—

The important thing that should be appreciated by the member for Maylands is that it would be totally unethical for a person connected with the Cabinet in any way to sit not necessarily in judgment, but in inspection of accounts controlled by his colleagues in the Cabinet.

The Premier made some comments in relation to the matter on that day. On page 1971 Sir Charles Court said—

We were very concerned about the position, but on the other hand I must take full responsibility for the fact that the Parliamentary Secretary of the Cabinet did not continue as a member of the Public Accounts Committee because I felt he would be very vulnerable the first time that Parliament met, in view of the fact that he had an office in the Premier's Department and had regular access to all Ministers in the Cabinet if he still continued to be a member of the Public Accounts Committee.

Of course, attitudes have changed a little since 1975. Today, at least four or five weeks after his appointment as a Minister of the Crown, the member for Scarborough is still the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. He has refused to call a meeting of that committee.

A week ago I wrote to the member pointing out that it had been three or four weeks since the committee had met and urging him to call the committee together to get on with the business. I did not particularly want a meeting to be called with the member for Scarborough in the chair, bearing in mind his position as Minister for Health whilst the committee is investigating the Health Department; but nevertheless the committee should have met and got on with its job. Of course, the member has not replied to my letter and the committee has not met.

I believe the attempt by the Government to replace the member for Merredin is an example of the Government playing politics. It is a blatant attempt on the part of the Government to exert its authority and control over the Public Accounts Committee.

I reject completely the pathetic argument put up by the Deputy Premier that this committee was an all-party committee; that the political parties were running it, and that the Government was not running it. There is no mention in Standing Orders of political parties, either Liberal, Labor, or Independent. Standing Orders refer to members of Parliament; it is a committee of this Parliament. There is no mention of political parties.

The Deputy Premier indicated there was no practical reason that the member for Merredin should not continue to serve on the committee. The Deputy Premier was worried about the prospect of the member for Merredin being made the chairman. After all, that would not be so unusual. He was the senior member after the member for Scarborough, and was most experienced. Surely it would be natural for him to be promoted to chairman. Usually the most experienced person gets the job.

We are discussing a very important principle today; the independence and the impartiality of the Public Accounts Committee. How are we to function as a Public Accounts Committee and investigate Government departments, and decisions of Government Ministers, if we are under the thumb or control of the Government? This sentiment was expressed by the Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly appointed in 1973 to investigate a parliamentary committee system. I intend to quote a couple of passages from the report. The committee was chaired by the member for Morley, and the report, in part, states—

4. The executive arm of Government is becoming increasingly powerful and Parliament is in danger of becoming increasingly impotent. This trend, which is world-wide, is to be deplored because the Parliament is, or should be, the people assembled and its impotence is the people's impotence.

Mr Blaikie: Who were the other members serving on that committee?

Mr HODGE: The committee comprised Mr Tonkin, Mr Bryce, Mr Mensaros, Mr Moiler, and Mr Young.

Mr Bryce: What a great team!

Mr HODGE: I am reading from the majority report.

Mr Mensaros: There was a minority opinion expressed.

Mr HODGE: I am aware of the minority report, but I am now quoting from the majority report. It continues—

The Select Committee believes that all members of Parliament should be assisted to make a more positive contribution to the legislative function and that a means of achieving this would be the introduction of a comprehensive and effective committee system.

We have not made much progress with regard to the introduction of a committee system. However, we have made a start and we do have the Public Accounts Committee. However, the motion before the House, presented by the Government today will, if carried, virtually mean an end to the Public Accounts Committee. I certainly do not feel inclined to continue working on the committee if it is to be subject to the control of the Government. What is to stop the Deputy Premier coming here next week and moving that the member for Melville be discharged from the committee?

Mr Blaikie: Hear, hear!

Mr HODGE: Well, do members opposite want it to be a committee of the whole House, or a committee set up by the Government to do just what the Government wants it to do? It then would be quite useless. Surely members opposite must accept that the committee should be independent from the Government. It must be genuine in its endeavours.

Mr Mensaros: Are you saying that the committee formed by the Tonkin Government did not have a majority from one party? When Mr Bickerton resigned was he not replaced by a Labor member?

Mr HODGE: If the Minister wants to talk about that aspect, I will refer to what occurs in the provincial Legislatures in Canada.

Mr O'Neil: You always quote what happens in other places, but only when it suits you.

Mr Davies: Who always does that?

Mr O'Neil: Someone from the Opposition always does it. Very frequently, the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Davies: It suits your purpose to say that.

Mr HODGE: I will quote from a publication which refers to Provincial Governments in Canada, as follows—

... all the legislatures appoint a public accounts committee which, like a regulations committee, carries out a post-mortem function. It is assisted in its enquiries by the provincial auditor, who presents an

annual report on the public accounts, drawing attention to irregularities and other matters on which he sees fit to comment. A number of legislatures have followed Ottawa's lead in appointing an opposition member to chair this committee, a gesture of fair play that is now widely recognized in countries operating a parliamentary system of government. Ontario, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island and, since 1973, British Columbia all appoint an opposition chairman. In Quebec, following a decision to offer one committee chairmanship to an opposition member, the Committee of Finance, Public Accounts and Revenue has had an opposition chairman.

That is the position in Canada.

Mr O'Neil: It is up to the committee to appoint the chairman; the Government does not appoint the chairman, nor does the Opposition.

Mr HODGE: The Deputy Premier seems to be somewhat concerned.

Mr O'Neil: No, it was the member for Swan who said we were concerned.

Mr Skidmore: You were concerned.

Mr O'Neil: You have let the cat out of the bag. Now the member for Melville does not want to serve on the committee. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition will nominate someone else.

Mr HODGE: I do not want to serve on the committee if it is to have no say, or if it is under the control of the Government.

Mr Bryce: The Government is pulling strings; everyone knows.

Mr O'Neil: The Leader of the Opposition can replace the member for Melville with anyone he likes.

Mr HODGE: The Deputy Premier gave us a very colourful rundown on the history of the Public Accounts Committee, right back to 1970.

Mr O'Neil: I was with you for most of the morning, so you know that I did not research it.

Mr HODGE: I cannot comment on that.

Mr O'Neil: That is right.

Mr HODGE: The Deputy Premier did not advance any reason that the member for Merredin should not continue on the committee. Why should he not? Is he incompetent? Is the Deputy Premier reflecting on his integrity? Is it because he is an Independent member of this Parliament? Will that be the rule from now on; if a member does not belong to a major party he cannot serve on

the committee? I would like to know whether the Deputy Premier considers the member for Merredin is incompetent?

Mr O'Neil: He is not a nominee of the party which nominated him in the first place.

Mr HODGE: What has that to do with it?

Mr O'Neil: The member is aware of what it has to do with it. I suggest his leader can nominate another member in his place, if he does not want to serve on the committee. That is perfectly fair.

Mr Bryce: Is the Deputy Premier saying that an Independent has no right to serve on the committee?

Mr O'Neil: I am saying it has been traditional that the leaders of the political parties nominate the members who are to serve on the committee. That has been the situation ever since the committee was formed. Your leader can do what he likes.

Mr Bryce: But the Government will not consider the appointment of an Independent member to the committee?

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order.

Mr HODGE: If the Deputy Premier and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition do not mind, I would like to continue my speech. It is to be observed that there are a couple of empty seats in the Chamber, and that two members of the Public Accounts Committee are not here.

Mr Clarko: That is a cheap gibe. Do you want it recorded in *Hansard* every time you are out of the Chamber?

Mr HODGE: I have not finished my comment yet.

Mr O'Neil: If the member for Melville looks around he will see that at least one of the members to whom he is referring is in the Chamber.

Mr HODGE: I am in the process of referring to the integrity of the members of the committee.

Mr Clarko: You would do better not to use that type of remark.

Mr HODGE: The member opposite jumped in before I had finished my comment.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr McIver: The member for Melville said he hoped that politics would not come into it.

Mr Blaikie: And you are bringing politics into it.

The SPEAKER: Order! Will the member resume his seat. It must be quite impossible for the *Hansard* reporter to record this debate. I call on members to cease their interjections.

Mr HODGE: It is becoming increasingly difficult for me to give my usual efficient and coherent speech!

When I referred to the absence of two members from this Chamber it was my intention to ask them whether they were prepared to criticise the work done by the member for Merredin. I am sure they would not. They could not deny that he has been a competent member who has served the committee well.

Mr O'Neil: Nobody has said that; you are saying it.

Mr HODGE: I would like to know the reason that he is being sacked. Why is he being sacked?

Mr O'Neil: You are suggesting reasons.

Mr HODGE: I want to know the reason. The Deputy Premier has not advanced a proper reason.

Mr O'Neil: You just have not understood it; that is the difference.

Mr HODGE: I just do not agree with the Deputy Premier's particular twisted logic. Obviously the member for Merredin is being sacked purely for political reasons. If this motion is carried today, it will be the death knell of the Public Accounts Committee. Obviously that committee cannot continue to function as an impartial independent body. It is the member for Merredin today; will it be the member for Swan and the member for Melville tomorrow? Who will the Executive next want to be rid of? Perhaps we will be asked to sign an agreement that we will not disagree with anything put forward by the executive.

Mr O'Neil: You are nominated by the Leader of the Opposition. It is up to him whether you continue to serve.

Mr HODGE: I am serving the public, not the Government.

