

Legislative Council

Thursday, 21 March 1991

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon J.M. Brown) took the Chair at 2.30 pm, and read prayers.

PETITION - USED VEHICLE CONTRACTS

Cooling Off Period Opposition

Hon George Cash (Leader of the Opposition) presented a petition bearing the signatures of 1 008 citizens of Western Australia indicating total opposition to the cooling off period for used vehicle contracts.

[See paper No 227.]

PETITION - DUCK SHOOTING

Prohibition Legislation Support

Hon Fred McKenzie presented a petition bearing the signatures of 19 706 citizens of Western Australia urging Parliament not to declare duck shooting seasons and to legislate for the prohibition of any future duck shooting in this State.

[See paper No 228.]

URGENCY MOTION - RURAL DOWNTURN

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon J.M. Brown): I have received the following letter -

Dear Mr Deputy President

URGENCY MOTION - RURAL CRISIS

I give notice in terms of S.O. 63 that I intend to move at this day's sitting "that the House at its rising adjourn until Friday, April 26 at 10.00 am", for the purpose of discussing the rural downturn throughout Australia and call on the Federal Government to develop with the State Government a strategy to alleviate hardship and in particular address the problem arising out of:

- 1) the debts and the cost of funding the wool stockpile;
- 2) the absence of a Guaranteed Minimum Price for wheat from the 1991 harvest;
- 3) the need for sufficient flexibility in the RAFCOR guidelines to enable the release of Part A funds and to negotiate on activating Part B of the Rural Adjustment Scheme.

Yours sincerely

MARK NEVILL, MLC

Member for Mining and Pastoral Region

[At least four members rose in their places.]

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Honourable members, before we start proceedings I emphasise that I will not be placed in the same position as I was yesterday. It is very difficult to be fair to all members of the House, and to conduct Parliament under such trying conditions as those of yesterday with such an agenda. If members wish to have a say, the rules of debate allow that. I ask all members to extend me some courtesy and respect for the job I am trying to carry out in the absence of the President.

HON MARK NEVILL (Mining and Pastoral - Parliamentary Secretary) [2.37 pm]: I move -

That the House at its rising adjourn until Friday, 26 April, at 10.00 am.

Last Tuesday during debate on an urgency motion, I foreshadowed a more wide-ranging debate because that debate was confined to the pastoral industry. As all members in this Chamber are aware the current rural downturn is affecting all regions of this State. This is

not just another cyclical downturn. In my view, it is a major turning point for rural industry in Western Australia, and unless we vigorously support farmers and pastoralists many of them will go out of business, at great cost to themselves, the taxpayers, and the economy of this State. It is important, therefore, that we debate the wider issues. Farmers in this State need our support in order to survive the present serious situation with both wheat and wool prices being depressed to unprecedented levels.

The first item to be addressed in the motion relates to debt and the cost of funding the wool stockpile. It is stupid to ask the growers to pay the cost of funding the wool stockpile. To start with many of them do not have the capacity to do that; also, many of those who are expected to meet that cost have not incurred the debt. The debt has reached the level of 2.8 billion, and by June this will increase to \$3 billion. With the current interest rates, a cost of somewhere between 50¢ and 80¢ per kilogram per year is accrued – I have seen two sets of figures on this. Farmers and pastoralists cannot pay a wool levy of 25 per cent of their clip earnings and be expected to survive in the present climate.

The problem is how to manage the stockpile. As long as the stockpile hangs over the market it will create uncertainty for buyers throughout the world. Therefore, something must be done. The Federal Government must legislate to isolate the stockpile for at least a year, and the debts of the stockpile will cost the taxpayer somewhere in the order of \$400 million a year. Nevertheless, in the long term this will not cost the taxpayer as much as is assumed at this stage. The wool price is expected to reach 700¢ per clean kilogram next year. At the moment it is trading around 435¢, but when things return to an even keel, the price of 700¢ a kilogram will be realistic. If it does reach that level, we can look at releasing some of the stockpile to the market; however, the stockpile must be isolated now. When it is released in one or two years' time, it must be released in small amounts so that it does not have a major effect on wool prices. We must also encourage the Federal Government and the wool industry to increase wool promotion, especially of wool blends. We must use all means we can to reduce the stockpile. It is important that we encourage the sale of wool produced during the next year by generating an increased demand for wool.

The Federal Government has a responsibility to assist in the taking over of the debt involved with the stockpile. This Government received advice from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics that the 870¢ per kilometre floor price was not sustainable; the advice also came from other quarters. However, the Federal Minister did not want to upset the aggressive politicians and the people in the Australian Wool Commission, and he did not publicly state that such a floor price was silly. It is understandable that he should do that because of the commissioner's calls for autonomy and self-management. However, the Government has a responsibility to assist with the situation because it did not pass on that advice. I will refer later in my speech to the ways in which the Federal Government can assist the industry.

The wool industry is the biggest small business in Australia. Many farmers and pastoralists are competent, capable farmers and we must ensure that those people are kept in the industry. We must bring in the necessary reforms to ensure that the industry is restored to its former strength. We must allow the market forces to have a greater interplay so that wool production is tailored to demand. Producers and processors must be brought closer together than they are at present. A solution to the problem has been offered by Jonathon Toddhunter who released a paper called "Australian Wool into the 1990s: The New Realities". Jonathon Toddhunter is providing some thoughtful solutions for our problems, and he seems to have confidence in the industry's future provided we take the correct actions. He suggests that the industry and the Federal Government should establish an Australian wool bank. This will involve securing the wool stockpile. That would be no different from what happens in other industries such as the gold industry with gold loans, and the financing of the oil industry. The grower would go to the wool bank and say that he will produce 200 bales of wool next season. The wool bank would tell the farmer that it wants to sell 250 bales at a certain price. The farmer would receive the cash and when the wool was lodged with the bank he would pay an interest component of five per cent. Initially it would be necessary to have a wool stockpile in order to sell the wool immediately a producer put in a sale order. That stockpile could be funded by security on cash negotiable warranties which might carry an interest coupon, or something like that. Many ways exist in which that could be done.

That system would create a very close relationship between supply and demand and a big

benefit would be that of drawing much more capital into the wool industry. This would be the case particularly with the wool processing industry which has been starved of funds for many years since the pastoral finance houses faded away a couple of decades ago. As I said earlier the Australian Wool Corporation could help to commence the workings of the wool bank by supplying half a million bales of wool. However, the wool bank should be a completely private institution and would survive better that way than if it were run by the Government. The Toddhunter wool bank idea is in its infancy. It is parallel in some ways with gold loans and would bring some security to the wool industry. The Federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, John Kerin, is aware of that. I hope he studies that proposal thoroughly and considers it an alternative way of selling Australian wool. The wool bank would not be able to sell the entire stockpile. However, it would introduce some new mechanisms for the orderly sale of that stockpile and would not interfere with the prices that farmers and pastoralists received for their product.

Jonathon Toddhunter's paper also suggested that Australia should provide wool loans to Russia. Russia has a population of approximately 270 million people and has a pent up demand for wool. It has not been buying wool for the last year and Toddhunter fears that if we starve the Russians of wool now they will lose those manufacturing industries which rely on wool. If Russia loses its ability to process wool, other fibres will flood the market and Australia will have to convert the Russians all over again to the use of wool. That will cost huge amounts of money. It is in our interests for Russia to have access to our wool production. There is certainly the demand for it. Russia has a closed market and if wool were loaned to Russia it would be used internally and would not affect our customers who pay for our wool. If we do not loan wool to Russia it could be a long time before Russia came back into the market because at the moment it does not have the currency to pay for such things as wool and, in many areas of Russia, people are battling to be fed.

Political benefits would also flow from Australia's providing wool to Russia. The stockpile would be reduced, thus isolating it from free trading markets. Wool loans to Russia would also save huge amounts of money on interest payments and save on the cost of storing that stockpile. They are two ways in which we could reduce the wool stockpile and they should be explored in the short term. Some mechanisms must be developed so wool will not flood the market. That can only be done by introducing legislation to freeze the sale of the stockpile for at least a year. If that legislation is not introduced there will be no certainty among buyers. Wool buyers do not trust the Australian Wool Corporation because they have had their fingers burnt in the last year. Assurances made by the AWC will not solve that problem. At present, we do not know what will happen. Arrangements to market wool after July have not been announced. The Government has said that it is in the hands of the AWC. That will not provide a solution. There must be more direct Government intervention in the wool industry to ensure that it can survive to the next century.

The next point I refer to in the motion is the absence of the guaranteed minimum price for wheat for the 1991 harvest. I was amazed when the Federal Government did not announce a guaranteed minimum price for wheat. The Premier, Carmen Lawrence, and the Minister for Agriculture, Ernie Bridge, have both made personal representations to the Federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy and the Prime Minister to convince the Federal Government to reconsider its decision not to set a guaranteed minimum price for wheat this coming season. That will make good sense for the reasons I intend to outline in a moment. One of the most important reasons that a guaranteed minimum price should be put in place by the Federal Government is that it will encourage more wheat plantings and draw farmers away from wool production. That would be a positive move. The last thing we need now is increased wool production; however, I do not think that will happen. To depress wool production a guaranteed minimum price for this season's wheat crop should be introduced. Failing that, the Federal Government should guarantee the post harvest payment which is due to be paid in January 1992. That price should be about 85 per cent of what was the guaranteed minimum price last year. That would result in an amount of about \$127.50 – a record payment. It would certainly encourage growers to plant wheat. I am not suggesting that the Federal Government pay anything after that. It should be the first post harvest payment in January 1992. If that does not happen Australia runs the risk of not being able to service its existing export markets. If we do not service those traditional markets we will lose them to the United States or the European Economic Community.

The line put forward by the United States that it is venturing into our markets due to an unintended consequence of the trade war of the EEC is utter rubbish. I am convinced that it has been deliberately targeting our markets with its export enhancement program. If we do not service those markets next financial year the United States and the EEC will move in and we will find it very difficult to get them back. The farmers, if guaranteed a post harvest payment, will give consideration to planting a crop this year. At the moment they do not know what price they will receive for their crop. If I were a wheat farmer I would be quite worried about making a decision to plant wheat this financial year. By guaranteeing a minimum price for wheat the Federal Government will give farmers the opportunity to plan ahead with certainty. The farmers will have some confidence and that confidence will flow through to small businesses in the rural communities. At the moment those people are in a real state and they do not know what to do. We should bear in mind that a guaranteed post harvest payment or a guaranteed minimum price for wheat may cost the Federal Government very little, if anything at all. I am sure that the prospect of a low cost scheme is acceptable to the taxpayers. They would be willing to support any Government that was willing to support the wheat industry. Should the price of wheat increase – we do not know what sort of season the farmers will have – a guaranteed minimum price would cost the Government very little. If the wheat plantings are not substantial there may also be little cost to the Government. We do not know what rains the farming communities will have in April or May and that will be crucial to the amount of wheat that will be produced. It is within the Commonwealth Government's resources to provide a GMP and I certainly hope that it will reconsider its decision in that respect.

The Federal member for Kalgoorlie, Mr Graeme Campbell, has a great interest in agricultural matters and he has been heavily lobbying the Federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy and many of his colleagues over recent weeks on a GMP for wheat and the stockpile issue. Graeme Campbell, as many members of the Federal Caucus now realise, is more often right than he is wrong. I am convinced he is right in this case and I have great faith in his ability to turn around the Federal Government's decision on a GMP for wheat. If the Federal Government does change its mind I do not think anyone will complain about its decision. It will certainly be welcomed by everyone in the bush.

The rural crisis is causing financial distress to families in the bush. There is a real cost in terms of marriage breakdown and there is the potential for other problems, including a massive cost in unemployment benefits. A simple decision to bring in a GMP or to guarantee the first post harvest payment will in one fell swoop reduce the pressure on people living in the country. As I said earlier, if the Federal Government reverses its decision it will help the rural community to fight against those corrupted overseas markets which have been targeted by the European Economic Community and the United States. The scheme is fairly easy to administer because the systems are in place.

The Federal member for Kalgoorlie recently put together an industry policy paper in which he outlined what he thinks should occur in the wool and wheat industries. He also outlined in that paper his disappointment that those two great industries were not addressed in the Federal Government's industry policy paper. It is a disappointment, but I certainly do not consider that to be a reflection on the excellent job John Kerin is doing in that area. Obviously he cannot win every battle for which he goes in to bat. I am sure he has been battling for the industry, but the economic rationalists have won the day.

Hon E.J. Charlton: You mean the economic irrationalists!

Hon MARK NEVILL: Hon Eric Charlton knows what I mean.

I congratulate the Prime Minister and John Dawkins for the work they have done at the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade negotiations. They have done some very good work, but at the end of the day Australia does not have very much leverage when it comes to negotiations in international trade. One of the suggestions my colleague Graeme Campbell made is that we should target the EEC to change its policies on agricultural subsidies. He pointed out to me that from the discussion he had with a Labour member of Parliament in Britain it is estimated that agricultural subsidies in the EEC cost the average family £30 per week, and that is a lot of money. The Tories in Britain are generally not in favour of the EEC. He believes that the NFF fighting fund could be well used to point out to the British workers in the cities what is the cost of the EEC policies to their budgets. The United

Kingdom is certainly a weak link in the EEC. It is paying unnecessarily high prices for its agricultural products. If this were pointed out in an advertising campaign perhaps the Labour Party in Britain would take up the issue.

Another country in Europe worth targeting with an advertising campaign is Germany. In East Germany before the collapse of the Honecker regime the people enjoyed low food prices, but they received low wages. Today they have ridiculously high food prices and virtually no wages. This is a prime area we could target to illustrate the costs imposed on them by the EEC policies. It would be a positive step, and it is another suggestion put forward by the Federal member for Kalgoorlie.

The last item in the motion relates to the need for sufficient flexibility in the RAFCOR guidelines to ensure the release of part A funds and to negotiate on activating part B of the Rural Adjustment Scheme. Since I drafted the motion I have spoken to John Groves, the director of RAFCOR, someone I believe is capable and competent and doing a good job. He pointed out a few things to me and perhaps dispelled a few incorrect views I held about RAFCOR.

Hon E.J. Charlton: He is very good at that.

Hon MARK NEVILL: That may be so, but I will point out a few things. Under the rural adjustment scheme, part A debt reconstruction, he pointed out that RAFCOR is cashed up at the moment and has approximately \$9.5 million for the next year. That will support about \$150 million of rural debt, according to him. At the moment RAFCOR is carrying about 200 applications and has made a request to the Government for extra resources to help process those applications while the present situation prevails. I expect that request to be considered sympathetically and I will be taking up that matter personally with the Minister for Agriculture and the Premier in case they are not aware of it, although I would be surprised if they were not.

Mr Groves pointed out that the guidelines were relaxed in 1989. Members would know that I have been representing a pastoral area for the past two years and have lost touch with some of the changes in the RAFCOR scheme, which I followed closely when living in Esperance, which is now a part of the Agricultural Region. In 1989, I think January, the guidelines were widened so that people who were previously assessed as not in need of help could be assessed. The requirement that RAFCOR was a lender of last resort was also abolished; in other words, a person does not now have to be knocked back by a bank before RAFCOR will examine his problem. That does not necessarily mean that the person will gain greater access to funds but that many people do not now have to go through the trauma of putting a case to a bank, getting knocked back and then doing the same thing with RAFCOR. Mr Groves pointed out to me that this year RAFCOR has released \$12 million under part A debt reconstruction. Last year \$8.9 million was released across all schemes, A, B, C and the water scheme, the name of which I cannot recall. That is a big increase. The last board meeting approved \$3 million in assistance. He pointed out that the pressure is on this year. Last year 38.5 per cent of all applications were received between July and February and 61.5 per cent between March and June. This year 402 applications were received up until the end of February. One can see from the expenditure there was nowhere near as much last year. Using the projection of 61 per cent of the applications being between March and June, normally over 1 000 applications would be received, but it is believed that with the extra pressure at present applications will total about 1 400. Members would therefore see the need for extra assessors to be employed is critical. If that is done the adjustment scheme will be doing what it can to assist people who can no longer get help from the private sector.

Hon W.N. Stretch: Did Mr Groves indicate how many more FTEs are needed?

Hon MARK NEVILL: No, I did not ask him that.

Hon W.N. Stretch: It is a considerable number.

Hon MARK NEVILL: I suppose that can be ascertained. There are sources of staff around the place; it is merely a question of getting the funding for them. As I said when I commenced my speech, the rural sector is in real trouble. The actions of farmers in recent weeks have been condemned by some and praised by others. Whatever view one takes, their action does reflect the fact that much distress is being felt out there. I believe we can help to alleviate that distress by dealing with the wool stockpile and getting on with putting the wool

industry back on its feet. I believe that the Toddhunter Wool Bank is something we need to look at closely, and particularly at wool loans to Russia where we can help quarantine that stockpile so that textiles will not come on to the open market but will be consumed internally.

The guaranteed minimum price for wheat, or guaranteed first post harvest payment, is absolutely essential for the security of our rural areas; without it we will have a massive exodus of people from the country to the metropolitan area, creating more unemployment. We know what the results of that would be in urban areas in particular. I believe RAFCOR is doing a reasonable job. It has come under harsh criticism from members in this House but I would urge them to discuss their grievance with RAFCOR before they air those criticisms to ensure that they are not unfounded. If RAFCOR is to address this flood of applications that will occur it certainly needs extra resources to process them. In this the Federal Government in particular, and the State Government to a lesser degree, can relieve some of the rural hardship.

HON E.J. CHARLTON (Agricultural) [3.19 pm]: I point out while supporting this motion that I would have been happier supporting it had it been introduced during the last session of Parliament in about November, or in amending it, because although I agree in principle with what Hon Mark Nevill has put forward the problem is summed up in the introductory passage, which states –

... call on the Federal Government to develop with the State Government a strategy to alleviate hardship ...

The whole problem about that is that no time is left to develop a strategy because we have passed the eleventh hour. All this is very good except no time is left to develop strategies. Decisions have to be made. Australians have simply witnessed a talkfest. I have had an absolute gut full, and so has everyone else. No decisions are being made. Everyone knows the problems; the situation is as clear and precise as can be. The problem is that no-one in authority will make a decision. The problem has degenerated and ground slowly and uncomfortably to a destructive halt.

I want to go back a couple of years to help members get things in context. This is not some agri-socialist philosophy which I am sometimes accused of peddling. I spoke at a wool industry meeting in Calingiri last year about what should happen. Mr George Shenton, a well known man in the wool industry, accused me of saying what he would expect from an agri-socialist. I would like to take him around Australia now to see what has happened as a result of the sort of action promoted by him and others like him. The result is chaos, not only for the wool producer but for Australia.

China, Eastern Europe and Russia have stopped buying wool, not because they do not want the commodity but because they do not have any money. Those nations have had revolutions and they are as broke as they can be. Australia is running down the same path because many similar thinking people are running our show, both in Government and in other places. They seem to think that the way out of this problem is to make microeconomic changes. While they are arguing about that, the fire is burning. The nation is burning to a halt.

Australia has lost half of its buying potential. I do not know who is to blame: The Wool Corporation, the Wool Council or the Federal Government – probably all three. They did nothing, hoping the difficulties would go away. Wool was continually placed on the market and nothing happened except that the stockpile has grown to five million bales. A decision must be made by the Federal Government to isolate that stockpile and finance it. There is no alternative; that is as clear as day. I cannot believe how these people who are supposed to know what is good for the nation can go on without making a decision. It is like watching one's house burning with a fire fighter standing alongside and the tap turned off. These people are allowing this industry to burn to a halt. What are the alternatives? There are none. For the same reason, there are no alternatives in the wheat industry because Australia does not have anything to take its place. If we had a motor industry we could get that up and running to bring in some export dollars. What else do we have to export to make up for the loss of the wool industry? We have been going for 40 years.

Hon Mark Nevill: We have the mining industry.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Hang on, I shall come to that. For 40 years we have propped up and

hand fed the motor vehicle industry and a whole range of others. There have been tariffs and incentives – a whole host of protections. I am not critical of that, provided we look after those industries which keep the nation going, or develop something else. We have not done that. This is why the people of Western Australia must be told the hard, basic facts. All we are told is that must prop up the wool industry. Some people seem to think we have a bunch of hayseeds running around the paddocks and grazing properties with a few sheep and that we must keep them on their properties. Forget about those people. Forget about them as human beings with kids whom they are trying to educate. Look at it from an Australian point of view. Do we want Australia to be a viable business, or do we want it to go bankrupt? One does not need a degree in economics to understand that; even a mug like me can work it out. We can go to any pub or picnic and speak to 50 or 100 people and they will tell us what is wrong with Australia. Ninety per cent of the people know what is wrong with the nation, yet those who have the responsibility for making decisions cannot make them. That is an indictment on this Government.

Whatever our thoughts are, that is the position. The stockpile has five million bales. What are we to do with it? We cannot say to the wool industry, as I heard John Hewson say this morning, "It is an industry problem." Not only do we have an inept Government but we also have a Federal Opposition which believes the same thing – that we cannot do anything about it. Today, five million bales of wool are in the stockpile, and whether people in authority like it or not, they must make a decision. If not, that segment of Australia's economy will be bankrupted for a long time to come. There will be an upheaval, and the price of wool will be kept down indefinitely. If the stockpile is not isolated, it will guarantee the amount of income coming to Australia will be significantly reduced. We must ensure that the buyers of the world know that they cannot get their hands on that stockpile. If we had a commodity, say half a dozen cars, which we knew we could not put on the market, we would leave them. It is no good giving them away. We would say, "Let's put aside what we can't sell at a profit and make sure that what does go on the market goes on at a profit." It is as simple as ABC. Whatever the cost is – and it probably will be something like \$500 million to finance the stockpile – we must do it.

Look at the amount of money which has gone into so many other sectors of the Australian economy. In Western Australia \$5 billion has gone into our economy. While that is very significant, what is the amount for the whole of Australia? We put \$1 billion every year into Aboriginal funding. We put \$1 billion into a whole host of things. I am not saying the Aborigines should not have that money; the amount of money which goes into all these things every year with no return other than the social return is very important. I am not decrying the allocation of that money. We make these decisions year after year. But Governments say they do not know what to do with Australia's biggest export earner. The Federal Government said recently, "We will go on in limbo until 30 June and make a decision then in the hope that something happens in the meantime." This is what the Government did about the stockpile.

Only one decision can be made for the wool industry. The world must see that the stockpile is not available. When the time comes we can make a decision to put it on the market. The State Government must encourage the Federal Government to do that, and I do not fancy its chances because it will have pressure put on it by its Federal counterpart.

The second point about the wool industry is that until we isolate that stockpile Australia will continue to be degraded. Members talk about what has happened in the last 100 years and how people have allowed mismanagement to occur. Whether that is right or wrong, it happened and because of simple economics it will become more serious. That is another good reason that the Government can talk about what it is doing for the environment and how, at the moment, it is offside with the environmentalists because it made an economic decision concerning the forest industry. Before the Government made a decision to allow the loggers into the National Estate, it should have made a decision about the wool industry. I hope the environmentalists will turn their attention to having the Federal Government make a decision about the wool industry because of that industry's bearing on the wellbeing of Australia.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I refer now to the wheat industry. Hon Mark Nevill spoke about the

absence of a guaranteed minimum price from the 1991 harvest. Members who did not participate on our trip through the wheatbelt should take note that the wheat industry in Australia is in trouble because the Federal Government, with the support of the Federal Opposition, destroyed the minimum price scheme, which was based on a formula covering the previous three years and the current year. The so-called free enterprise people said that the growers should reflect the current world situation and that the prices in Australia for the current season's wheat should be an accurate reflection of prices around the world. When times are difficult general wage and salary earners are not told to halve their salaries for one year on the basis that next year when the nation might be prospering they would be doubled. That would cause a revolution.

The wheat industry is an export industry which is subject to great price variations throughout the world. Nonetheless it can live with a minimum price scheme, and Australia can afford it. The decision to eliminate the guaranteed minimum price scheme was the dociest and most irrational decision that could have been made. A number of members of Parliament travelled across Western Australia advising people that was the case and they had the support of the wheat industry, which had also told the Federal Government and the Federal Opposition. However, the Federal Government took no notice and implemented a new free enterprise system without regulations and without a formula because it wanted to show the world how to operate. We were dills. Other nations protect their wheat industries. Not one other country in the Western world does not subsidise its farmers. Members may not like that, but those are the facts. We Australians think we are bright and can run our operation oblivious of the rest of the world. When we are able to do that the world will be a different place. Had the price scheme remained, about \$23.50 a tonne would be in every wheat grower's pocket this month for last year's crop because the guaranteed minimum price would have been based on that price. It would have come from the taxpayers of Australia, but it would have been money from grain exported and that money would be being distributed throughout the economy. That \$25 a tonne would have been spent on fertilisers, chemicals, fuels for trucks and trains; and small business people throughout the country and metropolitan areas could have taken advantage of \$15 million. However, the current situation has arisen because this dopey Federal Government made a decision against the advice of the people who know, except a few gung ho people in the Australian Wheat Board.

I spoke to a Mr Jack Lewis yesterday - he is a little older than me - who said that he is old enough to remember when stabilisation, as it was commonly termed, was introduced to the wheat industry from when it fluctuated after the war. Since then, the wheat industry, except for one year, has not had to rely on the taxpayer to top it up. In that one year the supplementary payment provided continuity without dramas or crises. The industry produced 15 million tonnes of wheat of which 14 million were exported, earning new dollars to be shared by Australians. However, with one stupid decision we messed up the system and the money is not there. How could anyone in his right mind say the economy has changed so that we do not need that stability? That is what we should be asking the Federal Government. The WA National Party members have been talking to their Federal counterparts. Hendy Cowan, the leader of our party, has been to Canberra once to try to talk some sense into them and he is going there again tonight to try to convince them to amend the Wheat Act and revert to the previous formula. It is not a question of going cap in hand to the Australian taxpayers and asking them to provide the wheat industry with a \$500 million guarantee this year. If the guarantee is written into a formula it will be returned to the taxpayers.

Hon Tom Helm: Can we give as much as the American Government gives its farmers?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: That is a very interesting question. Hardly anyone in this nation would say that we can do that. Most people would say we cannot do it because the population is only 17 million and should therefore not subsidise wheat growers.

Hon Tom Helm: Can we do it to the same extent?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: We do not need to. We are only talking about \$25 a tonne. We cannot afford not to implement a guaranteed price because we have nothing else. We should stop asking whether we can afford to do it when the country is broke, because we cannot afford not to.

Hon Tom Helm: Can we not stop the Americans?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Not unless we take a coalition force there to fight them. I would guarantee that the European Economic Community will not stop subsidising farmers in the medium term because those of us who went on a trip to the United States a few years ago saw that their policies were a different ball game. They look at the industry from a different perspective. We take a business view of whether we should subsidise, although not a national business view. The difference overseas is that farmers in West Germany and France own four or five acres each and produce 40 or 50 bags to the acre. The Governments there would rather that than having the farmers' remaining in the city on unemployment benefits and contributing to the environmental problems. They are producing exports which are readily available across the world.

Hon Tom Helm: And subsidised.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Subsidised, but saleable; and it is in their interests to do that. Hon Tom Helm must come to terms with that. It does not matter whether he is right or whether I agree with him. We can argue until the sun goes down, but the EEC and the United States will continue with their subsidies. It is like someone saying we do not need a Police Force because everyone should obey the law; the fact is that not everyone will do that.

Hon Tom Helm: They will beat us at that kind of game. Why should we join in if we are going to get beaten?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Hon Tom Helm did not listen, or he does not agree with what I said. Can he tell me what Australia can manufacture or sell to replace the wheat industry?

Hon Tom Helm: I am trying to understand the logic of the argument of joining a game that we cannot win.

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Even with the farming subsidies that have existed around the world, Australia has not been beaten. Australia has been producing 15 million tonnes of wheat, and selling it all, since Adam was in short pants.

Hon Tom Helm: Why can't we do it now?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: Because the cost of production in Australia has gone above what the world is prepared to pay for wheat. Is the member saying that the industry should close down simply because for one year since the 1850s it has not been able to make a go of it?

Hon Tom Helm: If it is only for one year, why must it cost the taxpayers?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I will not go on with this. I will have to take Hon Tom Helm aside with some pictures to try to explain it to him. The United States' customer enhancement program has enabled its grain to be moved through that nation. The significant difference between today's situation and that of a few years ago is that there is no surplus of grain. Today the world has a 45 day surplus and 35 days is considered to be a crisis. There is not an over supply of grain. More than half the world is starving. The problem is that most of those people do not have any money. We should be addressing ourselves to that problem and not stopping Australian farmers from growing grain. The answer is that until Australia has something else to take the place of the wheat industry it has no option but to keep this industry going for this one year. It just so happens that wool and wheat have run into crises at the same time, but 90 per cent of the problem has been caused because the Australian Government changed the rules.

Hon Mark Nevill mentioned the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation in his motion. Some members in this place have worn a track to the door of RAFCOR in the past few years, and on each occasion were told the sorts of things that Hon Mark Nevill was told by Mr John Groves. He is a nice man, a good public relations officer for his organisation. But can Hon Mark Nevill tell members why Mr Groves did not know there would be a staff crisis in his organisation before the end of March? Anyone with half a brain would have known last year. As a matter of fact we told him that if he thought things were crook he had not seen anything yet, and that he should be ready for the large number of people who would be coming through his doors with applications. Yet today Hon Mark Nevill has told this House that Mr Groves has applied to the Government for more staff to handle the numbers. If Mr Groves was a farmer he would be one of those people receiving part seed from RAFCOR. That typifies RAFCOR's total inefficiency. Hon Mark Nevill did not tell members that RAFCOR is holding millions of dollars in its coffers.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.00 pm

[Questions without notice taken.]

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: In summary, if the RAFCOR administration did not know long before now about the consequences of the crisis besetting rural Western Australia, that demonstrates its inefficiency. As we approach the end of March RAFCOR is still holding a large amount of finance which is derived from crop liens that it receives as a result of securities for advances made by it to the rural industry. It is one thing for RAFCOR to use that mechanism of security – obviously it has no other – but it is another when it has not processed the reviews at the end of March so that the money can be returned. This may be for a number of reasons, such as a lack of staff, but it is not good enough.

So that members understand the significance of this, a crop lien is taken against the whole crop, and the return from that year's crop – in this instance the 1991 crop – is lodged with RAFCOR. Therefore, the farming operation borrows money from a trading bank at penalty interest rates far above what RAFCOR is paying for its holdings. RAFCOR is paying 17 per cent and a bank is charging 22 per cent; therefore, the farmer's operation is losing five per cent on its money. If that is economic brains, I do not want to hear about it. In those circumstances RAFCOR is penalising the very people who the Government has provided assistance to RAFCOR to help. RAFCOR should sharpen up its act in this area.

I made inquiries of the Victorian operation and I discovered that it turns around its applications in less than three weeks, and the representatives of country areas indicate that they do not receive any complaints from the farming community regarding the obligations and responsibilities of RAFCOR. Also, the Victorian RAFCOR makes assistance available to small business in the manner that we have requested in this State. Although I do not like using clichés in these situations, the motion moved by Hon Mark Nevill is too little too late.