Mr O'Neil: You are nominated by the Clerks on the recommendation to the Premier from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr HODGE: On an earlier occasion I pointed out that in numerous countries of the world Parliaments accept the proposition that for the sake of the appearance at least of the independence of the Public Accounts Committee, the chairman is a member of the Opposition. We have not suggested that today.

Mr O'Neil: The member for Swan went a long way towards implying that the two nominees of the Labor Party would determine who was chairman. He went a long way towards that. He let the cat out of the bag.

Mr HODGE: I am not suggesting that.

Mr Skidmore: I let the cat out of the bag? What are you talking about?

Mr HODGE: I believe the member for Scarborough did a good job as chairman of this committee. I have no criticism to make of his chairmanship.

Mr Blaikie: You are now rethinking who will be nominated the next time.

Mr HODGE: I would have been looking to the next most senior member on the committee, and probably that would be the member for Merredin. He has been a member of this committee for longer than any other member.

I urge members of the Government to reconsider this matter. I know some Government members want a committee system of the House, and they want an impartial Public Accounts Committee which will actually perform, and which is not just a committee under the control of the Government. I urge Government members to consider seriously their vote today.

MR COWAN (Merredin) [3.32 p.m.]: As the member most involved in this matter, I would like to say one or two words about the amendment. Firstly, the Deputy Premier has stated that the Government has a right to nominate members to the committee. I do not think anybody denies the Deputy Premier that right. Neither can the Deputy Premier deny any other member of this House the right to nominate somebody else.

Mr Davies: Hear, hear!

Mr COWAN: This is the point we were making.

Mr O'Neil: The House has denied itself that right if you look at the Standing Orders.

Mr COWAN: The House has not, and for the benefit of the Deputy Premier I will read the Standing Order under which the Public Accounts Committee is appointed. Standing Order No. 411 reads as follows—

A Public Accounts Committee, to consist of five Members to be chosen as the House may direct, shall be appointed at the commencement of each Session with power to act during the recess. Unless otherwise ordered the quorum of the Committee shall be three.

Nowhere there does it say the Premier or any other member of Parliament has the sole right to nominate members.

Mr O'Neil: If you like to check your Standing Orders, I suggest you refer to Standing Order No. 357 under the heading of "Select Committees" which relates to the power of the House to appoint members, and particularly excludes the appointment of members to the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr Pearce: Rubbish! He just read out the Standing Order relating to the appointment of the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr O'Neil: He did not read out Standing Order No. 357 which particularly excludes the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr Pearce: Because it is a different type of committee.

Mr O'Neil: Nonsense!

Mr Pearce: Nonsense yourself! What a ridiculous statement from the Deputy Premier.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call upon members engaging in a cross-Chamber exchange to allow the member for Merredin to make his speech. The member for Merredin.

Mr COWAN: Thank you, Sir. I would like to reiterate to the Deputy Premier that the Public Accounts Committee is chosen as the House itself may direct, and that is set out in the Standing Order under which the Public Accounts Committee is constituted. As I see it, there is nothing in the Standing Orders to prevent any member of this House from amending a motion relating to that matter or from nominating another person. The only thing Standing Order No. 357 provides for is a ballot.

Mr O'Neil: That is right.

Mr COWAN: Therefore, what it really means is that if there are more nominees to the Public Accounts Committee than required, the membership will be decided as the House will direct. It will not be decided by a ballot unless the House directs this course. Therefore, we have every right to nominate our own members of the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr Davies: Absolutely correct.

Mr COWAN: As far as I am concerned, I am stating my right to remain on the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr Davies: So are we.

Mr COWAN: In doing so, I must remind members of this Parliament that they do not have to follow automatically the dictation of the Executive, and there is a difference between the

two bodies. I wonder how many members on this side of the House are prepared to face the type of reprimand they will incur from the Executive and its members if they are prepared, for once in their lives—

Mr Sibson: That is assuming they want to do what you want them to do anyway.

Mr COWAN: I am making that assumption, and I wonder whether they are prepared for once in their lives to vote according to their consciences. I wonder—and I put this to members—if Standing Order No. 357 did have some relevance to the election of the members of the Public Accounts Committee, what the result would have been. That would have been very interesting.

Mr O'Neil: A division on this motion in the Chamber will prove that, I think.

Mr COWAN: No, it will not, because there are too many frightened people in this Parliament.

Mr Davies: Hear, hear!

Mr Coyne: They are not on this side of the House.

Mr Bryce: Listen to the epitome of courage.

Mr Wilson: The mouse that roared!

Mr COWAN: I believe the answer to that interjection speaks plainly enough. I would like to turn now to the Public Accounts Committee itself, and not so much to its function but rather to its membership and chairmanship. It is quite obvious to everyone that when it became apparent to the Premier that the new Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee may not be a Liberal Party member, quite obviously something had to be done.

I would like to quote from the first report from the Select Committee on Procedure which was printed in London at the direction of the Westminster Parliament. The report refers to the Chairman of Select Committees, and it reads—

6.31. With the exception of four committees<sup>2</sup> the chairmen of select committees are at present drawn from the majority party, but a number of subcommittee chairmen are appointed from the main Opposition Party. We recommend that committees should continue to appoint their own chairmen, but that the present convention of appointing Members of opposition parties to the chair of certain committees and subcommittees should be maintained and, if possible, extended. In future we expect there

to be fewer sub-committees, and the maintenance of balance in the appointment of chairmen will therefore require more co-ordination between committees.

One of the four committees that happens to have as chairman a member of the Opposition party is the Public Accounts Committee. It is my understanding that our Public Accounts Committee was modelled on the committees of the Victorian and Tasmanian Parliaments which themselves were modelled on the Public Accounts Committee of the British Houses of Parliament. I suggest that if members of this Parliament believe in the autonomy of that committee and its integrity they will, for once in their lives, not submit themselves to the bidding of the Executive, and for once in their lives they will think as members of Parliament rather than as members of a party.

Mr Sibson: You haven't got one to think as.

MR DAVIES (Victoria Park—Leader of the Opposition) [3.39 p.m.]: The amendment before the House is to delete the letter "s" from one word of the motion. This indicates to us that one of the names contained in the motion will later be deleted.

This motion has been before us for a long time. It first appeared on the notice paper on the 3rd August, and I am sure you will recall, Mr Speaker, that last week the Opposition endeavoured to have this motion brought forward because we felt there had been a very long period without a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee. There was work to be done and the peculiar circumstances that existed demanded that the committee should meet.

You would be aware also, Mr Speaker, of the debate on that motion and the fact that since then, the Government apparently has felt it necessary not only to move on the matter as originally intended but also to take further action which would deprive a member of this House of his just appointment to the Public Accounts Committee.

We do not deny anything the Deputy Premier said today in moving the motion. Since he moved his motion and sat down, he has made a couple of blues; however, that is only because he has not read the Standing Orders correctly, and I do not think they are worth bothering about at present.

We do not deny the fact, either, that it has been only a few years since this committee was appointed—in fact, since 1971—and that during that time there has not really emerged a fixed

pattern of how the committee is going to operate, because every time a change was wanted for one reason or another, that change has been made.

Standing Order No. 411 states as follows—

A Public Accounts Committee, to consist of five Members to be chosen as the House may direct, shall be appointed . . .

I do not think the House has ever “directed”, unless we include the fact that the Government moves a motion and the House agrees to that motion. That is the only way the House has directed, and I do not suppose that is unreasonable.

However, I still maintain that under that Standing Order we could direct any way we wish regarding appointments to the Public Accounts Committee and for that reason we are suggesting on this occasion there be no change to at least one of the two members the Government proposes to remove from the committee. We do not deny the fact that, because of his new position the Minister for Health should be allowed to move off the committee if that is his wish.

However, we do deny the removal at the whim of the Government of a member who has served the committee well, and, in fact, who is the longest serving member of the committee; he should be allowed to remain on the committee because he wants to remain there.

In moving his motion, the Deputy Premier kept saying that I, as the Leader of the Opposition, was able to nominate members to the committee. He later corrected that to say I was able to submit two names for consideration by the Government, our party having decided who would be the nominees to that committee; that is quite correct.

I believe that if the National Country Party wanted to remove one of its previous members from the committee, the person to have done that was the Leader of the National Country Party. However, like the member for Moore, who has been strangely silent when challenged on various matters in this House—and he is the man who is to replace the member for Merredin as the National Country Party representative on the Public Accounts Committee—the Leader of the National Country Party has chosen to remain quite quiet on the matter.

Mr Old: Actually, I seconded the motion.

Mr DAVIES: That is probably the longest speech he has made on this question during the entire debate.

Mr Old: What is the use of having two motions?

Mr DAVIES: The very least the National Country Party should do is for its leader to stand and say, “We do not want this man on the committee. We want him removed because he will not do as he is told.” That is exactly why the matter is before the House now.

Mr O’Neil: Can I make the point—

Mr DAVIES: The Government wants to remove the member for Merredin because that member will not bend the knee and do as he is told by the Premier and the Leader of the National Country Party. That is why this matter is before us now.

Mr O’Neil: Can I make the point—

Mr DAVIES: The Deputy Premier can make any point he wants to; I am telling him why this matter is before the House.

Mr O’Neil: It has always been the Premier who moves to restructure the committee, not the Leader of the National Country Party.