The members who took part in the recent tour of the wheatbelt met this morning with Mr Ernie Bridge, the Minister for Agriculture, and discussed the points contained in Hon Mark Nevill's motion. The Minister for Agriculture agreed with them all. That was particularly so with the \$150 guaranteed minimum price for this year's wheat harvest. We will be watching the situation with interest. I suspect that Hon Mark Nevill and his colleagues, along with members on this side of the House, will encourage the State Government to pursue these matters. Hon Mark Nevill said that it was within the bounds of the Federal Government's responsibility to underwrite Australia's wheat crop. It is certainly within the bounds of the State Government's responsibility to underwrite the Western Australian wheat crop. If that is not to be done, compounding consequences will stay with the industry for many years into the future.

HON W.N. STRETCH (South West) [4.36 pm]: I am very interested that this motion should have been moved today by the Labor Party. Everyone has been aware of the rural crisis for a long time, and the urgency of the situation has been recognised by members of this House, particularly by members of the Liberal and National Parties. This is a time for constructive criticisms and suggestions rather than, as Hon Eric Charlton said, mouthing more and more words about this serious issue.

The rural community is in a state of crisis and emergency. The Government must move and, as was discussed yesterday regarding the pastoralists, it must move quickly to literally put bread on certain people's tables. These people do not have the finances to carry on their businesses or to feed and clothe their families. We went into these issues fairly thoroughly yesterday, and today's debate has dropped the geographic centre down a few hundred kilometres into the wheat and wool area. The terms of this motion are a little narrow, as it is restricted to the costs of funding the wool stockpile.

Although the stockpile is a very significant concern to the industry, the motion tends to gloss over the real cause and effect of the current situation. During the debate on the pastoral industry yesterday the Minister for Police interjected during my speech and said I was unaware of the impact of international markets on rural matters. That was an absurd comment, and I said this to the Minister and also that he was out of order. I recognise as well as anyone the importance of marketing strategies and the effect they have had on the rural crisis. When we consider the real root causes of the crisis it behoves us to look at the history of interference in rural production and its consequences in the international markets.

The name George Shenton came up earlier in the debate and was spoken about in a

somewhat derogatory manner. That was a little unfair because 12 to 15 years ago the same gentleman, who has a long association with the wool industry, warned what would happen if Australia became over zealous about its support system and turned it into a market demand scheme. He told us then that no country, no matter how much wool it produced, could dictate the international wool price. That may have been the case until the second World War, but since then we have had a rapid increase in textile technologies. We have seen the emergence of new fibres which could directly compete with wool and give millers an alternative feedstock to which mills could change at very short notice. Those members who are old enough to remember the second World War will recall the scorn with which the nylons were held; they ran up one's legs, moved up one's arms, irritated one's skin – God knows what they did not do to one. Nylon was not a totally satisfactory alternative fibre to wool and never presented a real challenge. However, after the second World War Dupont and other large American and European companies realised that the textile field was wide open to an innovative product that would give somewhat the same qualities as wool at a fixed and predictable price and quality. Wool no longer held its virtually monopolistic place in the textile market. There was cotton, rayon and silk, but they had fairly well controlled markets in the way of production figures, and they posed no particular threat. Australia had then, and still has, a superb climate in which to grow a superb product.

The wool debate has a few anomalies that need clearing up. The Australian Wool Corporation sold more wool last year than it did in the previous years. There has been a slight increase in sales, but overall the textile market has increased at a greater rate than the wool market. We have increased production and selling, but two things have gone out of kilter. Firstly, we have lost our penetration; in other words, we have produced more wool but we are selling a lesser percentage in the overall picture. Secondly, because of a guaranteed price for wool in the Australian market, we have had a burgeoning of production of approximately 30 per cent in the last three years and that has put us above the tonnage of wool that the world market can absorb. There is a strict correlation between those two figures. As a consequence wool has found its way on to a stockpile.

Hon Sam Piantadosi: Do you think that the establishment of the wool corporation has taken incentives away from the growers to chase new markets?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: It did chase new markets, and sell a little more wool, but it was nothing compared with the 30 per cent production increase in Australia in past years. It is easy to be wise in hindsight and it is clear now to most thinking wool growers that we made a big mistake pressing for the price to be raised to 870¢ per kilo. When wool was at its highest there was a strong move by some growers to move toward the 1 000¢ mark. There was a strong feeling that the market would stand that. Fortunately wiser counsel prevailed and we stuck with 870¢. In retrospect we should never have moved above 700¢, or even 500¢. That is now water under the bridge, and we are faced with this large stockpile which is sitting there as a threat to the entire industry.

The difficulty now is offshore. We have exported our problem in that the international mills look at the Australian market with the knowledge that we have five million bales of wool and they know we cannot sit on them forever. That is a danger to the Australian market. It has even been suggested that we burn the stuff. The European Economic Community pulled the plug on the wine lake in Europe, and got rid of the butter surplus through several drastic steps. That may be one way out of the problem, but that is getting back to Hon Eric Charlton's criticism that we are talking about the problem rather than doing something about it. I do not think it falls within our ambit to discuss this today, but certainly the debts and the cost of funding the wool are a major problem for the industry. I am not sure that the Government can totally absorb the cost; I think the growers have a responsibility to shoulder some of that cost. The figures I looked at in February indicated that it would cost growers 50¢ for every kilogram of wool grown to pay the holding costs of that stockpile. That is a fairly arbitrary figure because it depends on the amount of wool that is grown in the future. It gives us a ballpark figure of what the industry is up for.

I have to declare a vested interest in this. My family has been growing wool since settlement and it is our intention to continue doing so long into the future. We have had a lot of experience in handling this product. The mistakes that we as growers have made have been in letting our industry get out of our control and turning too much to Government for support. We must face the fact that the real political clout of this group of export earners is

now so small that Governments of all colours tend to override their interests very easily. I do not believe that the Liberal Party has sold out the wool growers in any shape or form. We have always had a strong lobby, but when one looks at the general distribution of the voting population of Australia it reflects that decisions in Federal elections are made within an 80 kilometre radius of the centres of Sydney and Melbourne. The political impact of wool, grain and beef producers is minimal. A Government could lose every rural seat, and provided it got its message through in the capital cities, would not suffer any effects from that. If we follow down that path it means that the rural sector must rely on sound economic advice to Government, because its voting strength cannot carry the force of its arguments. In the future this will pose a problem to Governments in Australia when considering our electoral systems. How do areas of primary industry, which include mining, fishing, agricultural and horticultural products, receive representation that corresponds to their importance to Australia's economy? I know that has political implications for all political parties, but if we are to survive as an economic force in the world, we must address this problem clearly, firmly, and soon.

The wheat growers have had a particularly disastrous season in the way of prices, and we in the Liberal Party have supported the call for a guaranteed minimum price. It is not an arbitrary figure, but one set on a three year average. That would give the industry some chance of responding to current market trends. In other words, if there were a general downturn we would follow the average down; not in one year, but a three year averaging benchmark. That gives growers that little bit of time, which is essential if they are to adjust their operations. I was interested in Hon Mark Nevill's comments on the post harvest payment because it is very important to realise, as most members will appreciate, that cereal growers have very high input costs. They incur a lot of costs to grow a good crop and the worst part is that those costs must be paid up front. One does not wait until harvest time to pay bills; not unless one wants to pay a big interest bill. It is essential when talking about post harvest payments to explain how "post" one means. I ask Hon Mark Nevill, in his summing up, to explain the time period. Members must appreciate that it is the first payment on the delivery of a harvest which really decides whether one will survive. The second and third payments do not really count when one is paying one's bills which have accrued through the sowing of the crop. Again I emphasise that it is the first payment which is significant.

I am glad that Hon Mark Nevill updated the House on the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation's fees because some confusion was caused by his remarks yesterday when we discussed the pastoral industry. RAFCOR has recently come in for a fair bit of stick. From personal experience, RAFCOR is like any bank; it is a quasi bank and the main criteria in dealing with any bank is communication. I was shadow Minister for Agriculture in the last downturn in 1986. I found that the people who spoke to their financial institutions planned their way through that major crisis in their farming careers. I cannot stress too strongly that the development of and continuation of a business depends on communication with one's staff and with one's financier. When a principal in any business loses contact with his financier, either by design or accident, there is a breakdown in the trust and mutual understanding on where the operation is heading. That is when the seeds of disaster are sown and they can germinate quickly. The harder the times the more quickly they germinate. Banks are only shops selling money. Unless one talks to his shopkeeper one will not get the service one pays for. There is nothing magic about them and nothing about which one should be frightened.

I was disturbed in 1986 by the number of people who said that they would not talk to their banks because they did not want to hear what they had to say and the banks certainly did not want to hear what these people wanted to tell them. The same attitudes seem to apply to RAFCOR. It is important and urgent that RAFCOR receives an urgent increase in staffing. That goes against my grain because I am very much in favour of smaller departments and fewer of them; I have generally found that more people tend to complicate issues rather than clarify them. However, in this instance RAFCOR is faced with having to process 1 000 or 1 500 very complex operations that are in financial trouble and that cannot be done overnight. It has to be done on a one-to-one basis of going through the client's needs, assessing his prospects and making the dreadful decision on whether he has a future on the land. That decision cannot be hurried and it cannot be made without sensible, experienced

staff to assess the information because, in many cases, farmers have a tremendous emotional attachment to their land and it becomes a matter of life and death for them to have it taken from them or having to walk off it. Mr Deputy President (Hon J.M. Brown), you are aware of the tragedies which have occurred across Australia and which are beginning to occur in Western Australia. It is therefore incumbent on us to make sure that RAFCOR receives an immediate injection of more staff. From what I was told earlier today by Hon Joe Berinson, the Government is considering allocating more staff to RAFCOR. John Groves and his staff at RAFCOR are extremely stressed. They have increased their output of decisions twofold in the last few months and they cannot go on doing that. They work many more hours than the normal working hours to get the work done. However, they have to be able to assess each case as it comes to them.

Hon Phil Lockyer outlined clearly the tragedy of what is happening in pastoral areas. Some people do not have enough money to put food on their tables or fuel in their tanks, but have just enough to shear their sheep and to keep the windmills pumping water. They are in a desperate situation. I believe up to 70 stations will approach RAFCOR in the next few weeks for emergency household relief. Each of them will have to fill in the first three or four pages of the application form. That will not take too long. That is then assessed by a person either on the ground or in Perth. Later, that person will have to go through the application with the property owner and work out what are his needs, what are his prospects and whether he will survive in the pastoral industry. If that person is going to survive and needs more help, he then has to go through the next 23 pages of detailed analysis of the farm or pastoral operation. That has to be assessed by RAFCOR staff and that can take two or three weeks' work.

RAFCOR will receive hundreds of those applications which cannot be assessed without personal attention by a reasonably experienced and competent operator because, as I said earlier, at the end of the day that is decision time. The pastoralist or the farmer either stays or walks off and that decision cannot be taken lightly or rushed. It is not fair to put the officers under pressure when they are in an overworked and stressed state. It is bad enough for the business owner to be stressed without the officer being stressed also. That could lead to an incorrect decision being made. I implore the Government to appoint more staff. In previous years, applications have begun to flood in from this time on and by June the staff of RAFCOR are throwing up their hands and saying that they cannot cope. Emergency staff have then been supplied by Drake Personnel Ltd or others to carry over the backlog, but it is usually too late. Decisions by people planting crops have to be finalised within the next three or four weeks at the outside. Planning has to be started in two weeks. As Hon Phil Lockyer said yesterday, many pastoralists need a decision in 10 days. RAFCOR has said that it can handle an application in eight working days if it is given a well prepared form. Even a well prepared form often requires the person filling it out to seek assistance. The only solution at this stage is for the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation to have staff in the field assisting farmers and pastoralists to fill out the application forms and to have sufficient staff in the office to assess them as quickly as possible. I am sorry to say that the situation will get worse, and if there is no increase in RAFCOR's staff by June the industry will be in absolute turmoil. That situation can be avoided if the staff is increased now and the workload is spread evenly. A considerable number of application forms have been submitted by farmers in the heavy rainfall areas of the south west of this State. Most of them could wait to have their forms processed because cropping can often be financed out of their stock proceeds. The people in the wheatbelt and pastoral areas have little time left and decisions about their future have to be made now. The applications have to be well researched and the decisions have to be properly made. The situation must be taken in hand now, but we have to look further and paragraph (2) of this urgency motion addresses the issue of the absence of a guaranteed minimum price for wheat.

Earlier I said we should press the Federal Government to reinstate the three year floating average. It is more realistic, but it cannot be done by members sitting in this House bleating about it. The Liberal Party has taken a slightly different view from the other political parties to the suggestion put forward in the other House that the State Government should guarantee the price of wheat for this year's crop. If all else fails that is something we should address but there are inherent dangers in doing that. In the past the Federal Government has been happy to neglect people on this side of the Nullarbor Plain and if it is aware that the Western

Australian Government will pick up the tab for this year's crop it will say, as the Leader of the House is aware, "You are all right. We have problems in New South Wales and will allocate funds in that direction." It is the Federal Government's responsibility to adopt a national guaranteed minimum price because it will be an investment in the cereal growing industry of this country.

At this stage wheat farmers are going through the usual transition that is required when there is a downturn in the economy. The older members in this House will recognise that that is what has happened previously. The export industries are the first to feel the pain, although at the end of a boom, having benefited from the good years, they receive a good cheque one year later. However, when there is a downturn in the economy the building industry feels it first and very close behind it is the farming industry and that is what is happening now.

The National Party has sensibly called for an underwriting of this year's crop. As I said, the Liberal Party believes it is a Federal responsibility, but if it will not meet its responsibility, the State Government may have to look at picking up the tab. That is of concern, especially when we cannot estimate what will be the size of the cheque. It is a gamble all Treasurers have to take and they have taken that gamble on behalf of several industries previously. They will now have to make a decision about the farming industry. Do they want people walking off their farms and adding to the welfare community, or do they want them to continue producing an export commodity at whatever price? Even if the price of wheat drops to \$80 per tonne it is still a significant export earner. It is essential that the farmers continue to do what they do best. Historically, the pendulum has always swung and any assistance to the industry will be a long term investment. The Liberal Party urges the Premier to call a special Premiers' Conference to debate this issue. It is a state of emergency and it comes down to the issue of the survival of a very important export earner.

Some very important long term decisions must be made for the wool industry. The wool industry will have in place a support scheme until 30 June. It is not a guaranteed price, but a top-up price which will compensate woolgrowers who sold their wool later in the season and suffered losses. The farmers who sold their wool early in the season were protected by the guaranteed price of 700¢. The question that arises is what decision Mr Kerin will make after 30 June. I have been involved in woolgrowing for a long time and I believe the market is beginning to edge its way back to being competitive. Certainly, for the finer quality wools there is a future, but for anything over 22.5 or 23 micra the situation is bleak because the growers are receiving well under the cost of production for their wool and that is a road to nowhere. Only yesterday some of my colleagues and I were talking to representatives from one of the major pastoral firms and they indicated that most pastoralists would be producing wool and receiving a return for it of between 180 and 220¢ per kilogram, but their production costs would be between 300 and 350¢. Therefore, they will lose approximately \$1 for every kilogram of wool they grow. A large amount of the pastoral shearing will not be completed before 30 June so we will be faced with another urgent situation which will be as bad as that precipitated by the collapse of the wheat market. Hon Max Evans reminds me that the Government had no hesitation in finding \$150 million for Rothwells.

Hon Max Evans: And \$180 million for Teachers Credit Society and \$6 million for the Swan Building Society – all guaranteed by the Government.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: It is a comparison which concerns me and it is not a path down which I would be happy to go again; but the point is well taken that money is always there if it is prioritised in that manner. It is worth making the point that because of \$304 million –

Hon Garry Kelly: Could we put it on the record that there is no such word as "prioritised"? Let us make it "priority order".

Hon W.N. STRETCH: I would be happy to go along with the member. I am glad that we still have a scholar in this House; sometimes we miss Hon Bob Hetherington but I am pleased that Hon Garry Kelly is trying to pay some heed to the English language. I apologise for using that term.

Hon Garry Kelly: Your apology is accepted.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: It indicates how easily one can drop into bad habits.

Hon Reg Davies: It is a living language so it can change fairly rapidly.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: We should not go down that path. The question of allocating priorities is up to the Government and, as Hon Max Evans said, it had no hesitation finding that rescue money. Therefore, we must look at the contribution of the rural industries over the years and compare it to the benefits gained from the Bond empire, the petrochemical project and the several other calamitous deals into which this Government entered so rapidly. I am confident that my community and other farming communities will be a better investment than those made by the Government in recent years. I am not aiming to be political in this speech, but it is important to raise that aspect. I urge Government members to persuade Premier Lawrence to take this deputation to Canberra, to get other State Premiers onside, and to take steps to relieve the situation.

With regard to the future of the stockpile, we must consider two aspects; firstly, obviously it is a debt but due to the long term keeping qualities of wool it will in time become an asset. Secondly, the interest that accrues on holding the stockpile is a serious matter, and we must carefully consider the interest and isolation costs. It is similar to the accrued sinking fund debts on railways. How much interest should we pay for a long term asset? Should there be an interest bill at all? Should it be set aside and, after allowing for depreciation on the buildings and restoration to their former condition, be written off? It has been done in other industries, such as the railways, in this State. We must take a broader view of the stockpile – what it is and how it came about. The growers have paid in a considerable amount of money and the Government has guaranteed a considerable amount of money. Some lateral thinking is necessary with regard to setting it aside and forgetting about it until the market recovers when we shall be able to realise on some of the money. We should also consider the root cause of this problem which arises from the woeful performance in the support industries and the wage structure of the exporting industries in this country.

Remarks were made earlier about the dreadful conditions of workers of Mt Newman Mining Co Pty Ltd and Robe River Iron Associates and how the enslaved population of Robe River was trodden upon. I am not sure whether they were chained up at night or allowed to go back to their quarters! Despite that, I am reliably informed that Robe River has a waiting list of people seeking employment with the company because of the high salaries they can earn.

Hon Max Evans: Could you get Tom Helm a job there?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon J.M. Brown): Order!

Hon W.N. STRETCH: The costs added on to our industries, particularly the exporting industries, have made them non-competitive in the marketplace. For example, we could ship our wool to Indonesia and India and have it processed very ably by skilled people simply because the cost structure in this country is unrealistic. I do not believe the average working person has any objection to being part of a sensible restructuring of the work force and a more realistic wage structure linked to the productivity of the country and international markets. We seem to run into trouble with the elected spokesmen of the minority who throw spanners into the works when we approach genuine restructuring and realistic aligning of work inputs to productivity.

Hon Tom Helm: They are reducing their standard of living, not keeping up with it.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Life and business are cyclical; there are good times and bad times. Every other sector of the economy is accustomed to taking the bad times with the good times. However, one sector of the community – I believe it is the leaders of that sector of the community – believes it is not necessary to have any correlation between the inputs of labour and the outputs of productivity. Until the middle part of this century there was a correlation whereby the work force would align with productivity.

Hon T.G. Butler: Going back to the days of the 1890s.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: The member is miles out of date. My family have been involved in woolgrowing and has been through times when it was necessary to boil down the sheep. There is even a station in Queensland called Boiling Downs.

Hon Tom Helm: And probably blackbirding as well!

Hon W.N. STRETCH: In the last Depression five generations of one family had worked on a station and as the economy took a downturn those people worked without pay. They had been through the good times with the station owner and decided they would stick with them

during the bad times. That spirit of cooperation in industry has been lost and this nation will be in trouble until it can be revived.

Hon Tom Helm: The companies are making a profit and the workers are taking a reduction in their standard of living.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: The standard of living of the people Hon Tom Helm represents is nothing compared to the farmer Hon Phil Lockyer referred to who had to borrow \$20 to get back to his station because his line of credit had been stopped. I have never argued with the principle of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, but I believe the pendulum has swung too far in the opposite direction. If Australia is to work its way out of its present difficulties and its industries are to become more competitive it must be acknowledged that everyone will take a drop in their standard of living. We have already taken it. We took it a few years ago, and the people Hon Tom Helm talks about must accept that drop too.

Hon Tom Helm: Every worker in Australia but not necessarily the shareholders, lawyers, doctors and solicitors.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: At this stage of this sitting we should not get into debate about capital input into jobs. Suffice to say that to talk about profits without relating them to investment capital is pointless and will get us nowhere. If we want to go back to a workers' Utopia we will continue to wallow around as one of the most unproductive countries in the world, lose our competitive edge and go further and further backwards. I know Hon Tom Helm does not agree with me and we must agree to disagree. I have been in this country long enough to know that we shall not have a social welfare led economic recovery. The system does not work that way. Nor will a worker led Utopia take us out of the wilderness. The only recovery possible is through improving our export industries.

Hon Tom Helm: Should we go back to the 1890s or 1930s?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: It may be necessary to go back to those conditions, but I do not think we will ever return to the situation where people walk barefoot from Sydney to Melbourne because they hear of a job vacancy.

Hon Tom Helm: What about troops on the docks?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: That would not hurt at times. If we are to make any economic recovery in this country and any inroads into our national indebtedness it is essential that we give protection to capital intensive industries that provide jobs and exports and are the only avenue by which we can claw our way back to world competitiveness. We may then not have to export a commodity from Australia if we want to have it competitively manufactured. I welcome this opportunity Hon Mark Nevill has provided to debate this issue. The positives that come out of it must be the special Premiers' Conference and the acceptance of this emergency. I can assure the Premier she has the goodwill of all rural members of the Liberal Party who strongly support anything that can be done to underwrite the wheat crop in the coming year to ensure the survival of that industry.

The same applies to the wool industry to ensure that it can become competitive again. We would appreciate the addressing of work practices that affect all export industries and some of the internal costs in the agricultural industry and the hard consideration of State taxes and charges applying to agricultural industries to enable the Government to do what it can to alleviate or defer those charges. We appreciate the fact that all local government people are making an effort in that regard. It is incumbent on the State Government to do what it can to get us through what I am confident will be a temporary setback. No-one can judge how temporary that setback will be at this stage, but I have confidence in our primary industries; they will kick back and it is a matter of husbanding the resources to see them through.

HON T.G. BUTLER (East Metropolitan) [5.22 pm]: I congratulate Hon Mark Nevill on his motion which I have much pleasure in supporting. I do not profess by any stretch of the imagination to have great technical knowledge of the farming industry. I was fortunate on one occasion to be part of a salinity Select Committee that took me close to the problems of rural industry at a time when circumstances were different from now. Hon Eric Charlton should be congratulated on the recent country visit he initiated and for the way he got a group of people to go into the farming community and look at the problems facing rural people as a result of the rural downturn. Until I took part in that visit I had not read the Special Rural Task Force's executive summary and recommendations. Since returning I

have had a close look at them. They helped me to understand what I saw on my visit. I understand the need for many of these recommendations to be adopted and acted upon urgently.

Clearly the rural sector requires urgent, short term measures to assist it through a serious situation. As a city based member of Parliament I realised that there was a serious rural problem but certainly had no concept of how deep that problem was prior to my visit to the country. After listening to Hon Phil Lockyer yesterday speak on his motion about the pastoral industry my memory was revived of the problems explained to me in the rural towns we visited. I was disappointed when I returned to find that the Federal Government had rejected a call for a guaranteed minimum price for wheat because clearly that is what is needed at present as a short term measure to get people over this hump. It is all right for Hon John Caldwell who can fall back on the gold mine on his property.

Hon J.N. Caldwell: It has dead sheep in it now.

Hon T.G. BUTLER: That is a new way of salting a gold mine, is it not? If the present attitude of the Federal Government is maintained it will have serious and devastating effects, not only on farmers but also on the small business sector in country towns. I heard Hon George Cash refer to Dowerin yesterday in his Address-in-Reply speech. In that town the drop in employment in the business sector, the actual wage earners, was in the vicinity, as a rough rule of thumb assessment, of 50 per cent. Is that correct, Mr Cash?

Hon George Cash: I believe so.

Hon T.G. BUTLER: That is a serious matter. I guess we are not talking about many people in the overall scheme of things but we are talking about many people in Dowerin and the effect this will have on the community there. One of the problems explained to me was that because most of the people who worked in the shops were aged between 16 and 25 years they tended to leave the district when they lost their jobs and not return. That causes a further problem for the community and has a destabilising effect on local families. I was pleased also at the support given for the guaranteed minimum price scheme by the State Government and am proud of the attitude and attention given to this matter by Hon Ernie Bridge, Minister for Agriculture. He certainly has been pressing this matter hard for quite a while with his counterpart in the Federal Government. I think it is incumbent upon all of us to get behind that push to ascertain whether we can change the prevailing attitude. We can certainly bring some well required assistance to that sector.

The report of the Special Rural Task Force clearly identified the problems, and section 4, headed "The Rural Downturn and its Implications", spelt out for me the severity of those problems at present. It compared today's prices with the prices in 1988 and 1989. There is a significant difference, which requires a great deal of attention. I was going to quote some of that material but given the time I will leave it to my Address-in-Reply speech. That section of the report sets out clearly the position of agriculture and indicates that it is imperative that we find quickly at least some short-term solutions.

It is easy for a lot of city people to criticise the rural community and say that in good times they want to capitalise their profits and in bad times they want to socialise their losses. That argument has been around for a long time and it is one which some people believe. However, it cannot be denied that primary produce is a major part of our economy and a valuable part of our export markets so it is vital that we listen to people in the farming sector and not underrate their problems. I listened to the rural community, although when I was in Beacon I was criticised for not listening, and all of a sudden I thought everyone had caught up with me and that Hon John Caldwell and Hon Eric Charlton had turned loose a lynch mob on me.

Hon Murray Montgomery: Couldn't they catch you?

Hon T.G. BUTLER: No. I was the target of many mass meetings during my period as a trade union official, and I have never run away from that sort of confrontation, but things did not look good for a few minutes. I listened carefully to what they had to say. I did not necessarily agree with all that was said because they talked about other sectors of the work force inflicting some sort of problem on the rural sector. I do not agree with the type of solution put forward by Hon Bill Stretch, Hon Norman Moore and Dr Hewson in their package of industrial reforms because there is nothing in those reforms for working class people. I do not believe for one minute that we should impose upon some people rules which

will decrease their standard of living in order to improve the standard of living of others. Dr Hewson made the outrageous statement that if we do not achieve waterfront productivity improvements he will put the Army on the wharves. Were he to do that he would set off a situation which would thrust this country into turmoil. That sort of situation is foreign to Australia. It does not form part of normal Government practice. He should be very careful about advocating such an approach.

Hon W.N. Stretch: In Singapore a ship can turn around in one day but it takes 14 days to turn around in Australia. Is there not some way in which we should look at that?

Hon T.G. BUTLER: Of course, and we are looking at that. There have been some major reforms in the seamen's area. Recently there was a substantial reform on the waterfront. We have been going through that exercise for the last two to three years and substantial gains have been made, basically by consultation, communication and discussion, not by putting troops on the wharf and starting off a new era of conflict.

Hon W.N. Stretch: It takes 100 pieces of paper to get a container through the Port of Melbourne.

Hon T.G. BUTLER: If the member wants to go ahead and advocate that, please be my guest, because I know what will happen in the long run. He will frighten away more people than he will please.

Hon W.N. Stretch: I am just asking you to get on with the reforms.

Hon Tom Helm: Go to Singapore and see what they have there compared with what they have in Sydney, Melbourne or Fremantle.

Hon Reg Davies: What do they have – efficiency?

Hon Tom Helm: No; they have big cranes – capital investment.

Hon T.G. BUTLER: The sort of approach advocated by Dr Hewson will lead to major disruption not only on the waterfront but also throughout industry as a whole, and it will have a devastating effect on the economy; and the rural community will be the first to suffer. Hon Bill Stretch should think these things through before he advocates them or makes himself a captive of the H.R. Nicholls Society, which is completely in the grip of the New Right, as is the Federal Liberal Party at present.

Hon Fred McKenzie: There are now 360 wharflies. There were 1 300 in 1970. If that is not reform, what is it?

Hon Peter Foss interjected.

Hon T.G. BUTLER: In terms of the amount of work they do, they probably earn their money. I doubt if any of the wharflies at Fremantle could afford the services of Mr Foss as a lawyer. They certainly would not want his services as a member of Parliament!

Hon W.N. Stretch: Why are 100 pieces of paper necessary to get one container through the docks?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon J.M. Brown): Order! I suggest that members give Hon Tom Butler the opportunity to direct his remarks to the motion.

Hon T.G. BUTLER: Thank you, Mr Deputy President; I agree that they are a bit unruly.

Our visit to the wheatbelt would have been no more than just a visit had we not as a group decided to meet together on our return, in a bipartisan fashion, to consider what we had seen and to see what we could recommend to the Government by way of short-term measures that could be of assistance to farmers and small businesses, and to the provision of education and health in those towns. The suggestion was to put these things with the priority listed recommendations. We came to see some proposals which can be strenuously advocated as a short term measure. The long term future of the farming industry is dealt with at page 12 of the report of the task force, and a very optimistic picture is painted. To understand all the planning required to secure the long term future of the industry would require a lot more than an overnight trip.

Several members interjected.

Hon T.G. BUTLER: It was not discussed much. I think some sort of reference was made, and I hope it was distributed throughout the town.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon J.M. Brown): Might I suggest to Mr Butler that the Hansard reporter is having a little difficulty hearing him.

Hon T.G. BUTLER: I am sorry. The question of education is also dealt with in the report. Its short term and long term futures are both discussed. This is a big country; we need all our industries to perform well in order to provide a good lifestyle for us all. We cannot expect to live harmoniously if the standards of some fall in order to benefit other sectors of the State. Many problems need urgent attention.

I support the proposals put forward by the bipartisan group which visited the wheatbelt area. I offer my congratulations to Hon Mark Nevill on his motion, and to Hon Eric Charlton for initiating the visit to those towns. I support the motion.

HON MARGARET McALEER (Agricultural) [5.42 pm]: The time for the debate has practically elapsed, but I have a few words to say and I welcome the opportunity to do so. When I returned from the second meeting I have attended in Morawa in 10 days, I was a little late because the House was already sitting. However, it seemed to me appropriate that we should be debating as an urgency motion the rural downturn.

I had no sooner arrived back in the House than I received an urgent message from an anxious farmer in the Northam district who hoped that I might have brought back some encouraging news from the Morawa meeting. I had to explain to him that although the meeting with the United States Consul General, Mr James McGlinchey, was a very good meeting, with fair and frank discussion of the problems, it produced no truly encouraging news about the American export enhancement program. In fact I thought that the news was discouraging, because this morning on my way to the airport several news programs began with the announcement that there was light at the end of the tunnel for farmers because a farm Bill shortly to go before the United States Congress would have an amendment to the effect that it was not the purpose of the export enhancement program to target Australian farmers, that consultation processes would be set up, and that somehow Australia could be protected from the effects of American policy in its struggle with the European Common Market and its subsidised selling in the wheat markets.