Mr DAVIES: On occasions, the Leader of the Opposition may have seconded the motion and may have supported the restructuring of the committee but on this occasion different circumstances apply, and the Leader of the National Country Party has remained strangely quiet.

Mr O’Neil: Let us see how strangely quiet you remain when you want to remove one of your members from the committee.

Mr DAVIES: The Leader of the National Country Party will not stand and tell the House why his party does not want the member for Merredin on the committee. We know the reason; they do not want him because he will not bend the knee.

Mr O’Neil: No, because he is not a member of the National Country Party.

The SPEAKER: Order! During an earlier stage of the debate, I requested the member for Swan to desist from repeated interjections. I also invite the co-operation of the Deputy Premier.

*Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.08 p.m.*

Mr DAVIES: We do not deny Governments have the right to nominate any person to the committee if they so desire. If they want to nominate a committee consisting entirely of Government members—entirely of members who will do what they are told—and they have the numbers in the House, they can do so. We would not be very happy about it, to say the least; but we do not deny they have the right to initiate and to take what action they think is necessary.



In cases like this in the past where changes have been made, there have been very good reasons for such changes. In this case, no reason has been advanced. The Deputy Premier went to considerable lengths to point out that certain changes had been made, and they had been made with the agreement of the House. We do not deny any of that. However, on each of those occasions there was a perfectly pertinent reason that a change should be made. Generally it was that there had been a promotion of one of the persons concerned. It looks like this might be a good avenue of promotion. Perhaps the member for Moore might be the next member to be promoted into the Ministry, the way things are going. Promotion has generally been the requirement to effect a change.

If there is no reason similar to reasons in the past for making the change on this occasion, I believe the Parliament is entitled to know why the change is being made. To what extent does the member who sits there at the present time not represent Parliament? Is he biased? Does he give a slanted view of things? Will he not attend meetings? Is he not responsible? Can he not relate to the Parliament as a whole? None of these reasons has been given for his removal. The only reason we believe is that it is the whim of the Premier. He does not want this fellow on the Public Accounts Committee.

That is a slight, not only to the member concerned but to the Public Accounts Committee as well. I feel that the innuendos that have been cast, apart from effecting a slur, have led us to believe that in this case he will no longer be part of the party system. I support the party system, but I also agree that any person on either side of the House has the right to break away from the party system if he so wishes. In a situation such as this we could still have the member serving on a committee of the Parliament; and there is no reason for removing him from such a position.

In this case, it is not members of the Premier's own party who are concerned; it is members of what is still the National Country Party. These members were previously members of that National Country Party. I know, Mr Speaker, that you are calling these people independents, and that has rather surprised me because in this House we have long had independent Labor, or independent Liberal, or independent Country Party. One of the photographs turned up in the album in the lobby today shows an independent Liberal.

Photographs have also shown independent Labor. I thought these men might have been entitled to call themselves independent Country Party.

I could not cavil if one of my members broke away from the party and called himself an independent Labor. I would hope I was going to get his vote on most occasions, but he would no longer remain part of the party system.

The SPEAKER: For the information of the Leader of the Opposition, the official journals of this Parliament did not record party affiliations of members before 1974. The only person in the Parliament who ceased membership of an established political party has, since he ceased being a member of the party, been recorded in the journals simply as "independent".

Mr DAVIES: I am just going on what is in the book.

The SPEAKER: It is not official.

Mr DAVIES: It is not official but members have gone to the electorate and said they were independent Liberals or Labor or whatever, and having gone to the electorate as such I do not think anyone can be so registered. However, that is just by the way.

The two people we are talking about are independent members of the National Country Party. Because they have previously had that affiliation, I would have thought the leader of that party would say they were unacceptable to the party now; that they do not have any relationship to the party and therefore he wished to get rid of them.

Did the leader of the National Country Party write to the Premier and say, "Please get rid of this man whom we have recorded as a nominee of our party and replace him with the member for Moore"? Or did the Premier say it would be done this way? It is London to a brick on that the latter is what happened.

Mr Old: We are entitled to representation on this committee. We asked that there be a replacement. That is the reason.

Mr DAVIES: We are having a speech by way of interjection and it is a good thing—

Mr Pearce: It is longer than his first speech, too.

Mr DAVIES: Yes it is. It is good to know these things because it clearly indicates to the electorate at large that the members are no longer acceptable to the National Country Party. I do not know who is acceptable to them now. From the newspaper headlines it would seem there are fewer and fewer people acceptable to the NCP

now. From what I have heard from bankers around the place bank orders are being cancelled, too. I do not weep crocodile tears over this.

Mr O'Neil: Are you serious when you say bankers have told you?

Mr DAVIES: They have given me numbers. Do not look so astonished. The Deputy Premier has been in politics long enough to know what is going on and he should not start this holier-than-thou business with me. I am not in the habit of making untrue statements and if the Deputy Premier judges people by himself he has to live with himself I suppose. I think that sounds fair enough to him.

The fact remains that we are gradually getting a little information as to what transpired and I am wanting to know whether these members are ever to be accepted into the fold again, what will happen, and will we see a change of membership on the committee.

The member for South Perth broke away from his party for quite some time. He was an independent Liberal. I do not know whether he was registered in the House as such but he was taken back into the fold again and this could happen with the people in question. There could be a reconciliation and in some ways I hope there will be because, as I said earlier, I support the party system and it is sad to see parties breaking up like this. The Labor Party has gone through a break-up itself and it knows the traumas involved. So if they do go back, will the National Country Party then say these people are highly respectable and are suitable to be members of the Public Accounts Committee?

As far as I am concerned it does not add up. I think what the House could possibly do, as has been suggested, is to have a secret ballot. Although the *mutatis mutandis* provision does not apply, under Standing Order No. 357 with respect to a Select Committee, under certain conditions members shall be elected by a secret ballot. I note in Standing Order No. 411 that members of the Public Accounts Committee can be chosen as the House may direct. If the House believes there should be a secret ballot, I believe that would be the fairest way to do things. It would be a good idea for the Deputy Premier to move accordingly. I would happily go along with having the members elected by secret ballot.

There is no argument about what has happened in the past but what is happening now leaves a nasty taste in the mouth. I believe the committee will lose credibility because of the situation which has developed. That would be a bad thing. It has been a very successful committee and it has

had some good chairmen. It has done some good work and there is plenty of scope for it to do more good work. However, when we know the membership is going to be changed at the whim of someone, without good reasons being given, there is reason for concern. I want to see the member for Merredin sit on the committee and that is why I support the amendment.

MR PEARCE (Gosnells) [4.18 p.m.]: There are a couple of aspects of this matter to which I would like to turn my attention. I was not tremendously impressed with the great listing of research by the Deputy Premier who started this debate, particularly as it turned out that the research had not even extended to a coverage of Standing Orders. The difference in precedents in what he said and what we have now is what my leader has dealt with. All the people who have been removed from the Public Accounts Committee have been removed of their own volition. They have been promoted elsewhere or they have agreed to resign or stand down from the committee.

In this case the member for Merredin has indicated to the House that it is not his desire to stand down from the committee and he is not going to resign voluntarily. As a result the Government is asking the House to remove him forcibly.

I am not impressed by a party nominating this one or that one to be a member of a committee as a way of getting people onto a committee initially. I draw the parallel that parties nominate people to run for this House—do they not? The two members who have become independent country party members last stood for election to this House having been nominated by the National Country Party. That they have changed party affiliation does not deprive them of their place in this Chamber. Similarly, if there are to be changes in party designations with committees they were on, they should not lose their places on the committee. That seems to be a clear principle in line with the fundamental way in which this Parliament operates. It is not contradicted by the precedents the Deputy Premier brought up, which were clearly irrelevant.

What has happened is that the Government has wanted to fiddle with the Public Accounts Committee for its own purposes. This is the point I made the week before last when I spoke on the question of a similar motion sinking down to the bottom of the notice paper. The earlier motion for the replacement of the member for

Scarborough by the member for Albany was like the Irish submarine. Down to the bottom it went and down to the bottom it stayed, never to rise.

When we challenged, and I particularly challenged the Premier on this point and asked him whether or not the reason for the Irish submarine antics of his notice of motion was in fact connected with the Government having a thought or two about the position of the member for Merredin, the Premier denied it. Not only did he deny it to me, but he denied it also in answer to a question on Wednesday, the 23rd August, 1978. At page 2611 of *Hansard* the member for Mt. Hawthorn asked the Premier an eight-part question, part (7) of which reads as follows—

Is it his intention to move to discharge Mr Cowan from the Public Accounts Committee?

The Premier's answer to that part of the question was—

Such a prospect has not been considered.

The following day—we are talking about the last sitting week—in the debate on the Opposition's motion to raise this Irish submarine to the surface and let the debate proceed on whether or not the then Minister for Health should remain as the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, the Premier in a rather garbled speech reported at page 2628 of *Hansard*, made the following statement—

I remind members opposite that there have been some important changes in the constitution of the House, and he is well aware of these.

The changes in the constitution, as pointed out then, were that the party status of the member for Stirling and the member for Merredin was in some doubt, but, as I understand the situation, the member for Merredin had not then sufficiently dissociated himself from his former colleagues of the National Country Party. Members on the front bench opposite are nodding wisely and sagely and telling me at least on this occasion my remarks are accurate.