It was made clear during discussion at Morawa today that, while there may be long term benefits, as a result of America's struggle to achieve a subsidy-free wheat marketing environment there was no hope for benefits in the short term; Australians stood to be hurt because, although one might say other markets were being targeted, it was not possible to limit the effect of subsidies to any one market in a world market situation. Subsidised selling and subsidised production lead to increased production. When prices are lowered in one area, as sure as night follows day that lowering of the market will spill over into other markets, although they may not be directly targeted.

The acting United States Consul General undertook to bring back to Western Australian farmers urgent and quick answers about the way in which the United States would view a guaranteed minimum price for wheat; whether it would regard that as a subsidy and therefore bring Australia within the target area. His personal feeling was that it would not, but he felt the legal situation was complicated so he undertook to get a proper answer for farmers so that in pressing the Federal Australian Government for a guaranteed minimum price it would be quite clear that it would not reflect on our position in the general agreement on tariffs and trade (GATT) talks. That is one reason the Federal Government has given for not being able to give a guaranteed minimum price for wheat.

Another matter on which the acting US Consul General undertook to get a quick reply was when the Iraqi wheat money to be paid to Australia from Iraqi funds would be released from American banks. As members know, those funds have been frozen as part of the sanctions applied to Iraq since August. While he gave every assurance that the money would be released and would in time flow to Australian farmers, he was not yesterday able to give any idea of how long that might take. As he pointed out, this was only one amount of money from the millions of dollars frozen, not only withheld from Australian and American farming interests, but also from a whole range of financial bodies. The matter was complicated and would probably be a slower process than one would wish. However, he gave a guarantee that the money would come. It seemed to give point to the fact that the Federal Government should make arrangements to compensate farmers for the loss of that money which we have suffered up to this time. I find it incomprehensible that the Prime Minister should have said

so early in the Gulf troubles that the farming sector should not be expected to bear the whole burden of sanctions, yet there is this reluctance to honour his word almost to the point of repudiating his promise.

I attended a second meeting at Morawa. Ten days ago a meeting was held regarding the close down of the township. People wished to show their solidarity with the farmers and to underline to the people of the State that the fortunes of townspeople, business people, and all workers in rural areas is intimately bound with the fortunes of farmers. One could say that they are entirely dependent on the fortunes of farmers. While this is well known and understood in small country towns, the losses of people experienced weekly – almost daily – from the districts, are not always apparent in larger cities, certainly not in the metropolitan area, although people who have been in business for many years know very well that when a rural downturn occurs the metropolitan area suffers as well. Hon Bill Stretch said that farmers have very little voting power and the problem of representation is, therefore, difficult as it relates to the importance of the economy. But, in such a serious situation as this, the voting power of rural areas is greatly enhanced by the effects felt in the metropolitan and urban areas. It is not simply a question of looking after rural people; it is a question of looking after the State and the nation because we are all affected by the situation faced in country areas.

I emphasise that an urgent need exists for leadership and action by the Government. Farmers are making budget decisions about whether they should plant crops and risk a loss. They need to submit their budgets to banks which in turn – perhaps more importantly – make decisions about planting crops and risk a loss. Farmers need guidance. Banks also, as much as farmers, are in need of guidance to set suitable policies.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon J.M. Brown): I should advise Hon Margaret McAleer that if she wishes to speak until six o'clock, the House will adjourn in accordance with our Standing Orders; then the motion will be listed again for Tuesday. Alternatively, if Hon Margaret McAleer concludes her comments, and no other member wishes to speak, the House has the right for the Attorney General to terminate debate on this matter.

Hon MARGARET McALEER: I do not wish to delay the House. I simply emphasise that we need to take urgent action, especially at the Federal level. I hope that the State Government will do everything in its power to ameliorate the situation.

MOTION – ORDERS OF THE DAY

HON J.M. BERINSON (North Metropolitan – Leader of the House) [5.53 pm]: I move –

That Orders of the Day be now read.

I move this motion in the unavoidable absence of the member who moved the urgency motion. Agreement to it has the same effect as withdrawal by the mover, which is the normal course adopted for urgency motions.

Question put and passed.

SELECT COMMITTEES – JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION

Assembly's Message

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that the Assembly had agreed to the following resolution –

That Mr Cowan, Mr Kobelke and Mr Mensaros be appointed to the Joint Select Committee on the Constitution.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON PAROLE

Assembly's Message

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that the Assembly had agreed to the following resolution –

That the Select Committee on Parole originally appointed during the second session of the thirty-third Parliament be reappointed.

That the members of the Committee shall be –

the member for Marangaroo – Mr Cunningham
the member for Kingsley – Mrs Edwardes
the member for Avon – Mr Trenorden

That the date for the presentation of the report of the Select Committee be extended to 4 June 1990 and otherwise the terms of the committee's appointment remain the same.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE – ORDINARY

HON J.M. BERINSON (North Metropolitan – Leader of the House) [5.56 pm]: I move –

That the House do now adjourn.

Adjournment Debate – Foss Select Committee Re-establishment Decision – Lack of Media Coverage

Hon J.M. BERINSON: I take the opportunity, firstly, to indicate to all members that by agreement between the parties the House will adjourn at 4.30 pm next Thursday.

The second matter to which I refer is rather more substantial. I regret that little media attention has been given to the decision of the House yesterday in relation to the re-establishment of the Foss Select Committee. An issue raised by that decision goes well beyond the particular case because it again highlights the general approach by the Opposition to the place of parliamentary committees in this House. I must say again that while it may satisfy very narrow and immediate aims, in the long run this approach will inevitably deprive the committee system in this House of any prospect of public respect. As members will be aware, my basic position is that there should be equal Government and Opposition numbers on our Select Committees; that is the only fair and balanced approach to the system. In fact it did normally apply; certainly it applied in the majority of cases until the Opposition changed that approach two years ago.

Point of Order

Hon PETER FOSS: I believe that the Leader of the House is reflecting on a decision made by the House yesterday.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: That is not a point of order. In my view, the Leader of the House is explaining about the lack of media coverage of debate that took place yesterday.

Debate Resumed

Hon J.M. BERINSON: Despite that basic position, we on the Government side, under protest, which has proved to be well justified by practical experience, accepted committees with an Opposition majority. For the Opposition to have now insisted on the total exclusion of Government members from a committee is, however, taking the undesirability of its approach to the ultimate.

Hon P.G. Pendal: You decided that in December, and you know it!

Hon J.M. BERINSON: No. The member's party decided it yesterday!

Several members interjected.

Hon P.G. Pendal: You have put your foot in it, and now you are paying for it.

Hon J.M. BERINSON: I can understand Hon P.G. Pendal's embarrassment about the decision yesterday. It is a decision about which he should be not only embarrassed but also ashamed.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! In the first instance, I allowed debate on the lack of coverage by the media of this matter. We are now entering an area of debate which reflects on a decision of the House. That is rather dangerous ground at this stage of the sitting.

Hon J.M. BERINSON: I take my comments no further.

Adjournment Debate – Pike Select Committee Re-establishment – Procedures of the House, Compliance Need

HON GEORGE CASH (North Metropolitan – Leader of the Opposition) [6.01 pm]: The House should not adjourn until it recognises that although it is quite proper for Hon Mark

Nevill to move his urgency motion regarding the rural crisis, and although it is very proper for members to contribute to that debate, I had behind the Chair discussions with the Leader of the House regarding the handling of business today. We discussed the possibility of the debate extending past one hour, and the fact that we would not have an opportunity to debate motion No 1 on the Notice Paper, which, as members would be aware, involves the re-establishment of what is termed the Pike committee. I said informally to the Leader of the House that if the debate on the motion ended at a reasonable hour, I would move for a suspension of Standing Orders to allow motion No 1 to be brought on. However, the Leader of the House said that he was not prepared to support that. It is fair enough for the Leader of the House to stand in this House tonight and complain that the Press have not given him the reporting he desired regarding the re-establishment of the Foss committee; however, the fact that the urgency motion on the rural crisis extended to the time it did has precluded the opportunity for the House to deal with the re-establishment of the Pike committee. I hope that on Tuesday the House will have more of an opportunity to debate that subject. Also, I hope the Leader of the House will read the words he has uttered in the House this week. The business of the House should proceed in an orderly manner, and the motion should be brought on so it can reach an urgent conclusion.

HON J.M. BERINSON (North Metropolitan – Leader of the House) [6.04 pm]: How often have we heard the Opposition give a lecture on the need to observe the ordinary procedures of the House? How often has it resisted attempts by the Government to modify the procedures in the slightest way? The occasions are innumerable. Now we have received a lecture from the Leader of the Opposition saying that having followed the absolutely universal procedures of this House today, we have done something wrong.

Hon P.G. Pendl: You have lost your touch.

Hon J.M. BERINSON: I am very happy to come to some arrangement with the Leader of the Opposition whereby –

Point of Order

Hon MARGARET McALEER: Our Standing Orders state that we rise at 6.00 pm.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon J.M. Brown): The Standing Orders also say that we have the right for debate on the adjournment. That is exactly what we are doing.

Debate Resumed

Hon J.M. BERINSON: I will be very happy if the Leader of the Opposition wishes to enter into discussions to consider the possibility of agreements to suspend Standing Orders both for his purposes and for Government purposes.

Hon George Cash: Hear, hear!

Hon J.M. BERINSON: However, we have not reached that stage. Every time a modest proposal of that kind is moved by the Government, we have been given a lecture on the ordinary procedures of the House.

Hon George Cash: In your view.

Hon J.M. BERINSON: Nothing I have said regarding the introduction of this motion has not been consistent with the management of the House at any time in the past or will be shown to be inconsistent at any time in the future.

Hon George Cash: We will test you on Tuesday.

Hon J.M. BERINSON: The Leader of the Opposition is welcome to test me on Tuesday.

Hon P.G. Pendl: You have lost your touch.

Hon J.M. BERINSON: We will have further discussions – provided, of course, that the formal procedures of the House will accommodate them – on the place of parliamentary committees in this House, the respect which is due to them, and the respect they will never have –

Hon P.G. Pendl: You closed them down.

Hon J.M. BERINSON: – while the Opposition continues with its present attitude towards them. Members opposite should not be afraid. The Leader of the Opposition seems to have

some fear that somehow or other Hon Bob Pike's committee will be derailed through discussions of urgency motions or by other means.

Hon George Cash: Not at all.

Hon P.G. Pandal: You are the blokes who need to have fear.

Hon J.M. BERINSON: I must have touched on a nerve.

Hon B.L. Jones: He seems a little touchy.

Hon J.M. BERINSON: I said no more than that the decision of the House last night was disgraceful. The Leader of the Opposition came back with a sensitive response which appeared to indicate there could be some kind of conspiracy.

Hon P.G. Pandal: This is not one of your best Actors' Equity performances.

Hon R.G. Pike interjected.

Several members interjected.

Hon J.M. BERINSON: Hon Bob Pike has dealt with conspiracies before. He will have his day. Time will tell whether that day is Tuesday, Wednesday or another day, but nobody needs to hold his breath on it. Hon Bob Pike's motion is No 1 on the Notice Paper and that will be attended to in due course through the accepted procedures of this House.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.06 pm

5. How many applications have been processed and decided upon in each of the previous 24 months?

Answer:

During the last 24 months 661 applications have been processed and decided upon.

These figures are spread over each month as follows:

<u>1989/1990</u>		<u>1990/1991</u>	
JULY	33	JULY	28
AUGUST	28	AUGUST	38
SEPTEMBER	37	SEPTEMBER	27
OCTOBER	28	OCTOBER	24
NOVEMBER	24	NOVEMBER	33
DECEMBER	19	DECEMBER	23
JANUARY	9	JANUARY	32
FEBRUARY	16	FEBRUARY	62
MARCH	21	MARCH	63*
APRIL	34		
MAY	42		
JUNE	40		
		TOTAL	330+
TOTAL	331		

+ TOTAL 1990/1991 refers to
Year to Date as at mid-March

* MARCH 1990/1991 refers to
1-20 March, 1991

APPENDIX B

6. How many applications have been
 (a) approved
 (b) declined
 in each of the previous months since 30 June 1990?

Answer:

The numbers of applications which have been dealt with, and the decisions thus made are as below –

RAFCOR DECISIONS 1990-91 AND 1989-90

	1990-91			1989-90		
	Approved	Declined	Total Decisions	Approved	Declined	Total Decisions
July	17	11	28	24	9	33
August	21	17	38	21	7	28
September	19	8	27	23	14	37
October	15	9	24	20	8	28
November	21	12	33	11	13	24
December	15	8	23	9	10	19
January	15	17	32	4	5	9
February	34	28	62	7	9	16
March*	29	34	63	13	8	21
April				23	11	34
May				30	12	42
June				31	9	40
TOTAL+	186	144	330	216	115	331

+Total 1990-91 refers to year to date as at mid-March.

*March 1990-91 refers to 1-20 March.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

ROYAL COMMISSION – HEENAN LEGAL TEAM
Government Contractual Arrangements – Non-appearance Costs

4. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Attorney General:

- (1) What contractual arrangements were entered into by the State Government with the legal team headed by Mr Eric Heenan QC to appear on behalf of the State of Western Australia for the duration of the Royal Commission?
- (2) What were the anticipated costs the State would incur as a result of the above arrangement?
- (3) In view of the decision of the Royal Commissioners to not permit the legal team to appear at the hearing, what are the anticipated costs to the State?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

- (1) I am informed by the Crown Solicitor who has had the carriage of those matters that a legal team comprising practitioners in the Crown Solicitor's office and in private practice was set up to handle the major Bond, Rothwells and related civil litigation in which the State of Western Australia was involved. Mr Heenan, QC, was briefed as the senior counsel of this team. When the Royal Commission was announced the subject matter of a number of the terms of reference made it logical that most of the team would be involved in an extended brief to include appearance before the Royal Commission. One additional counsel from private practice was retained to supplement the existing team.

(2)–(3)

The State has not been refused permission to appear before the Royal Commission. A general right of audience has been refused as has a right of audience in respect of one term of reference. The Royal Commission has indicated it will receive submissions from the State in respect of all the terms of reference. It is anticipated that the State will also be given a right of audience when certain other terms of reference are dealt with.

The retainers of those from private practice involve payment for work undertaken so that the effect of the reduced involvement with the Royal Commission will be to lessen the State's expenditure. However, no separate costing has been carried out.

LANDS DEPARTMENT – LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Records of Correspondence 1977–78

9. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for Lands:

- (1) Have the records of correspondence between the Lands Department and Local Government authorities been kept for the years 1977–78?
- (2) If so, where are they located?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for Lands has provided the following reply –

(1)–(2)

All correspondence is filed by subject matter on relevant departmental files which may either be located within the Department of Land Administration or at State Archives. Where no requirement exists to keep records for historical or other purposes, files are destroyed under an approved records retention and disposal schedule.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ACT 1950 – ENDANGERED FLORA AND FAUNA
Binding of Crown

10. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for the Environment:

Why does the Wildlife Conservation Act of 1950 bind the crown in matters of endangered flora but not in matters of endangered fauna?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply –

The Native Flora Protection Act 1935–1938 was repealed by Act No 86 of 1976 and the protection of the State's flora was transferred to the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950. It is intended that the provisions of the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950 will be amended so that binding of the Crown with respect to flora will be extended to fauna.

CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT –
CONTROLLED BURNINGS
Radio 6WN Announcements

11. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Is it customary for the Minister's department to alert people to controlled burnings by making an announcement on radio 6WN?
- (2) If so, why have these not taken place in recent times?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply –

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The last notification was made on 13 March 1991.

BURNING OF LAND – CONTROLLED BURNINGS
Autumn Restrictions – Mid-summer Burns

12. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Why are controlled burnings not taking place in autumn?
- (2) Why are they taking place at the height of summer when the dangers of the fires getting out of control are clearly higher?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply –

- (1) The restrictions imposed by prohibited burning time have just been lifted in some areas, mainly in the south. No burning will take place until some rain has fallen, for example in Walpole.
- (2) Only special burns take place in mid-summer. Examples of special burns include completion of karri burning already alight, karri regeneration burns, research burns and bauxite pit debris burns. In each case approval to burn is obtained from the Bush Fires Board and local authorities.

BURNING OF LAND – CONTROLLED BURNING
Margaret River Caves Vicinity, Mid-summer

15. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Why was a controlled burn conducted by the Minister's department in the area adjacent to the Margaret River caves at the height of summer and while tourists were visiting the caves?

(2) Is it intended to repeat this practice

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply –

- (1) The burn around the Lake and Mammoth Caves took place in spring, November 1990, and was a low intensity prescribed burn. The section of the doline where tourists emerge was not burned and neither tourists nor facilities were placed at risk.
- (2) Hazard reduction burns will continue in the Boranup area.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT – WORK CONTRACTS

Awarding Procedures

16. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) Is it correct that local government authorities are allowed to award work contracts to any company/individual they select, without calling publicly for tenders?
- (2) If the answer to (1) is no, what procedures should be followed by local government authorities when awarding work contracts?
- (3) Are local government authorities required to publicise successful tenders for their work contracts?
- (4) If so, in what publication do these appear?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for Local Government has provided the following reply –

- (1) No.
- (2) The Local Government (Tenders for Contracts) Regulations 1983, require tenders to be invited for most work contracts which equal or exceed \$20 000.
- (3) Local governments are not required to publicise successful tenders but the details are recorded in the council minute book which is a public document.
- (4) Answered by (3) above.

PETITION – WASTE DISPOSAL OPERATION, BEACONSFIELD

Moltoni Corporation Proposal – CROSS Opposition

17. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Has the Minister received a petition from "The Concerned Residents of Southern Suburbs of Fremantle" (CROSS) objecting to the Moltoni Corporation's proposed waste disposal and treatment operation in the Old Lefroy Road quarry at Beaconsfield?
- (2) If so, has this petition been examined?
- (3) Does the Minister proposed to take any action regarding the planned waste disposal operation in light of this petition?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply –

(1)-(2)

Yes.

- (3) Yes. The Environmental Protection Authority is preparing a report to me on this matter and I have forwarded a copy of the petition to it.

EDUCATION – PRIVATE PRESCHOOL CENTRES
Financial Assistance

19. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is there any likelihood of any financial assistance, at all, being made available to a privately run preschool centre where parents currently pay the teacher and all other expenses?
- (2) If so, to what authority/agency should such a preschool centre apply?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

- (1) The Ministry of Education provides per capita grants to eligible non-Government, non-profit making preschools for students who are five or will turn five during the current school year.
- (2) Ministry of Education for State Government per capita grants.
Commonwealth Department of Employment and Training for possible Commonwealth Government assistance.

SEWAGE – WOODMAN POINT TREATMENT PLANT
Reuse Study

20. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Has any study been undertaken to determine any re-use of sewerage (eg for watering parks) once it has left the Woodman Point Treatment Plant and before it is discharged off Point Peron?
- (2) If not, are there any plans to recycle such waste product?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Water Resources has provided the following reply –

- (1) Two studies have been undertaken to investigate the reuse of Woodman Point effluent for industrial use at Kwinana. It is hoped to undertake pilot plant work next year – as special treatment would be required – if funds become available.
- (2) Not applicable.

"GENOCIDE" FILM – GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE

23. Hon J.N. CALDWELL to the Minister for The Arts:

- (1) How much State money was spent on the film "Genocide"?
- (2) Did any of the money used in making or promoting the film come from sources other than Government sources?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

- (1) The Western Australian Film Council invested \$20 000 in the production of this film which represents seven per cent of the film's budget.
- (2) Yes. The producer, Margaret Lattimore, contributed 35 per cent. The Federal Government contributed 58 per cent of the film's budget through the Australian Film Finance Corporation.

COMPULSORY UNIONISM – ELIMINATION ACTION

24. Hon E.J. CHARLTON to the Attorney General:

- (1) Will the Attorney General outline what actions he has taken to stamp out the practice of compulsory unionism, known commonly as the closed shop or "no ticket, no start"?
- (2) Is the Attorney General satisfied that compulsory unionism no longer exists at any Western Australian workplace?
- (3) If the answer to (2) is no, in what industries is it still a practice and what specific steps will he be taking to eliminate it altogether?

- (4) Does the Attorney General have a target date by which the practice of compulsory unionism will be eliminated?
- (5) If the answer to (5) is yes, what is that date?
- (6) Is the Attorney General satisfied that there has been no political direction of industrial inspectors by the Minister for Productivity and Labour Relations that has the effect of requiring inspectors to turn a blind eye to breaches of the voluntary unionism provisions of the Industrial Relations Act?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

(1)-(6)

See answer to Legislative Assembly question 546, 1990.

CHILDREN - BIRTH STATISTICS

25. Hon E.J. CHARLTON to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for The Family:

In each of the last five years -

- (1) How many children were born in Western Australia?
- (2) How many children were born in Western Australia to parents who were teenagers at the time of the birth?
- (3) How many children were born in Western Australia where the name of the father was not registered?
- (4) How many children were born in Western Australia where the parents were not de jure married?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for The Family has provided the following reply -

The information sought is not available from one department and the following data was obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Registrar General's Department.

- | | | |
|-----|--|--------------------------|
| (1) | 1990 | 26 595 |
| | 1989 | 25 051 |
| | 1988 | 25 143 |
| | 1987 | 23 332 |
| | 1986 | 24 236 |
| (2) | 1990 | No data available |
| | 1989 | 957 |
| | 1988 | 1 534 |
| | 1987 | 1 381 |
| | 1986 | 1 506 |
| (3) | Data unavailable at this time. The questions will be referred to the Australian Bureau of Statistics and answers supplied as soon as possible. | |
| (4) | 1990 | No information available |
| | 1989 | 1 161 |
| | 1988 | 1 224 |
| | 1987 | 979 |
| | 1986 | 1 129 |

FOETUS - HUMAN LIFE AGE LEGISLATION

Reproductive Technology and Abortion

26. Hon E.J. CHARLTON to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for Health:

- (1) At what age is a foetus recognised as a human life for the purpose of determining whether or not it is lawful and/or ethical for it to be used in reproductive technology experimentation?

- (2) At what age is a foetus recognised as human life for the purpose of the law as it is currently administered in relation to abortion?
- (3) If the answers to (1) and (2) differ, will the Minister explain the reason for the difference?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for Health has provided the following reply –

- (1) There is currently no law that recognises a foetus as human life for the purposes of reproductive technology experimentation. The current scientific state of reproductive technology does not enable reproductive technology experimentation to be carried out on a foetus, medically defined as the period beyond eight weeks gestation to birth.
- (2) There is currently no law that recognises a foetus as human life for the purposes of administering laws relating to abortion. The Criminal Code provides for offences in relation to the procuring of a miscarriage on a woman but makes no reference to "human life" in the definition of offences. The Criminal Code also provides that a child only becomes a "legal" person capable of being killed when it has proceeded in a living state from the body of the mother.
- (3) No answer required.

CHILDREN – STATISTICS

Divorced Natural Parents – Non-custodial Parents

28. Hon E.J. CHARLTON to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for The Family:

- (1) What approximately is the percentage of children in Western Australia whose natural parents have divorced or separated?
- (2) Approximately what percentage of non-custodial parents –
 - (a) who are within the jurisdiction of the Child Support Agency; and
 - (b) who are beyond the current jurisdiction of the Child Support Agency, pay maintenance at substantially less a fair rate?
- (3) Approximately what percentage of non-custodial parents pay no maintenance at all?
- (4) Approximately what percentage of non-custodial parents are significantly or regularly in arrears over the payment of maintenance?
- (5) Can the Minister advise if and when implementation of stage two of the Child Support Agency will come into effect?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for The Family has provided the following reply –

(1)–(4)

The subject matter of this question falls within the responsibility of the Attorney General. Information supplied by the Crown Law Department is that the statistics are not maintained in the form sought by the honourable member. The questions have been referred to the Australian Bureau of Statistics who collate such data and an answer will be supplied as soon as possible.

Question (2) requires a qualitative assessment of what constitutes a "fair rate" and that depends on who is making the assessment; a single parent, the court or the person paying the maintenance. No definition answer is possible.

(5) 1 October 1989.

HOMOSEXUALITY – NEW LEGISLATION

29. Hon E.J. CHARLTON to the Attorney General:

Is the Government proposing to introduce legislation that would have the effect of removing or nullifying the existing unlawfulness of encouraging or promoting homosexual behaviour?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

No.

CABINET – SACKINGS AND RESHUFFLE

Members' Concern – Action Taken

31. Hon E.J. CHARLTON to the Leader of the House:

- (1) Is the Government or any Minister, including the Premier, taking any action against any member of this House, including any Government member who expressed opposition to or concern about the Premier's mishandling of the Cabinet sackings and subsequent reshuffle?
- (2) If the answer is yes, what action is being taken?
- (3) Is the Minister aware of reports that the Labor Party or office holders within the Labor Party have attempted to intimidate a Member of this House, Hon Tom Helm, to resign from the Legislative Council against his wishes?
- (4) Have such allegations been investigated?
- (5) If the answer to (4) is yes, who did the investigation and what were the findings?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

(1)–(5)

These matters are not relevant to my portfolios.

MINDARIE REGIONAL REFUSE SITE – GROUND WATER FLOW

Hydrological Study

33. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Has any hydrological study been carried out on the ground water flow beneath the Mindarie Regional Refuse site to determine the direction of that flow?
- (2) If so, will the Minister provide details of such studies and the conclusions?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Water Resources has provided the following reply –

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The geological survey of WA has undertaken a groundwater scheme investigation on behalf of the Water Authority. Groundwater flow is toward the coast at an average velocity of 100 metres a year. Work by the CSIRO estimates water velocity to be in the range 85 to 335 metres a year.

MINDARIE REGIONAL REFUSE SITE – SANITARY LANDFILL OPERATIONS

Pollution – Hydrological Studies

34. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Will the sanitary landfill operations at the Mindarie Regional Refuse site cause any pollution to the water table?
- (2) What hydrological studies, if any, have been conducted to assess the likely effect of the proposed sanitary landfill operations?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Water Resources has provided the following reply –

- (1) There is expected to be pollution of the water table under the site and towards the coast.
- (2) The CSIRO has studied pollution from the Morley landfill site. This information has been used to predict pollution movement and establish a system to accurately monitor the pollution at Mindarie. The CSIRO expects the pollution to move to the west; however, as a result of relatively rapid dilution, the pollution is not expected to have any effect on the ocean.

MINDARIE REGIONAL REFUSE SITE – SANITARY LANDFILL OPERATIONS
Water Regime and Wetlands Effects

35. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Will the sanitary landfill operations at the Mindarie Regional Refuse site have an effect on the water regime and wetland areas due east of the proposed site?
- (2) If so, what is the likely time scale in respect of measurable signs of toxic pollution?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Water Resources has provided the following reply –

- (1) No.
- (2) Not relevant.

MINDARIE REGIONAL REFUSE SITE – SANITARY LANDFILL OPERATIONS
Toxic Pollutants – Ocean and Marine Life Effects

37. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Will the sanitary landfill operations at the Mindarie Regional Refuse site cause toxic pollutants to flow into the ocean west of the site?
- (2) If so, what is the likely effect of this pollution?
- (3) What is the likely effect on marine life in the area to be polluted?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply –

- (1)–(2) Implementation of the environmental management and monitoring program approved by the Environmental Protection Authority in November 1989 will minimise the generation of leachate which will move generally westerly with groundwater flow towards the ocean.
- (3) No effects on marine life are expected from this diluted plume.

MINDARIE REGIONAL REFUSE SITE – LINING
Environmental Protection Authority Recommendation

38. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Did the Environmental Protection Authority recommend that the Mindarie Regional Refuse site be artificially lined prior to sanitary land fill operations to ensure the groundwater pollution from the site would be significantly reduced?
- (2) If not, given the recent announcement by the EPA that all new landfill sites should be lined either with naturally occurring clays or be artificially lined, will the Minister have the earlier decision of the EPA not to require the lining of the Mindarie Regional Refuse site reviewed?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply –

- (1) No.
- (2) I will review the requirements for lining on the second stage.

WASTE DISPOSAL – SINGLE METROPOLITAN WASTE DISPOSAL AUTHORITY
Government Support

40. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for the Environment:

Does the Government support the view that there should be one Metropolitan Waste Disposal Authority established with responsibility for the collection and disposal of municipal waste in the metropolitan area?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply –

As Minister for the Environment, I am attracted to the proposal and I am conferring with my colleague, the Minister for Health, with a view to putting a proposal to Government shortly.

MINDARIE REGIONAL REFUSE SITE – BORE WATER, WEST OF SITE
Drawing Restrictions

42. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Are there any restrictions or proposed restrictions in respect of the drawing of bore water west of the proposed Mindarie Regional Refuse site?
- (2) If so, what restrictions exist or are proposed?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Water Resources has provided the following reply –

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The area is proclaimed under the Rights in Water and Irrigation Act and a licence is required to draw groundwater. The Water Authority will refuse licences if the pollution will cause problems.

Note: It is the understanding of the Water Authority that no developments that will use groundwater are proposed in the area west of the Mindarie tip.

MINDARIE REGIONAL REFUSE SITE – LAND USE NOTATIONS
Perth Metropolitan Region Geological Survey Map, Sheet 2034 IV

43. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for the Environment:

I refer to the Perth Metropolitan Region Geological Survey Map Sheet No 2034 iv Environmental Geology Theories Scale 1 – 50,000 and ask what notations are made on Sheet No 2034 iv in respect of the general features, physical properties and suitability for specific land uses for that area of land comprising the proposed Mindarie Regional Refuse site?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply – .

Since the honourable member obviously has a copy of sheet No 2034(iv) in his possession, the notations to which he refers should be well known to him.

STATESHIPS – WESTPAC BANKING CORPORATION
Three Vessels Lease – Currency Fluctuation Cover

44. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Transport:

What arrangements have been made to cover the currency fluctuations in respect of the leasing by Stateships of three vessels from the Westpac Banking Corporation?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Transport has provided the following reply –

None. The decision not to put any arrangements in place was made after seeking Treasury advice and taking into account the fact that a proportion of Stateships' future revenue would be received in \$US to provide a natural hedge against the impact of currency fluctuations on charter payments.

MV ROBERTA JULL – WESTPAC BANKING CORPORATION
Ownership

47. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Was the *MV Roberta Jull* handed over to the Westpac Banking Corporation on September 4, 1990?
- (2) What was the ship building contracted price of the vessel?
- (3) What was the value of the steel rebate consideration?
- (4) What was the value of the import duties?
- (5) What was the value of the contract variations?
- (6) Who was the owner of the vessel during construction?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Transport has provided the following reply –

- (1) Yes.
- (2) \$12 879 673.
- (3) \$76 769 – subject to final calculation.
- (4) \$314 198 – subject to final calculation.
- (5) \$169 437.
- (6) Westpac Banking Corporation became the owner of the vessel on assignment of the building contract in October 1989.