When the Premier told the House in answer to the question asked by the member for Mt. Hawthorn that the prospect of the replacement of the member for Merredin had not been considered, he was not in fact making statements to the House with any great accuracy at all. Clearly what had happened was the matter had been considered and a decision had been reached

on it, but the notice of motion could not be brought up till such time as the member for Merredin officially dissociated himself from the National Country Party.

If members on the front bench opposite agree that my statements on the matter are accurate, I think they will have to concede that the Premier's statements on the same matter were remarkably inaccurate. That seems to me to be a fairly serious and significant matter. Why is it that the Government is seeking to fiddle in this way with the Public Accounts Committee? If the Government saw the Public Accounts Committee simply as a committee which looks at the way in which Government departments are financed, tries to discover any abuses which might be occurring, suggests ways of streamlining procedures, and reports back to this House—that is, as if the committee is the executive arm of Parliament in this matter—then it would not be terribly concerned with the party designation of the member for Merredin or indeed how he became a member of the committee in the first place. However, the Government should be concerned with the quality of the work he is performing. No-one would suggest the member for Merredin has done anything other than a first-rate job as a member of the Public Accounts Committee.

For a start, the Premier himself moved at the beginning of the session to renominate the member for Merredin to the Public Accounts Committee and, as has already been pointed out, he is a man who has served on that committee for a longer period than any of the other members currently on it. So the Premier's information, which I presume in this instance came from the leader of what is left of the NCP—almost the last surviving member and the leader of the do-dos—must have indicated that the member for Merredin was doing a perfectly good job on the Public Accounts Committee and that he should be retained.

I was quite prepared, when I voted in favour of the motion, to take the word of the Premier that the member for Merredin was doing a fine job. In that regard I feel if the desire is now to expel the member for Merredin from this committee, we ought to be given some reasons for that along the lines suggested by my leader; for example, that the man is incompetent, dishonest, that he is not doing the job properly, that he is not attending meetings, or something of that nature. If that were the case, it may be necessary to agree with the removal of the mem-

ber for Merredin. However, as far as I know none of those suggestions is true and no-one has suggested in the course of the debate that they are.

I should like to turn to another matter. The question of the propriety surrounding the Public Accounts Committee is a very important one. The committee has an important function in this House and we would expect it to exercise that function properly. I turn my attention to the timing of the motion to remove the member for Merredin and to replace him with the member for Moore. To say the least, the member for Moore is under something of a cloud in this Chamber. There is a motion on the notice paper asking for further clarification from the member for Moore and, indeed, for the Premier to obtain this clarification from the member for Moore about statements he made in the House some weeks ago.

That motion stays on the notice paper and I am told the Premier was very anxious for the matter to be dealt with last night, as I was myself, because it is a matter which should not be left lying around. It is an important matter and it should be settled as soon as possible.

You will remember, Sir, in statements by myself and the member for Balcatta in the House the suggestion was made that there was some evidence the member for Moore may have acted improperly by making a sworn statement to the House. It has even been suggested to me that his sworn statement was not in fact properly sworn before a justice of the peace. It was not in fact a sworn statutory declaration in the legal sense, despite the fact that the member for Moore presented it as such to this House. I do not know whether or not that is true, but I would certainly like to hear the explanation of the member for Moore on that as indeed I should like to hear his explanation on the comments of the three journalists as to what he said to them.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member to confine himself to the amendment which is before the Chair and not to digress too widely.

Mr PEARCE: I felt I was dealing with the point in question.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think you went on and I ask you to contain your comments to the amendment before the Chair.

Mr PEARCE: The amendment is to replace two members of the Public Accounts Committee with two other members.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The amendment is to delete the letter "s".

Mr PEARCE: I am aware of that.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not want to inhibit you, but I am asking you to contain yourself and please kindly do so.

Mr PEARCE: I am trying to assist you in not inhibiting me, Sir, in this matter. You and your predecessor in the Chair in this debate have allowed a very considerable amount of discussion in this House revolving around the name of one of the members referred to in the motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will not allow you to debate my rulings from the floor. I was just trying to advise you so that neither you nor I would be put in that position.

Mr PEARCE: What are you asking me to do, Sir? Are you asking me not to talk about the member for Moore?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am asking you to speak to the amendment and if you do not speak to the amendment I will sit you down.

Mr PEARCE: I shall do this as politely as I can. Are you, Sir, asking me to desist from discussing the member for Moore in terms of this motion?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: If you speak of the member for Moore in a way that is not related to the amendment before us, I will have to sit you down.

Mr PEARCE: The point I am making is that it seems to me in looking at the qualifications of the four gentlemen mentioned in the resolution the Deputy Premier is proposing and whether or not these people are fit to be members of the Public Accounts Committee, the Deputy Premier has suggested at some length that the member for Merredin is not fit to be such a member in view of his party designation.

I am suggesting there may be some question about the fitness of the member for Moore to be a member of the Public Accounts Committee and it seems to me my remarks so far have been perfectly relevant to that point. If you insist, Sir, that one may discuss the member for Merredin at great length but not the member for Moore, I will comply with that ruling; but I think many questions need to be answered before the House could agree to the appointment of the member for Moore as a member of the Public Accounts Committee.

Really what I am saying is this: The Government has shown a tremendous lack of judgment in bringing this motion on before dealing with the previous motion calling on the member for Moore to make certain explanations. If in fact the House votes in

favour of the notice of motion that the member for Moore should make further explanations, and the member for Moore does make further explanations which are not acceptable to the House, and the House seeks to take some stronger action, look how stupid we would be if we had ourselves voted a few days before to appoint the member for Moore to the Public Accounts Committee, which one would hope would enshrine that which is right and proper in this particular Parliament. I am not happy about the way this Government has gone about the whole shemuzzle in relation to the Public Accounts Committee. It indicates to me both shoddy thinking and shoddy actions. It is the sort of shoddiness which has typified the Government, particularly during the last session of this Parliament.

The Government's performance has been worse in this session than it has been in the other sessions I have been here.

Mr Blaikie: What has this to do with the amendment?

Mr PEARCE: I am placing the amendment in some sort of historical perspective.

Mr Blaikie: It has nothing to do with the amendment.

Mr Bryce: Listen to the self-appointed Deputy Chairman!

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gosnells!

Mr PEARCE: I am just about finished. This business has done no credit to the Government; it shows a lack of credibility which is clear for all to see. I hope the more independent back-benchers on the Government side will do something to prevent the Government getting away with this particular fiddle.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result—

#### Ayes 18

Mr Barnett	Mr Hodge
Mr Bryce	Mr McIver
Mr T. J. Burke	Mr Pearce
Mr Carr	Mr Skidmore
Mr Cowan	Mr Stephens
Mr Davies	Mr Tonkin
Mr T. D. Evans	Dr Troy
Mr Grill	Mr Wilson
Mr Harman	Mr Bateman

(Teller)

#### Noes 24

Mr Blaikie	Mr Nanovich
Mr Clarko	Mr Old
Mr Coyne	Mr O'Neil
Mrs Craig	Mr Ridge
Mr Crane	Mr Sibson
Dr Dadour	Mr Sodeman
Mr Grayden	Mr Spriggs
Mr Hassell	Mr Tubby
Mr P. V. Jones	Mr Watt
Mr Laurance	Mr Williams
Mr MacKinnon	Mr Young
Mr Mensaros	Mr Shalders

(Teller)

#### Pairs

Ayes	Noes
Mr Jamieson	Sir Charles Court
Mr Bertram	Mr Grewar
Mr B. T. Burke	Mr Herzfeld
Mr T. H. Jones	Mr Rushton
Mr H. D. Evans	Mr O'Connor
Mr Taylor	Mr McPharlin

Amendment thus negatived.

#### Debate (on motion) Resumed

MR SKIDMORE (Swan) [4.34 p.m.]: I want to correct the record to ensure that the Deputy Premier is not in a position to mislead the House. He referred to Standing Order No. 357 and he indicated it would have some bearing on the Public Accounts Committee. I point out that chapter 31 deals with the Public Accounts Committee and Standing Order No. 415 reads as follows—

415. The provisions of Standing Orders Nos. 356, 359 to 361 inclusive, 364, 366 to 370 inclusive, 372 to 384 inclusive, shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the Public Accounts Committee as if set out *in extenso* in this Chapter and as if each of such Standing Orders referred to the Public Accounts Committee instead of a Select Committee or Select Committees.

The Deputy Premier tried to get the House to believe that Standing Order No. 357 applied to Select Committees. The exclusion has been made specifically under Standing Order No. 415. Chapter 28 deals with Select Committees and their functions, but because Standing Order No. 357 was to be excluded, it did not appear. In other words, it does not appear in the list of Standing Orders which apply to the Public Accounts Committee. Standing Order No. 357 was definitely excluded.

Mr O'Neil: That is what I said.

Mr SKIDMORE: It could not apply.

Mr O'Neil: That is what I said.

Mr SKIDMORE: I understood the Deputy Premier wanted it to apply.

Mr O'Neil: I said that a ballot was specifically excluded in the omission of Standing Order No. 357 in respect of appointments to the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr SKIDMORE: If I am incorrect, I apologise.

Mr O'Neil: You are confirming what I said.

Mr SKIDMORE: I understood that the Deputy Premier said that Standing Order No. 357 should apply, but I misunderstood.

I intended to deal with other matters, but find that what has been said in this regard has been sufficient. Let me conclude by saying that a great deal has been said about our veracity and about our sincerity in supporting the amendment moved by the member for Stirling. I make it quite clear that in all the time I have been on committees in this House, and particularly on the Public Accounts Committee, I have never taken into committees my political affiliations. This applies to all members of committees.

The Public Accounts Committee has always considered matters in a fair, unbiased, and proper manner. I give the lie to the statement of the Deputy Premier and I say that I at least—I am speaking for myself now—have ever indulged in politics. I am affiliated with the ALP, but I do not indulge in politics on that committee. I do not operate that way, and I do not want the Deputy Premier to imply that I do.

Mr O'Neil: I did not imply that.

Mr SKIDMORE: The Deputy Premier did imply it. He should study *Hansard*.

Mr O'Neil: I simply stated the fact that it is the leaders of the parties who nominate members.

Mr SKIDMORE: The Deputy Premier doubted the veracity of the Opposition.

Mr O'Neil: I doubted the veracity of the Leader of the Opposition when he mentioned certain things—

Mr SKIDMORE: The Deputy Premier said that the Opposition was hypocritical.

Mr O'Neil: That is right.

Mr SKIDMORE: We are not. The hypocrisy is being displayed by the Premier. I want to clarify that point.

In conclusion I wish to state that the motion before the House should be defeated. It stinks of political "cronyism", if one might use that term, and it stinks of a desire to get rid of a person who has served the Parliament well. He may not have served the Government well, but certainly he has served the Parliament well, and this is the only way the Government can get rid of him. In future the people will look upon this sordid affair and will judge the Government accordingly. Those on this side of the House will be able to hold their heads up high, but I am damned sure Government members could not be proud of their part in the charade of justice they are perpetrating on this House.

Question put and a division taken with the following result—

#### Ayes 23

Mr Blaikie	Mr Nanovich
Mr Clarko	Mr Old
Mr Coyne	Mr O'Neil
Mrs Craig	Mr Ridge
Mr Crane	Mr Sibson
Dr Dadour	Mr Spriggs
Mr Grayden	Mr Tubby
Mr Hassell	Mr Watt
Mr P. V. Jones	Mr Williams
Mr Laurance	Mr Young
Mr MacKinnon	Mr Shalders
Mr Mensaros	

(Teller)

#### Noes 17

Mr Barnett	Mr Hodge
Mr Bryce	Mr Pearce
Mr T. J. Burke	Mr Skidmore
Mr Carr	Mr Stephens
Mr Cowan	Mr Tonkin
Mr Davies	Dr Troy
Mr T. D. Evans	Mr Wilson
Mr Grill	Mr Bateman
Mr Harman	

(Teller)

#### Pairs

Ayes	Noes
Sir Charles Court	Mr Jamieson
Mr Grewar	Mr Bertram
Mr Herzfeld	Mr B. T. Burke
Mr Rushton	Mr T. H. Jones
Mr O'Connor	Mr H. D. Evans
Mr McPharlin	Mr Taylor
Mr Sodeman	Mr McIver

Question thus passed.

### QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

### UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA ACT AMENDMENT BILL

#### *Council's Amendment*

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

#### *In Committee*

The Chairman of Committees (Mr Clarko) in the Chair; Mr P. V. Jones (Minister for Education) in charge of the Bill.

The amendment made by the Council was as follows—

Clause 2, page 4, lines 13 to 19—Delete paragraph (d) of proposed new subsection (3) of section 16A and substitute the following paragraph—

(d) providing—

(i) that where an allegation is made of a breach of a by-law and an element of the breach is the use, driving, parking, standing, or leaving of a vehicle and the identity of the driver or person in charge of the vehicle at the time of the breach cannot be immediately established a notice of the allegation may be addressed to the owner of the vehicle at his last known place of residence or business or may be served on the owner of the vehicle by leaving it in or upon, or attaching it to, the vehicle; and

(ii) that if—

(I) the prescribed penalty is not paid within the period specified in the notice; or

(II) the owner of the vehicle does not within the period specified for the payment of the penalty—

(A) identify the person who was the driver or person in charge of the vehicle at the relevant time to an authorised person; or

(B) satisfy an authorised person that, at the relevant time the vehicle had been stolen or unlawfully taken or used,

the owner is deemed to be the driver or person in charge of the vehicle at the time of the alleged breach;

Mr P. V. JONES: I move—

That the amendment made by the Council be agreed to.

When this Bill was received in another place an anomaly was noticed in regard to paragraph (d) of proposed new subsection (3) of section 16A. The Bill, as passed in this Chamber, permitted the conviction of the owner of a motor vehicle for an offence actually committed by a driver other than the owner. The Legislative Council now seeks our concurrence in an amendment which will modify this owner-onus provision to ensure it applies only when the identity of the true offender cannot be ascertained.

As members are aware, many of the vehicles driven onto university property actually belong to the parents of those driving them, and so quite frequently the owner of a vehicle is not the person who has parked a vehicle in a manner against the prescribed by-laws. The amendment before us places some considerable onus upon the administering authority to do all it possibly can to ascertain the identity of the offender rather than to take action against the registered owner of the vehicle.

Mr PEARCE: The opposition supports this amendment as it supported the Bill in the first instance. I am pleased that this anomaly has been picked up; perhaps we were remiss in this Chamber that we missed it. I indicate also that we have pleasure in supporting it because one of the owners prosecuted under the old anomalous provisions was a relative of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in another place.

Mr Young: It shows it is a House of Review.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

#### *Report*

Resolution reported, the report adopted, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

### NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

#### *Inaugural Opening: Attendance by Speaker*

**THE SPEAKER** (Mr Thompson): I wish to advise members of the Assembly that tomorrow I shall, as their representative, attend the ceremonial opening of a new session of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. Members will be

aware that this is to be a particularly significant occasion in the life of the Northern Territory, because its Assembly has recently been given expanded responsibility. To mark the occasion the presentation of a suitable gift from this Assembly will be made to the Northern Territory Assembly.

*House adjourned at 5.10 p.m.*

## QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

### POLICE

#### *Radios*

1512. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Police and Traffic:

Further to my question 1370 of 1978, concerning radios for the Police Department:—

- (a) would he now be in a position to advise as to whether or not tenders have been accepted;
- (b) if so, would he advise the names of the firms who tendered for the contract; and
- (c) the tender prices submitted?

Mr O'NEIL replied:

- (a) No tender has yet been accepted. It is anticipated acceptance of a suitable tender will be finalised at an early date;
- (b) and (c) subject to acceptance of the tender, this information will be available from the State Tender Board of Western Australia.

### HEALTH

#### *Venereal Disease: American Sailors*

1513. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Is any effort made to screen visiting American sailors who spend shore leave in Fremantle to ensure that the transmission of venereal disease is kept to a minimum?
- (2) Does the Health Department have any figures on the percentage of the incidence of venereal disease of sailors on American warships?
- (3) Is any restriction placed on American sailors who suffer from venereal disease to ensure that they do not get shore leave while in Australian ports?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No, the Commonwealth Health Department is responsible for quarantine.
- (3) Yes, I understand that shore leave is granted under supervision and for treatment only.

## EDUCATION

### *Art Students*

1514. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Education:

In the future planning for all art students in the metropolitan area, will graphic art students be located in the city area so that it will allow them to be in close contact with areas associated with their courses, e.g., advertising?

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

Existing studios of professional graphic artists are widely scattered throughout the metropolitan area and are not concentrated in the central city. There is no intention, however, to move graphic arts courses away from Perth Technical College at this time.

## CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### *Waste Disposal*

1515. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Conservation and the Environment:

How far advanced are the Government's plans on waste disposal that would allow the present landfill disposal methods to be phased out and thus prevent possible pollution of our waterways, drinking water resources and our environment?

Mrs Craig (for Mr O'CONNOR) replied:

The administration of waste disposal sites comes within the portfolio of the Minister for Health to whom the member should direct his question.

## WORKERS' WAGE INCREASES

### *Male and Female*

1516. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

In 1977 in this State, what percentage increases took place in adult male and female wages that were the result of wage increases outside of the guidelines of wage indexation?



Mrs Craig (for Mr O'CONNOR) replied:

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' publication, *Wage Rates Index, December, 1977 (Preliminary)*, catalogue 6311.0, page 1, made the following statement for Australia as a whole:

"In the year ended December, 1977, the adult male wage rate index rose by 10.0 per cent, 97 per cent of the rise being attributable to indexation increases. For adult females the corresponding figures were 10.3 per cent and 97 per cent."

This information is not available on a State by State basis.

### WATER SUPPLIES

#### *Water Resources: Federal Funds for Development*

1517. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister representing the Minister for Water Supplies:

- (1) Of the \$6.6 million provided to the States by the Commonwealth Government towards the cost of the States' water resources assessment programmes, aimed at determining the quantity and quality of the nation's water resources on a long term basis, how much of the said grant did this State Government receive?
- (2) Has the Government now worked out its research programme to ensure the maximum quality and quantity of our water resources?
- (3) What areas of our water resources are programmed for investigation?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) The Commonwealth Government provided \$2 million to Western Australia for the measurement and assessment of water resources in the financial year 1977-78 and a further \$2 million has been allocated to the State for 1978-79.
- (2) and (3) Commonwealth funds have been provided to the States for these purposes each year since 1964. In Western Australia the funds have been used throughout the whole State to build up and operate a system which provides this State with information about the quality and quantity of the State's water resources, both surface and underground. As in past years, the funds to be made available in 1978-79 will be used throughout the State.