MV ROBERTA JULL – WESTPAC BANKING CORPORATION
Charter Cancellation, Future Charter Hire Date

48. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer to Question on Notice No 907 of 1990 and ask –

- (1) If the charter is cancelled on the future charter hire due date, does all of the future charter hire become payable?
- (2) If the answer is yes, is such an arrangement for the payment of all future charter hire, upon cancellation, a standard clause in agreements between the charter party?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Transport has provided the following reply –

- (1) Liability for future charter payments would be totally dependent on the circumstances of the charter termination. In a premature termination by either party damages would be assessable in precisely the same way

as any other contract. I also refer to the answer given to Legislative Council question 907 (3) and (5) of 1990.

(2) Not applicable.

WATER AUTHORITY OF WA – CONTRACTS TO PRIVATE SECTOR
Freight Value – Goods Movement, Perth-Kimberley Region

51. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Water Resources:

What was the value of freight for the movement of goods from the Perth metropolitan region to the Kimberley region including Broome, included in the contract price, in respect of contracts awarded to the private sector by the Water Authority for the financial years ended June 30, 1989 and June 30, 1990?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Water Resources has provided the following reply –

In relation to the Kimberley region, a total of 16 contracts were awarded by the Water Authority of Western Australia to private sector contractors during the financial years ending 30 June 1989 and 30 June 1990. All but one of these were what is referred to as "works contracts". That is, it is the contractor's responsibility to complete the works in their entirety; that is, supply and deliver the necessary equipment and materials, installation and commissioning etc. As such, separate freight values are not known or available to the Water Authority. The delivery component of the remaining contract, a contract for the supply of 300 mm sewer pipe to Broome was \$12 600.

TRADES AND LABOR COUNCIL OF WA – WOMEN'S OFFICER POSITION
Employment and Training Department Funding

71. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Employment and Training:

I refer to an advertisement inserted in *The West Australian* on 23 February 1991, for the position of Womens Officer with the Trades and Labor Council of WA and ask –

- (1) Is it correct that the Womens Officer position is to be funded by the Department of Employment and Training as stated in the advertisement?
- (2) What is the justification for Government funding of this position?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The women's employment and training strategy in 1988 contained a number of initiatives requiring action by the tripartite partners, particularly the TLC. Funding is provided for the women's officer position to support the implementation of these initiatives.

AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT – IRRIGATION AND MANAGEMENT SERVICE
Functions

72. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) What are the functions of the Department of Agriculture's recently formed "Irrigation and Management Service" (IDAMS)?
- (2) Do these functions include anything akin to a commercial marketing venture, competing with private enterprise firms for the irrigation market?
- (3) If so, how can such direct competition with private ventures be justified, especially in light of the current depressed economic climate and its consequent difficulties for small businesses?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Agriculture has provided the following reply –

- (1) IDAMS has two functions –
 - (i) To provide a commercial irrigation design and management service to horticulturalists.
 - (ii) To educate the industry – growers, irrigation suppliers and agricultural consultants – on the need for and benefits of efficient irrigation design and management.
- (2) IDAMS provides a service to horticulturalists on a commercial charge basis. Until January 1990 the service was provided free by Government. It is expected that by charging for the service an increased market will develop for private enterprise in an area where it has traditionally not been active.
- (3) Not applicable.

SCHOOLS – SOUTH KENSINGTON SPECIAL SCHOOL
Building Extension Plans

74. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Are any building extensions planned for the site of the South Kensington Special School?
- (2) If so –
 - (a) What are the details; and
 - (b) for what purpose will the extensions be used?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.

SCHOOLS – CARSON STREET SPECIAL SCHOOL
Therapy Services

75. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Education:

- (1) How are therapy services provided currently for the students at the Carson Street Special School?
- (2) Is the Minister aware that parents of the handicapped and multiply handicapped students at the school consider the present therapy service system as quite inadequate for the children's very special needs?
- (3) Will the Minister undertake to look into this situation with the aim of improving therapy services for the school students?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

- (1) Therapy services are provided by the authority for intellectually handicapped persons.
- (2) Parents' concerns on this matter have been made known.
- (3) During 1991 there will be a review of the provision of therapy services to students with disabilities.

SCHOOLS – CARSON STREET SPECIAL SCHOOL
Female Teachers' Aides

76. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Has consideration been given to employing female teachers' aides at the Carson Street Special School to assist with the special toileting needs of female students so that female teachers may be relieved of this constant duty and concentrate on their teaching role?

- (2) Is the Minister aware that parents of students consider that such a female aide is very much needed so that female teachers have more time for their other duties?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

- (1) Yes; 6.4 full time equivalent female teacher aides are employed at the school.
(2) Not applicable.

SCHOOLS – SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Enrolments

78. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Education:

What are the projected student numbers for 1992 for each of the following –

- (a) Kenwick Special School;
- (b) White Gum Valley Special School;
- (c) Castlereagh Special School;
- (d) Carson Street Special School;
- (e) South Kensington Special School; and
- (f) Malibu Special School?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

	February 1991 Census Enrolment
Kenwick Special School	63
White Gum Valley School (now Kim Beazley School)	98
Castlereagh Special School	58
Carson Street Special School	48
South Kensington Special School	65
Malibu Special School	53

Current enrolment numbers are shown above. Trends from previous years would suggest that enrolments in 1992 will be very similar. Precise projections for 1992 will be obtained in August this year.

LEADER'S ACCOUNT – PREMIER'S AWARENESS

82. Hon PETER FOSS to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

- (1) When did you first become aware of what is known as the "leader's account"?
- (2) When did you direct that it be closed?
- (3) What was the balance in the account when it was closed?
- (4) What happened to that balance?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

The Premier has provided the following reply –

(1)–(4)

I refer the member to my replies to his question without notice No 1 of 14 March 1991 and No 6 of Tuesday, 19 March 1991.

GROUND WATER – TAMALA PARK AQUIFER

Water Loss Costs – Mindarie Tip

83. Hon REG DAVIES to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Water Resources:

Will the Minister detail the loss in dollar terms of water from the Tamala Park aquifer given that expert advisers calculate that due to the siting of the disposal site (Mindarie tip) an estimated loss of between 15 per cent and 20 per cent of water resource of the total 43 million cubic metres per annum?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Water Resources has provided the following reply –

The reduction in the proposed coastal groundwater scheme as a result of the Mindarie tip will initially be three million cubic metres per annum. The loss is expected to reduce as experience is gained in operating the wellfield. A total cost of approximately \$3 million will be incurred by the Water Authority in replacing the loss with water from another source.

RETIREMENT – FORMAL RETIREMENT AGE ABOLITION

101. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Attorney General representing the Minister for Justice:

- (1) Is the abolition of formal retirement ages in employment being considered?
- (2) If so, what action is proposed, or currently under consideration, for such a move?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

The Minister for Justice has provided the following reply –

- (1) Yes.
- (2) It is proposed to amend the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 to make it unlawful to discriminate on the ground of age in the area of employment, and other areas of public life. Compulsory retirement will be exempt for a period of two years from the provisions of the proposed amendments.

AGE DISCRIMINATION – EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ACT AMENDMENTS

102. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Attorney General representing the Minister for Justice:

- (1) Are any legislative amendments, related to age discrimination, proposed for the Equal Opportunity Act in this session of Parliament?
- (2) If so, on what aspects of age discrimination will these amendments focus?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

The Minister for Justice has provided the following reply –

- (1) Yes.
- (2) It is proposed that discrimination on the ground of age be unlawful in all the areas of public life in which it is unlawful to discriminate on the present grounds under the Equal Opportunity Act 1984.

PORTS AND HARBOURS – CARNARVON FISHING BOAT HARBOUR

Dredging Delay

104. Hon P.H. LOCKYER to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Why has the dredging of the approaches to the Carnarvon fishing boat harbour not been completed as promised by the Government in 1990?
- (2) When will it commence?
- (3) What has been the delay?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Transport has provided the following reply –

- (1) The Environmental Protection Authority required a consultative environmental review, largely because of concerns regarding spoil placement. This review is now in its final phase.
- (2) It is anticipated that site work can commence within three weeks of the final determination by the Minister for the Environment. This determination could be made within two weeks.
- (3) The environmental review process requires time for consultation and

review, in addition to time involved in gathering data and documenting the necessary studies. In this case project modifications were negotiated in order to conserve migratory shore bird habitats.

FISHING – CARNARVON FISHERMEN

Prawn and Scallop Season Notification Delay

105. Hon P.H. LOCKYER to Hon Mark Nevill representing the Minister for Fisheries:

- (1) Why was such short notice given to fishermen in Carnarvon as to when the prawn and scallop season would commence?
- (2) What steps are being taken to avoid such short notice in the future?

Hon MARK NEVILL replied:

The Minister for Fisheries has provided the following reply –

- (1) The prawn industry was aware at the meeting with the Fisheries Department in January that the opening date for the 1991 prawn season in Shark Bay would be in early March. The final date of 7 March was advised to industry once the Minister had received and considered the report on the prawn and scallop fisheries. The scallop season will open on 6 April and industry has been advised.
- (2) Industry meetings with the Fisheries Department following the 1991 season will be held in December 1991 instead of January 1992. This will allow earlier decision making.

SHARK BAY – MARINE PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Draft Copy

109. Hon P.H. LOCKYER to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Will the Shire of Shark Bay and the Denham Fishermans Association be shown as draft copy of the management plan for the Shark Bay Marine Park prior to the regulations for the boundaries are in force?
- (2) If not, why not?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for the Environment has provided the following reply –

- (1) The Minister for the Environment has already given an undertaking to provide both bodies with a preliminary copy of the draft management plan.
- (2) Not applicable.

QUARANTINE CHECKPOINTS – NORSEMAN QUARANTINE CHECKPOINT

24 Hour Operation – Kununurra Plans

112. Hon P.H. LOCKYER to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Does the Norseman quarantine checkpoint operate 24 hours a day?
- (2) Can the Minister give a date for the providing of a similar checkpoint close to Kununurra?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Agriculture has provided the following reply –

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Government has given a high priority to the establishment of a 24 hour checkpoint near Kununurra. The part time checkpoint will continue to operate until funding becomes available.

WILUNA SHIRE – BOUNDARY CHANGES

113. Hon P.H. LOCKYER to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) Does the Government have any intention to alter the boundaries of the Wiluna Shire?
- (2) If so, what changes are being examined?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for Local Government has provided the following reply –

- (1) Boundary change for the Wiluna Shire is not under consideration at this time.
- (2) Answered in (1) above.

RABBITS – CONTROL*Agriculture Protection Board Responsibility*

114. Hon P.H. LOCKYER to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) What steps are being taken to deal with the increase of rabbits in Western Australia particularly on the Nullarbor Plain?
- (2) Does the Agricultural Protection Board have the responsibility for the restriction of these vermin?
- (3) What funds were allocated to the APB in –
 - (a) 1985;
 - (b) 1986;
 - (c) 1987;
 - (d) 1988;
 - (e) 1989; and
 - (f) 1990?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Agriculture has provided the following reply –

- (1) Where increased rabbit numbers are observed, the Agriculture Protection Board encourages landholders to increase control activities. Numbers on the Nullarbor fluctuate seasonally and the Agriculture Protection Board considers it is generally uneconomic for landholders to undertake control in this area.
- (2) The Agriculture Protection Board has responsibility to ensure that landholders undertake control.
- (3)

(a)	1985	\$9.7M
(b)	1986	\$10.3M
(c)	1987	\$11.1M
(d)	1988	\$12.9M
(e)	1989	\$13.3M
(f)	1990	\$14.5M

HOSPITALS – BROOME DISTRICT HOSPITAL*Upgrading and Expansion Plans*

118. Hon P.H. LOCKYER to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for Health:

What plans are in place for the upgrading and expansion of the Broome District Hospital?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for Health has provided the following reply –

The staged redevelopment of Broome District Hospital has proceeded to date

in accordance with a masterplan developed by commissioned consultants in 1983. Stages 1 and 2 have been completed. The current 1988-89 Capital Works Program includes a sum of \$200 000 for initial planning of stage 3. The Building Management Authority has completed a feasibility study for stage 3 and a review of the hospital redevelopment masterplan.

As concern has been expressed that the present hospital site may restrict the potential for longer term future development, a review of options for use of a new site has recently been completed. The consultant's report, received in February 1991, is presently receiving consideration and it is proposed to convene a forum of relevant parties to resolve the future Broome strategy. Meanwhile, a provision has been included in the Health Department's draft three year Capital Works Program for future works.

STATESHIPS – SHIPS STATISTICS

Dampier Service – South East Asia Port Service

119. Hon P.H. LOCKYER to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) How many ships does the State Shipping Service operate?
- (2) Is Dampier serviced by a regular service by Stateships?
- (3) What ports in South East Asia are serviced regularly by Stateships?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Transport has provided the following reply –

- (1) Four, with a further vessel to be commissioned in April 1991.
- (2) No. Dampier is serviced on an as needed – inducement – basis.
- (3) Directly –
 - Jakarta
 - Surabaya
 - Singapore
 - Kuching/Sibu

By transshipment –

- Port Kelang
- Penang
- Bangkok
- Bintulu
- Muara
- Kota Kinabulu
- Labuan
- Sandakan
- Tawau
- Belawan
- Bali/Benoa
- Balikpapan

ANSETT WA – AIR ROUTES COMPETITION

120. Hon P.H. LOCKYER to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Is the Government considering additional competition to Ansett WA to air routes in Western Australia?
- (2) If so, when will a decision be taken?
- (3) What steps are being taken to protect smaller towns presently serviced by a jet service?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Transport has provided the following reply –

- (1) Yes.
- (2) An announcement is expected shortly.

- (3) If competition is introduced, the Government will take all possible steps to ensure smaller centres continue to receive adequate air services.

EXMOUTH – MARINA DEVELOPMENT

Commencement and Completion Date

121. Hon P.H. LOCKYER to the Minister for Police representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Has the Government set a date for the commencement of a marina at Exmouth as promised prior to the 1989 State election?
(2) If not, can an indication be given to a commencement and completion date?
(3) If not, why not?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The Minister for Transport has provided the following reply –

(1)–(2)

No.

- (3) The Government remains committed to proceeding with the development of a marina at Exmouth. Work continues on planning, design and documentation; however, a decision on the commencement date will not be made until such time as the economic climate improves and the right investors can be attracted to participate in the development.

**PASTORAL LEASE TENURE LEGISLATION – DRAFT LEGISLATION
DISTRIBUTION**

130. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for Lands:

Will the Minister honour the commitment of the former Minister for Lands that the draft legislation on pastoral lease tenure will be distributed to and discussed with the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, Western Australian Farmers Federation and Pastoral Lessors Association, prior to it being tabled in Parliament?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The Minister for Lands has provided the following reply –

Yes.

UNLAWFUL USE OF MOTOR VEHICLES – CRIMINAL CODE

Section 390A Amendment

168. Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON to the Attorney General:

Has the amendment to section 390A of the Criminal Code which increased the penalty for unlawful use of a motor vehicle from three to seven years imprisonment, as enacted in the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1990, been proclaimed?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

Section 51 of the Act came into operation on the date of assent, 20 December 1990. The balance came into operation on 14 February 1991.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

POLICE UNIFORMS – SHIRT MANUFACTURERS

Tenders

38. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for Services:

- (1) On what basis were local manufacturers asked to quote on the making of

police uniform shirts, the contract for which has now been awarded to a Chinese company?

- (2) Did the specification ask for the quotation to be based on a cut, make and trim basis only?
- (3) Was the successful tenderer quoting on the same basis as local manufacturers?
- (4) Were local manufacturers required to meet the quality standard AS39001 or AS39002?
- (5) Will the successful tenderer be required to meet the same quality standard?
- (6) Is it intended that the standard be subject to the stringent quality control demanded of local industry?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

- (1) Cut, make and trim, supplied free into store, Perth.
- (2)-(3) Yes.
- (4) No. However, the Western Australia Government has a policy on quality assurance that seeks all tenderers to attain AS3900 status by 1 August 1991.
- (5)-(6) Answered by (4).