### TOWN PLANNING

#### *Subdivision in Margaret River*

1518. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Urban Development and Town Planning:

- (1) Has any application been made to the Town Planning Board for approval to be given to allow the subdivision into building blocks of Location 815, situated in the Margaret River area?
- (2) If "Yes"—
  - (a) in what newspaper was the required advertisement placed; and
  - (b) what is the date upon which objections to the subdivision have to be lodged?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) Location 815 is included in the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River town planning scheme No. 13—Gnarabup.
- (2) (a) and (b) The scheme has been forwarded by council to the Town Planning Board for consideration of preliminary approval and has not yet been advertised.

### ABATTOIRS

#### *Private*

1519. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

- (1) Under what awards are all workers employed in private abattoirs?
- (2) Are there any variations that have been made to the wages paid to such workers working under those awards as from and including the years—
  - (a) 1974;
  - (b) 1975;
  - (c) 1976;
  - (d) 1977; and
  - (e) 1978?

Mrs Craig (for Mr O'CONNOR) replied:

- (1) and (2) There are many State and at least two Federal awards covering workers in this industry in Western Australia. It would take many days and high costs to extract the answer and as a result I am unable to supply the information.

### ABATTOIR

#### *Midland Junction: Awards and Wages*

1520. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Under what awards are all workers employed at the Midland abattoir?

- (2) Are there any variations that have been made to the wages paid to such workers working under those awards as from and including the years—

- (a) 1974;
- (b) 1975;
- (c) 1976;
- (d) 1977; and
- (e) 1978?

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) and (2) In view of the number of awards involved and the costs of extracting the details sought, it is impracticable to provide this information.

### TRAFFIC

#### *Midland Central Shopping Area*

1521. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Urban Development and Town Planning:

When will finality be reached with the eastern corridor study, particularly in respect of relieving the present excessive loading of traffic on roads in the Midland central shopping area?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

The eastern corridor study has been completed. Public comment on the published final report is being collated and will be considered by the MRPA as soon as possible. Traffic management measures to improve conditions in central Midland are currently planned by the Swan Shire Council. Funds have been allocated for upgrading Victoria Street in this financial year.

### TRAFFIC

#### *James-Meadow Streets Corner*

1522. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) When will the study of the question of traffic congestion at the corner of James and Meadow Streets, Guildford, be completed?
- (2) Will he make available that report or advise me as to what action is to be taken to relieve such traffic congestion?

Mrs Craig (for Mr RUSHTON) replied:

- (1) and (2) There has been no formal study carried out or report prepared. However, after an investigation, a proposal was forwarded to the Swan Shire Council recommending deletion of the access to the intersection from Meadow Street

south. It is considered that such a measure would improve the safety and efficiency of the intersection.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### *Itinerant Vendors*

1523. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Under what section of the Health Act are itinerant vendor licences issued by local shires?
- (2) Have the shires any legal right to impose any restrictions on such licences?
- (3) Would such restrictions permit a shire to limit a licence to state that an itinerant vendor was not to trade—
  - (a) within a quarter of a mile from any established retail food outlet;
  - (b) by parking on road verges;
  - (c) in public car parks;
  - (d) in private car parks;
  - (e) in public reserves or service stations?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Health Act, By-law series "A", By-law 51.
- (2) Only in relation to requirements of the Health Act.
- (3) Under the provisions of the Health Act—
  - (a) to (e) no.

### TRAFFIC: SIGNS

#### *"Give Way": Great Eastern Highway*

1524. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Transport:

In view of the fact that Great Eastern Highway is a major road and has along its entire length through the electorate of Swan "Give Way" signs at all intersecting roads, would he have the two "Stop" signs that are placed at the corner of Great Eastern Highway and Helena Street, Guildford, replaced with "Give Way" signs and thus have a conformity of signs which will remove the confusion that now exists at this intersection?

Mrs Craig (for Mr RUSHTON) replied:

"Stop" signs are erected where site conditions and accident experience shows them to be necessary. It is therefore not proposed to replace these "Stop" signs with "Give Way" signs.

## YALLINGUP CAVE

*Australian Speliological Federation*

1525. Mr BLAICKIE, to the Minister for Conservation and the Environment:

- (1) Did his department commission the Australian Speliological Federation to report on the Yallingup cave?
- (2) Has the report been completed?
- (3) What was the cost involved?
- (4) Will he table a copy of the report?

Mrs Craig (for Mr O'CONNOR) replied:

- (1) and (2) Yes.
- (3) About \$3 000.
- (4) Yes.

*The report was tabled (see paper No. 346).*

## VAPECH HOUSE

*Removal of Asbestos Materials*

1526. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister representing the Minister for Works:

- (1) When is it expected work on removing of asbestos materials from Vapech House will be completed?
- (2) Who is responsible for meeting the cost of such work?
- (3) What is the estimated cost?
- (4) Is it a fact that windows in the building must remain closed because of effect on the airconditioning?
- (5) Is it a fact that some staff members are unhappy with such a direction?
- (6) Until the work is completed, cannot the staff be given the option of opening windows?
- (7) If not, why not?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) 22nd December, 1978.
- (2) Public Works Department and owner of the building.
- (3) \$27 000.
- (4) Yes.
- (5) No complaints have been received.
- (6) No.
- (7) Efficiency of air-conditioning will be impaired.

## GOVERNMENT PROJECTS

*Names of Those to be Scrapped*

1527. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister for Labour, and Industry:

Arising from the page 1 report in *The West Australian* of 30th August, 1978, will he name the multi-million dollar projects which he threatened to scrap?

Mrs Craig (for Mr O'CONNOR) replied:

No, as this would reveal the contents of the State's works programme prior to its announcement.

## IMMIGRATION

*Ethnic Community Councils*

1528. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister for Immigration:

- (1) Does the State Government intend to contribute financially towards ethnic community councils which are being set up in the States to replace Good Neighbour Councils?
- (2) If so, on what basis?
- (3) If not, why not?

Mrs Craig (for Mr O'CONNOR) replied:

- (1) to (3) The Galbally Report is currently being examined and no decision relating to any aspect of the report has yet been made by the State Government.

## STAMP DUTY

*Bankcard Accounts*

1529. Mr DAVIES, to the Treasurer:

- (1) What stamp duty is charged on Bankcard accounts?
- (2) What amount was received from this source for the year ended 30th June, 1978?
- (3) What is the amount expected to be raised in the current financial year from this source?

Mr O'Neil (for Sir CHARLES COURT) replied:

- (1) No stamp duty is payable on a bank card account provided the account is fully paid within the prescribed period. Stamp duty is payable if cash withdrawals are made or the balance of the account is paid by instalments.
- (2) and (3) Information not available. (Any duty which may be payable in the above cases is collected by the bank and included with other duty paid to the department by monthly return).

## TAX SHARING

### *Federal Policy*

1530. Mr DAVIES, to the Treasurer:

- (1) Is it a fact that the 1½% increase in the standard rate of tax will not result in higher tax sharing payments to the States in 1979-80?
- (2) Is his Government in accord with the Federal Government's policy on this matter?
- (3) Is it a fact that the Federal Treasurer believes that the 1½% increase need not be shared with the States because the States are likely to be on their guaranteed entitlements under the tax sharing arrangements?
- (4) Is it a fact that the guaranteed entitlements are minimum levels at which the States can receive Federal funding under the personal income tax sharing proposals?
- (5) Is it a fact that the States do not expect the guaranteed entitlements would be the maximum level of funding under the tax sharing arrangements?

Mr O'Neil (for Sir CHARLES COURT) replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Clause 8 of the points of understanding between the Commonwealth and State Governments regarding personal income tax sharing provides that the yield or costs of special surcharges or rebates applied, in appropriate circumstances, by the Commonwealth, will not be included in the base figure from which the States' entitlements will be calculated.
- (3) and (4) Yes.
- (5) Yes, although the actual position will, of course, depend on future movements in revenue from personal income tax.

## ELECTORAL

### *Kimberley Roll*

1531. Mr DAVIES, to the Chief Secretary:

- (1) How many people have been sent letters challenging their right to be enrolled for the seat of Kimberley since the Kimberley by-election?
- (2) How many people have been removed from the roll as a result of—
  - (a) having left the district and re-enrolled elsewhere;

(b) having been struck off the roll since the Kimberley by-election?

- (3) What were the reasons for the persons being struck off the roll referred to in part (2) (b)?

Mr O'NEIL replied:

- (1) 229.
- (2) From 17th December, 1977, to 4th September, 1978—
  - (a) 254;
  - (b) 1253.
- (3) Enrolled in a new electorate; Deleted under section 48; Obvious error or removal of duplicate name; Elector's request; Marriage; Death; Conviction (section 59); Failure to reply to notices regarding non-voting at an election (section 156); Change of address within the electorate.

## TRAFFIC

### *Motor Vehicle Licence Fees: Increase*

1532. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister for Transport:

In view of the Premier's announcement that Fremantle Port Authority charges will rise soon—

- (a) can he give any indication when motor vehicle licence fees will rise; and
- (b) by how much?

Mrs Craig (for Mr RUSHTON) replied:

- (a) and (b) No.

## WORKER PARTICIPATION

### *Government Policy*

1533. Mr DAVIES, to the Premier:

- (1) Has he, or any of his Ministers, received correspondence from the Regional Director, Department of Productivity in Western Australia together with the Commonwealth Government's policy on employee participation?
- (2) If so, has the regional director asked for the State Government's support in implementing this policy?

- (3) Is it the State Government's intention to support the Commonwealth Government's policy on employee participation?
- (4) If not, which parts of the policy will the Government not support?

Mr O'Neil (for Sir CHARLES COURT) replied:

- (1) and (2) Yes.
- (3) and (4) The Government is currently examining the Commonwealth Government's policy on employee participation.

### WATER SUPPLIES

#### *Revenue Lost*

1534. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister representing the Minister for Water Supplies:

- (1) How much in revenue does the Metropolitan Water Board forgo in a full financial year by allowing 150 kl of water to domestic consumers as an allowance?
- (2) How much in revenue would the Metropolitan Water Board forgo in a financial year if it increased its allowance to:
  - (a) 175 kl;
  - (b) 200 kl;
  - (c) 250 kl.
 to domestic consumers?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) Approximately \$7 million.
- (2) Approximately a further—
  - (a) \$1.2 million;
  - (b) \$2.3 million;
  - (c) \$4.7 million.

### ZONE ALLOWANCES

#### *Submissions to Federal Government*

1535. Mr DAVIES, to the Premier:

- (1) Have written submissions been made by himself or other State Ministers to the Prime Minister seeking increases in zone allowances?
- (2) If so, when?
- (3) Will he table them?
- (4) If "No" to (1)—
  - (a) what other form of submissions have been made; and
  - (b) on which dates?

Mr O'Neil (for Sir CHARLES COURT) replied:

- (1) Submissions have been made from time to time seeking increases in zone allowances and also other taxation benefits for residents in northern areas.
- (2) A general request for an increase in zone allowances was made in February, 1975. In June, 1978, at the Premier's conference, discussions took place with the Commonwealth about an adjustment of the taxation zone allowances. At that time, I found that the Prime Minister and the Federal Treasurer clearly understood the reasons for our concern and appeared to be well informed.

I believe that zone allowances have been permitted to slip ridiculously low and I shall continue to press for them to be reviewed.

- (3) With permission, I submit for tabling, copy of correspondence.
- (4) Not applicable.

*The paper was tabled (see paper No. 347).*

### HEALTH

#### *Yeelirrie Uranium Deposits*

1536. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Has the Public Health Department been involved in any tests for radiation levels in connection with the Yeelirrie uranium ore deposits?
- (2) If "Yes"—
  - (a) what was the extent of the tests; and
  - (b) what was the result of same?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) The Public Health Department collaborated with the Australian Radiation Laboratory in measurements of radiation levels at Yeelirrie. Studies were also made independently by the Australian Atomic Energy Commission.
- (2) (a) Measurements were made of external radiation levels and radon daughter concentrations. Film badge monitoring was carried out for a period of approximately six months during the mining at Yeelirrie.

- (b) The external radiation levels averaged approximately two millirem per hour over the floor of the excavation with isolated pockets showing higher radiation levels. Radon daughter measurements made by the Australian Radiation Laboratory were below the limit of detection. Film badge monitoring of workers indicated some radiation doses were received, but these doses were well within the limits of the maximum permissible doses allowed for radiation workers under State regulations.

## CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### *Yeelirrie Uranium Deposits*

1537. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Conservation and the Environment:

Has the Environmental Protection Authority undertaken any studies into the proposed uranium mining at Yeelirrie as to the effect this mining will have on—

- (a) the environment;
- (b) the workforce who were or are employed at the minesite;
- (c) the workforce who handle the ore at any other place?

Mrs Craig (for Mr O'CONNOR) replied:

These issues are being examined as part of the Environmental Protection Authority's assessment of the ERMP which is currently open for public comment.

## KWINANA CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES

### *Code to Deal with Major Accident*

1538. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

- (1) Can he ascertain whether or not Kwinana Chemical Industries has a plan or code of practice to deal with a possible major accident?
- (2) If not, why not?
- (3) If "Yes" will the Rockingham Shire Council be informed of the plan?

Mrs Craig (for Mr O'CONNOR) replied:

- (1) and (2) Chemical Industries (Kwinana) Pty. Ltd. has a code of practice to deal with the possibility of accidents occurring to the work force, including

antidotes, respiratory devices, and protective clothing. It was recently suggested that Chemical Industries (Kwinana) Pty. Ltd. join with emergency organisations already in existence to plan action to control the accidental emission or spillage of chemicals.

- (3) The Rockingham Shire Council is kept informed of emergency plans by the organisations referred to in (1).

## HEALTH

### *Foodstuffs: Heavy Metals Level*

1539. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Health:

In testing for heavy metals in the Spearwood area, what analytical method or methods will be used to determine levels of cadmium present?

Mr YOUNG replied:

Testing procedures are conducted by the Government Chemical Laboratories, who employ an atomic absorption spectrometry method for the determination of cadmium levels.

## HOSPITAL

### *Ambulance Service in Rockingham*

1540. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Is it a fact that on 11th August, 1978 at 2.30 p.m., one Michael Reed suffered a broken leg in Read Street, Rockingham?
- (2) Is it a fact that an ambulance was called within minutes?
- (3) Is it a fact that an ambulance did not arrive until 3.15 p.m.?
- (4) If "Yes", why was it necessary to wait such a length of time when there is an ambulance centre in Rockingham only five minutes from the scene of the accident and another at Kwinana only twelve minutes away?
- (5) Why was he taken to Fremantle, over half an hour's drive away, when Rockingham Hospital was only three minutes drive from the scene of the accident?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) I do not know what time Michael Reed suffered his accident, but I am prepared to take the member's word that it occurred at 2.30 p.m.

- (2) The call was received by the St. John Ambulance Association at 2.47 p.m.
- (3) No, the ambulance arrived at 2.55 p.m.
- (4) Not applicable.
- (5) The ambulance attendants recognised the serious nature of the injury and wisely and correctly decided that he required admission to Fremantle Hospital.

#### HOSPITAL *Rockingham*

1541. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Have certain items of equipment recently been transferred from Rockingham-Kwinana Hospital to another place?
- (2) (a) What items of equipment were transferred;
- (b) where and why?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) and (2) No.

#### CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT *Alcoa Wagerup: ERMP*

1542. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Conservation and the Environment:

How many submissions have now been received which relate to the environmental review and management programme by Alcoa on its Wagerup proposal?

Mrs Craig (for Mr O'CONNOR) replied:  
63 detailed submissions; 123 simple statements of objection or support.

#### CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT *Yeelirrie Uranium Project: ERMP*

1543. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Conservation and the Environment:

- (1) Is it a fact that the environmental review and management programme by Western Mining on Yeelirrie contains several statements entirely contrary to the Fox report?
- (2) If "Yes" will the State Government make representations to the Commonwealth Government to have the Fox Commission reconvened?

Mrs Craig (for Mr O'CONNOR) replied:  
The Government does not intend to take any action with respect to the Yeelirrie proposal until it has received the advice of the EPA which is currently assessing the ERMP.

#### COMMUNITY WELFARE DEPARTMENT

##### *Thorpe Street Premises*

1544. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Community Welfare:

- (1) Is it a fact that the Rockingham branch of the Community Welfare Department is to move to new premises in Thorpe Street?
- (2) Is it a fact that the rent has been paid on these premises since December 1977, or thereabouts, by the Community Welfare Department?
- (3) (a) What is the total amount of rent so far expended on the as yet unused premises; and
- (b) when can it be expected the department will occupy the premises?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Rental has been paid by the Public Works Department from the 12th December, 1977.
- (3) (a) Total payment by Public Works is \$4 156.44 and covers rental to the 30th October, 1978;
- (b) the Department for Community Welfare is not expected to occupy the premises before mid-October.

#### EDUCATION

##### *Manual Arts Centres: Safety Officer*

1545. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Has the department given consideration to appointing a safety officer for the purpose of checking manual arts centres at educational institutions throughout the State?
- (2) If "No" will he instigate an investigation to evaluate the need of such an officer?
- (3) If "Yes" to (1), with what result?

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

- (1) and (2) Yes.

- (3) The Superintendent of Manual Arts is engaged in discussion of this question with manual arts teachers and no action will be taken until this investigation is completed.

#### POLICE STATION AND RTA OFFICE

##### *Rockingham*

1546. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Police and Traffic:

- (1) Has an investigation been conducted into the possibility of the provision of air conditioning at the Rockingham police station and the Road Traffic Authority office?
- (2) What is the result of such investigation?
- (3) If no investigation has taken place as yet, why not?

Mr O'NEIL replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Investigation resolved that the provision of roof insulation and window treatments would substantially improve conditions. As an additive to improving conditions, mechanical fans have been included and work has been requested to be carried out.
- (3) Answered by (1) and (2).