POLICE UNIFORMS

Value of Contract

39. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for Services:

- (1) What is the value of the contract for police uniform shirts that has been awarded to the Chinese textile manufacturer, Cinar?
- (2) What is the difference between the price quoted by Cinar and the nearest local tender?
- (3) Have contracts for any other items of police uniform been put out to tender by foreign based companies?
- (4) If so, what are they?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

- (1) \$63 028.
- (2) \$14 402.
- (3) No.
- (4) Not applicable.

EDUCATION – TERTIARY EDUCATION

Control – Australian Vice-chancellors' Committee View

40. Hon N.F. MOORE to the Minister for Education:

Does the Minister support the view of the Australian vice-chancellors' committee that responsibility for tertiary education should not be returned to the States?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The member is asking for an answer to a fairly complex and contentious question. A number of reports are in the melting pot at present and if the member seriously wants to discuss –

Hon N.F. Moore: I want to seriously have a discussion but I am interested in your view of the Australian vice-chancellors' submission.

Hon KAY HALLAHAN: I would be interested in having a discussion after I have read those views. It is always a temptation to give a quick response to a question, but I would prefer not to encapsulate my answer in one sentence.

PARKER, MR DAVID – GOVERNMENT REAL ESTATE INTERESTS
Sales Involvement

41. Hon E.J. CHARLTON to the Attorney General:

Will the Attorney General advise the House what involvement Mr Parker has had on behalf of the Government in the sale of or any transactions relating to real estate in which the Government has an interest?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

I have no knowledge of any such transactions.

POLICE OFFICERS – DETECTIVE SERGEANT RUSSELL AUGUST
Rottnest Island Business Venture

42. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for Police:

- (1) Will the Minister investigate whether advice given in 1989 in relation to Detective Sergeant Russell August's need to obtain departmental permission to enter a business venture on Rottnest Island is consistent with the advice given in the matter involving two police officers who this week are reported to have been involved in a business venture with Mr Laurie Connell?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

I have made some inquiries on this case as a matter of interest. There is no inconsistency at all because I understand that the business venture on Rottnest Island to which the member refers did not involve a direct interest by the police officer, but rather an interest held by his wife in a commercial establishment.

Hon P.G. Pendal: I think you will find his name was on the business documents.

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS: If the member will put the question on notice I will examine the matter further.

SCHOOLS – CAMP SCHOOLS
Bookings 1992

43. Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Will the Minister inform the House whether all camp schools under the control of the Ministry of Education in this State are accepting bookings for 1992?
- (2) If not, why not?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

(1)–(2)

That is an operational matter. If the member will put the question on notice I will obtain an answer for him.

RURAL ADJUSTMENT AND FINANCE CORPORATION – QUESTION 30
DETAILS

44. Hon W.N. STRETCH to the Attorney General:

With regard to question 30 which I asked the Attorney General yesterday, I understand he may now be in a position to provide some of the details that were not available yesterday and I ask him to do so.

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

This gives me an opportunity to not only provide the additional material but also to correct some mistaken detail provided yesterday. I am advised that a correction is necessary to parts (1) and (3) as follows –

- (1) The staff of the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation totals 39.

I said yesterday that the figure of 11 related to only one section of the corporation. With regard to part (3) the following correction is made –

- (3) To date this calendar year 385 applications have been received.
To date this financial year 599 applications have been received.

The answer to part (5) which I asked to be held over until today consists of a list of months and figures which would not make sense if read and I shall seek leave to table the answer and to incorporate it in *Hansard*.

[The material in appendix A was incorporated by leave of the House.]

[See page No 328.]

[See paper No 229.]

The position is the same with regard to part (6) and I shall again seek leave to table the answer to this question and incorporate it in *Hansard*.

[The material in appendix B was incorporated by leave of the House.]

[See page No 329.]

[See paper No 230.]

STATE EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY – PROGRESS

45. Hon B.L. JONES to the Minister for Education:

Will the Minister advise the progress on the State Employment and Skills Development Authority?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. Members will remember the long and incredibly complex deliberations which we had in progressing the State Employment and Skills Development Authority legislation, and I am pleased that the member has taken an interest in it at this time because that legislation will be proclaimed tomorrow.

Hon P.G. Pandal: She was sitting on the edge of her seat!

Hon KAY HALLAHAN: The member was interested earlier in the day and I told her that her question was extremely timely. Members will understand that we are on the brink of a significant move for training in Western Australia. We had a long debate in this Chamber to iron out the difficulties which members had in understanding the structures which relate to training and to tripartite arrangements, but that legislation has now been passed and will be proclaimed tomorrow.

SESDA will slash a lot of red tape by rationalising more than 130 industry advisory boards and committees which have traditionally been involved in providing training advice in Western Australia. SESDA will assist in directing training at areas which will have the capacity to address the question not only of industry training needs but also of people who are unemployed and who need some indication of where they can best use their time for training. This legislation is also an important microeconomic reform because it will promote greater efficiency and dynamism, and improved skills within the work force.

I was pleased to hear the jovial and almost celebratory interjections that were made when I said this legislation would be proclaimed tomorrow. Members may be interested to know that the first full meeting of the board will take place on 10 April. An interim or quorum board has been in place to do the developmental work, and that has allowed us to get to the position of proclamation tomorrow. Appointments have been completed to both the authority and the Skills Standards and Accreditation Board.

LEADER'S ACCOUNT – PREMIER'S AWARENESS

Incorrect Referral to Questions

46. Hon PETER FOSS to the Attorney General:

I refer the Attorney General to question on notice 82 in today's Supplementary Notice Paper where I ask the Leader of the House, representing the Premier –

- (1) When did he first become aware of what is known as the "leader's account"?
- (2) When did he direct that it be closed?
- (3) What was the balance in the account when it was closed?
- (4) What happened to that balance?

I received the following reply –

The Premier has provided the following reply:

(1)–(4)

I refer the member to my replies to his question without notice No. 1 of 14 March 1991 and No. 6 of Tuesday, 19 March 1991.

Question without notice 1 of 14 March is a question by Hon George Cash to the Minister for Police about juvenile offenders, and question 6 of 19 March is a question by Hon George Cash to the Leader of the House about his awareness of the leader's account. The question that I asked was directed to the Premier's awareness and dealt with other matters in any event. Will the Attorney General undertake to follow through my question and ensure that a proper answer is given by the Premier?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

I am happy to do that but I think I am safe in guessing that Hon Peter Foss would have solved his mystery had he referred to those numbered questions in the Assembly Notice Paper. I suspect that the Premier was referring to answers which she gave in the Assembly. However, I do not really know and I am happy to check and ensure that an answer to this question is provided which does not involve the Department of Corrective Services.

SCHOOLS – ASBESTOS

Broken Asbestos Sheets

47. Hon W.N. STRETCH to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is the Minister aware that some schools have broken asbestos sheets on some of their buildings which cannot be repaired due to a shortage of funds? I stress that I am talking about asbestos, not Hardiflex.
- (2) Due to the extreme concern of the public about asbestos, will the Minister direct all principals that broken asbestos sheeting must be attended to, and will she make available immediately funds to carry out such work?
- (3) If not, why not?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

(1)–(3)

Members must understand that if any maintenance is required for what is regarded as a health hazard, it will be attended to. If the member would make me familiar with the particular circumstance to which he refers, I could have the matter investigated, and if action were warranted, that action would follow. There is no difficulty about that. I flag to members that many people get very concerned about local issues, and members of Parliament often respond in that manner by thinking that a local matter is of the utmost urgency. We must make a sensible assessment of these assertions, and where they can be sustained by examination, repair work will follow. That is the

situation, and the member does not need to feel that he has to worry about a circumstance in his local school which is a hazard and is not being attended to.

SCHOOLS – ASBESTOS
Minor Repairs – Principals' Authority

48. Hon W.N. STRETCH to the Minister for Education:

Does a local school principal have autonomy or authority to have such minor repairs attended to without Building Management Authority approval? The Minister would be aware that a freshly broken sheet of old asbestos is a hazard, whereas an old painted sheet which is punched in a bit and is not exposed to the air is not regarded as a hazard. What autonomy do principals have, and is there a guarantee from the Ministry of Education that these minor and urgent repairs can be done immediately and paid for afterwards?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

Members must be clear that the concern is about airborne fibres and not about a broken sheet of asbestos.

Hon W.N. Stretch: When you crack a sheet you get airborne fibres. I live in an asbestos house.

Hon KAY HALLAHAN: The Ministry of Education has some of the most sophisticated monitoring equipment which tells us about the level of airborne fibres, and does not have to rely on assertions about what is or is not there. As I understand it, urgent work is referred to the district office, or principals may report it directly to the Building Management Authority. I am open to suggestions that we find a better way of doing things but any hazardous situation should be reported in the normal manner and the work will be done expeditiously. I do not believe, on the case put by Hon Bill Stretch, that we should change our whole system of doing things. That does not mean to say that I am not willing to look at other ways of meeting this need quickly or even to respond locally to repairs which may be required.

SCHOOLS – EMERGENCY REPAIRS
Principals Autonomy

49. Hon W.N. STRETCH to the Minister for Education :

Many years ago when Hon Graham MacKinnon was Minister for Education a principal had available in the kitty a sum of \$2 000 for emergency repairs and if that money were saved up over the years it could be put towards school improvements. That allowed that principal to phone up the local plumber or builder and say, "We have got a broken window or a broken sheet of asbestos which needs to be replaced. Come and fix it." Would the Minister consider giving to principals that sort of autonomy to enable them to undertake these small repairs without their having to go through a system which obviously involves some delay and red tape?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

I will consider what the member has said. I was critical yesterday of an article in which Mr Graham Kierath and Mr Fred Tubby expressed the view that there should be 10 year cycles of maintenance. I regard that as a wasteful way of going about things. One school principal said that he had to wait for a build up of minor things and referred to the changing of light globes. I do not know whether that is what happens but it certainly gave me cause to think that it is an area that needs examination. I am not unresponsive to notions suggesting ways to deal with minor matters which crop up from day to day in schools.

SCHOOLS – MAINTENANCE

Principal's Memo No 1646/88 – Schedule of Fault Work Modification

50. Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON to the Minister for Education:

In the light of the previous answer, I refer to a memo No 1646/88 sent to all school principals. The memo contained a schedule of areas of fault work which will be deferred as a result of constraints in the Budget, including an item "Asbestos Fibro Repairs – defer except genuine security/safety". Will the Minister instruct the Ministry of Education to modify that schedule?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

Nothing I have said indicates otherwise. The honourable member quoted from a document yesterday and his quotations were selective and not useful to overall debate so I will be cautious about quotations from Hon Derrick Tomlinson in future. As I said to Hon W.N. Stretch, matters of safety or security will be attended to.

PARKER, MR DAVID – PROFESSIONAL COMMERCIAL CONSULTANT

Government Real Estate Sales Involvement

51. Hon E.J. CHARLTON to the Attorney General:

I wish to rephrase my previous question. Since the resignation of Mr Parker has he been involved in any Government real estate sales in his capacity as professional commercial consultant?

Hon J.M. Berinson: Can the member elaborate on how that is different from the first question? I have trouble in giving a different answer. What is the distinction?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON: I thought perhaps the Attorney General would be aware of specific details. Obviously this information will come out in the Royal Commission hearings. However, since his resignation from Parliament, in his professional capacity as a consultant, has Mr Parker been involved in negotiations or transactions which have concerned the disposal of Government real estate?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for elaborating on the question, but as I anticipated my answer is the same: I have no personal knowledge of any such transactions. I think there have been some Press reports alleging matters of that kind. I have not taken note of them and they certainly have not related to any activity of which I am aware.

PARKER, MR DAVID – PROFESSIONAL COMMERCIAL CONSULTANT

Government Real Estate Sales Involvement Inquiry

52. Hon E.J. CHARLTON to the Attorney General:

Could the Attorney General make inquiries and advise Parliament?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

I do not think an inquiry of that sort comes within my portfolio responsibilities. I am not sure whose responsibilities it would come within but I think the safest way to pursue the question is by way of a question on notice to the Premier.

TAFE – SHEARING SHED, GERALDTON

53. Hon D.J. WORDSWORTH to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Has TAFE recently built a shearing shed in the Geraldton region for the teaching of shearing?
- (2) Was equipment specifically designed to teach left-handers how to shear, or was there some inadvertent mistake resulting in the plans being printed upside down?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

(1)-(2)

Many serious issues concern the Education portfolio, and Hon D.J. Wordsworth has hit on a particularly important one. I need to make inquiries. I do not know how many left-handed people live in Geraldton and whether indeed —

Hon D.J. Wordsworth: What about left-footers?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN: — the plans have not gone out as originally proposed. The honourable member appears to have a gleam in his eye about the matter; if he has information which he thinks should be followed up I will be pleased to hear from him.

AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS — TOWING REGULATIONS

Interim Protection

54. Hon W.N. STRETCH to the Minister for Police:

I refer to a question asked by Hon Murray Montgomery regarding the towing of agricultural implements.

- (1) Has the Minister gazetted an extension date from 1 March or 28 February to cover people in the interim while discussion takes place with the Western Australian Farmers Federation, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, farmers and dealers?
- (2) If not, what coverage do people have when moving agricultural implements?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

(1)-(2)

The mechanics to provide interim protection have been set in place. Following the question asked by Hon Murray Montgomery, I decided to pursue the matter further. As indicated to the House on Tuesday, the matters are all but finalised. There were three sticking points which I understand have been resolved. It is now a matter of giving final instructions to the parliamentary draftsman. The matter will come before the House by way of regulation as quickly as possible. If the member has knowledge of any concerns or doubts about the matter I would be happy for him to bring them to my attention.

ZIMBABWE — OLD BOOKS FROM SCHOOLS SCHEME

55. Hon N.F. MOORE to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of a scheme initiated by her colleague Hon Judyth Watson, and assisted by Rotary, to collect old books from schools in Western Australia for transfer to Zimbabwe?
- (2) Have the books been sent to Zimbabwe?
- (3) If not, why not?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

(1)-(3)

This matter has not come across my desk since I was appointed as Minister for Education. I do not want to jump the gun but I understand that Qantas is shifting 100 tonnes of materials to Zimbabwe. That reflects a most extraordinary effort and response. Qantas has come to the party in a remarkable way.

Hon N.F. Moore: The Minister should tell that to the people who hold the books.

Hon KAY HALLAHAN: The honourable member now indicates that his question is predicated upon the fact that there is a problem with the exercise.

Hon N.F. Moore: People have tonnes of books which have not been collected and no

indication has been given that they will be collected, or even sent to Zimbabwe.

Hon KAY HALLAHAN: I appreciate being made aware of difficulties in portfolios for which I am responsible. I would appreciate it more if the member would let me know in a way which will enable me to deal with the matter effectively. As the honourable member has raised the matter in this forum in this way it will not affect the manner in which I follow up the matter. The member might like to provide information about where the books are located so that I can sort out the situation.

AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS – TOWING REGULATIONS
Protection Cover

56. Hon W.N. STRETCH to the Minister for Police:

Referring to my previous question, will the Minister consider extending the gazettal date until such time as the new regulations are implemented, otherwise the public will not be protected?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

I will. If that has not been done I will ensure that it is done. The interim arrangement stands, pending the finalisation of other matters about which a fair degree of discussion and consultation were necessary. I reiterate that a tremendous amount of goodwill was generated by the exercise. It has almost reached its conclusion and no-one should have any fears about the interim arrangements being extended pending the finalisation of the other matters.