#### HEALTH

##### *Aborigines: Eye Sight*

1547. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Has he seen *The West Australian* press report dated 14th August, 1978, wherein a Professor Hallows claimed 23% of all Aborigines over 60 years of age in Western Australia, South Australia and Northern Territory, were blind in both eyes and further, that 30% of children under eleven years of age had active trachoma which could lead to eventual blindness?
- (2) If so, has he investigated these assertions?
- (3) If not, what is the situation in Western Australia?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The report is currently under investigation.
- (3) Not applicable.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE

##### *Public Servants: Retirement*

1548. Mr DAVIES, to the Premier:

Further to my question 1454 of 1978 concerning voluntary retirement at 55, and the answer to number (1), will he outline which Government offices have been undertaking research into the question of voluntary retirement at 55 years of age?

Mr O'Neil (for Sir CHARLES COURT) replied:

Three: Superannuation Board, Treasury, and Public Service Board.

#### LAND

##### *Busselton*

1549. Mr DAVIES, to the Premier:

- (1) Has he, or any other Minister, received representations from the Member for Vasse and/or the Busselton Shire Council requesting that land at Busselton be sold to the shire at market prices, so the shire could resell the land and use the profits to repair the Busselton jetty?
- (2) If so, what was the Government's response?

Mr O'Neil (for Sir CHARLES COURT) replied:

- (1) On 4th August, 1978 the Member for Vasse wrote to the Premier seeking land surveyed for residential usage to be made available to the Shire of Busselton. It was suggested that the proceeds be used in restoring the Busselton jetty and to build facilities for a small boat harbour in the Busselton district.

The approach concluded, "while local authorities in the near areas have been advantaged by 'endowment land' this is sought in this case".

This was construed as meaning that Busselton should be endowed with land, rather than Busselton purchasing at market value.

It was also considered that only by a gift of land would likely proceeds be sufficient for the purposes nominated.

- (2) The reply refused the proposed endowment.



## ABATTOIR

*Midland Junction: Superannuation Scheme Entitlements*

1550. Mr SKIDMORE, to the Minister for Agriculture:

What entitlements would accrue to workers covered by the superannuation scheme operated by the Midland abattoir if workers are—

- (a) dismissed; or
- (b) elect to leave?

Mr OLD replied:

The trust deed governing the scheme provides for entitlement relating to retrenchment, resignation, retirement, dismissal, and death—with the benefit varying according to salary and length of service.

1551. *This question was postponed.*

## NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

*Recycling*

1552. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister for Industrial Development:

- (1) Adverting to question 827 of 1978 dealing with recycling of newspaper, is it a fact that a charitable organisation was previously involved in the collection of used newsprint for ultimate sale to a pulping plant in Western Australia?
- (2) Is it a fact that this arrangement has ceased?
- (3) If so, why?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) Many such organisations have supplied waste paper to pulping plants in Western Australia.
- (2) Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd., Spearwood, is currently accepting waste paper of various kinds from a number of charitable and community organisations. The company recently extended invitations to about 400 such organisations to supply material, in an effort to increase its intake.

However, it is understood that an invitation to the Slow Learning Children's Group of WA to supply was not accepted. This group had previously been supplying the company, but deliveries were cut back last year when the company was obliged to reduce its intake of material.

- (3) It is understood that terms for supply could not be agreed between the parties.

## HOSPITALS

*Free Treatment for Disadvantaged Patients*

1553. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister for Health:

In view of his answer to question 1352 of 1978 that public hospitals in Western Australia are obliged to treat free of charge all uninsured persons whether socially disadvantaged or not, what effect will this have in terms of—

- (a) demand and supply of facilities;
- (b) personnel; and
- (c) extra cost?

Mr YOUNG replied:

As at present the agreement between the Commonwealth and State in relation to the provision of public hospital services provides that all persons other than those privately insured, are entitled to free public hospital treatment, and as the hospital arrangements for both public and private hospitals have not been changed, very little effect on public hospitals is expected in relation to demand and supply of facilities, personnel and gross costs.

A change in the number of patients who are covered by private insurance would affect revenue, but it is not possible to assess what individuals will decide to do with regard to private insurance.

## HEALTH

*Foodstuffs: Pesticide Residuals*

1554. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister for Health:

In respect of monitoring of foodstuffs, including vegetables, for pesticide residuals at retail outlets, will he indicate the arrangements for such testing, including whether testing is done—

- (a) daily;
- (b) weekly; or
- (c) monthly,

in the metropolitan area and major country centres?

Mr YOUNG replied:

Routine samples taken on behalf of the National Health and Medical Research Council at three-monthly intervals—approximately 1 000 samples taken per annum. Other samples taken as a result of complaints or routine inspection procedures as occasion demands. A total of 106 samples taken up to end of August.

**INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT***Sigma Chemicals Pty. Ltd.*

1555. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister for Industrial Development:

- (1) Has a firm, Sigma Chemicals Pty. Ltd., of Osborne Park, ceased to operate?
- (2) If so, what were the reasons?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) and (2) No. However, the firm's branch operation at Midland closed recently, due to uncertainty regarding future supplies of a key raw material obtained as a by-product of the Albany whaling industry.

**HOSPITALS***Pensioners*

1556. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Have there been negotiations between the Australian Government and the Western Australian Government concerning a change in policy in respect of classification of pensioners when admitted as long-stay patients to public hospitals?
- (2) If so, what decisions have been made?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) and (2) There have been some preliminary discussions between Commonwealth and officers of all States, but no firm proposals have been received from the Commonwealth.

**SEWERAGE***Rural Towns*

1557. Mr COWAN, to the Minister representing the Minister for Works:

- (1) What subsidy is available from all sources to local authorities for the financing of deep sewerage systems in rural towns when constructed privately?
- (2) In the Public Works Department implemented schemes in—
  - (a) Corrigin;
  - (b) Mukinbudin; and
  - (c) Narembreen—
    - (i) what was the total cost of each scheme;
    - (ii) in each town what amount was raised using local authority borrowing powers;
    - (iii) what is the estimated annual operating cost of each scheme;

(iv) what is the estimated revenue from sewerage rates in each town,

for the financial years 1977-78, 1978-79 and 1979-80?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) The approval of new schemes for local authorities in country areas is dependent both on the total funds which can be accommodated within the Government programme and on the viability of the proposals. Under the subsidy scheme the Government will assist a local authority by payment of a subsidy being the lesser of either:

- (a) 85 per cent of the annual charges for interest and capital repayments, or
- (b) the deficiency in the scheme which consists of total annual cost less the revenue derived from rating.

(2)	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80
(a) Corrigin			
(i) .....	\$16 050	Nil	Not applicable
(ii) .....	Nil	Nil	Not applicable
(iii) .....	\$16 535	\$18 575	Not available
(iv) .....	\$17 901	\$20 320	Not available
(b) Mukinbudin			
(i) .....	\$22 540	Nil	Not applicable
(ii) .....	Nil	Nil	Not applicable
(iii) .....	\$4 195	\$8 578	Not available
(iv) .....	\$6 084	\$7 250	Not available
(c) Narembreen			
(i) .....	\$272 711	\$370 000	Not applicable
(ii) .....	\$300 000	\$200 000	Not applicable
(iii) .....	\$7	\$6 365	Not available
(iv) .....	\$66	\$5 630	Not available

**COCKBURN SOUND***Heavy Metals Level*

1558. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Conservation and the Environment:

Further to his answers to question 1486 of 1978 concerning cadmium levels in Cockburn Sound, can he indicate when a positive result is likely to be achieved from the discussions between the company and Government advisers?

Mrs Craig (for Mr O'CONNOR) replied:

No.

## CONSUMER PROTECTION

*Glitter Lamps*

1559. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Further to question 1481 of 1978 concerning the glitter lamp on sale in Perth, and the answers given, has the investigation revealed that the lamps concerned contain—

- (a) perchlorethylene; or
- (b) a substance which is either equally or more injurious to human health?

- (2) If "Yes"—

- (a) will the lamps be withdrawn from public sale; and
- (b) if not, why not?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) (a) No;  
 (b) yes, the substance is trichlor ethylene.
- (2) (a) The lamps will be withdrawn from sale until the presentation conforms with appropriate poisons legislation;  
 (b) not applicable.

## HOSPITAL

*Busselton*

1560. Mr BLAIKIE, to the Minister representing the Minister for Works:

What was the amount of money recouped from the auction recently conducted at the old Busselton Hospital?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

The net proceeds totalled \$3 078.53.

1561. *This question was postponed.*

## QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

## WATER SUPPLIES

*Revenue*

Mr DAVIES, to the Minister representing the Minister for Water Supplies:

- (1) In 1977-78 what revenue was raised by the Metropolitan Water Board from water rates and charges on—

- (a) residential properties
- (b) non-residential properties
- (c) other?

- (2) In 1978-79 what revenue does the Metropolitan Water Board expect to raise from water rates and charges on—

- (a) residential properties
- (b) non-residential properties
- (c) other?

- (3) What amount would have been raised by the Metropolitan Water Board in 1978-79 from water rates and charges on residential properties if the old system of charging and the 1977-78 rates had been retained?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) Detailed accounts for 1977-78 operations have not yet been received.
- (2) In response to an earlier question it was indicated that the expected total of receipts with similar water consumption to last year were expected to be \$29.5 million. Of this approximately 50% is derived from "residential" and the remainder from "other than residential". Under the Act there are no separate categories within the "other than residential" group.
- (3) With similar consumption in both years approximately \$13 million. With consumption remaining at this low level the new charges for 1978-79 will yield about \$15 million.