

# Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, the 22nd August, 1979

The SPEAKER (Mr Thompson) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

## PORNOGRAPHY

### *Exploitation of Children: Petition*

MR GREWAR (Roe) [4.32 p.m.]: I have a petition addressed to the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly, calling for the abolition of sexual exploitation of children. The petition is signed by 44 petitioners, and I certify that it conforms with the Standing Orders of this House.

The SPEAKER: I direct that the petition be brought to the Table of the House.

See petition No. 87.

## RAILWAYS: FREMANTLE-PERTH

### *Closure: Petition*

MR DAVIES (Victoria Park—Leader of the Opposition) [4.33 p.m.]: I have a petition addressed to the Hon. the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled. It reads—

We, the undersigned—

1. PROTEST at the decision to withdraw the Perth-Fremantle passenger rail service and the subsequent dismantling of the Perth-Fremantle railway;
2. ARE AMAZED that such a major and important decision affecting tens of thousands of people should be taken so arbitrarily;
3. DEPLORE the Government's short-sighted expediency. At a time when the rest of the world is turning to electric rail systems, we are turning to transport systems which use oil, a diminishing energy source;
4. ASSERT that buses will not offer an equivalent service particularly for people with children and babies in prams, shoppers with bulky parcels, for young people travelling to the beaches, and for many elderly people:

We, the undersigned, REQUEST the Government to:

- (a) REVERSE its decision to withdraw the railway passenger service between Perth and Fremantle;
- (b) UPGRADE the system to encourage more passengers to use the trains:

(c) RATIONALISE existing bus and train services so that they complement each other rather than compete with one another;

(d) UNDERTAKE immediately steps to investigate the possibility of electrifying the railway system in accord with world trends.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that you will give this matter earnest consideration and your petitioners, as in duty bound will ever pray.

The petition bears 16 signatures, and I certify that it conforms with the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

The SPEAKER: I direct that the petition be brought to the Table of the House.

See petition No. 88.

## EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

### *Unemployment Benefits: Petition*

MR TONKIN (Morley) [4.35 p.m.]: I have a petition addressed to the Hon. the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled. It reads—

We, the undersigned citizens of Western Australia ask that the Parliament of this State intercede with the Commonwealth Parliament on behalf of the unemployed people of Western Australia so that—

the unemployment benefit entitlement of all unemployed people be increased;  
the waiting period for all classes of unemployed people be abolished;  
the limit of maximum allowable income for unemployed people be at the same rate applicable to Social Security Pensioner beneficiaries.

The petition contains a prayer at the end. I have signified that the petition conforms with the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

The SPEAKER: I direct that the petition be brought to the Table of the House.

See petition No. 89.

## QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE

On motion by Mr Shalders, leave of absence for nine days granted to Mr Grayden (South Perth) on the ground of urgent public business.

On motion by Mr Bateman, leave of absence for 12 days granted to Mr Bryce (Ascot—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) on the ground of urgent public business.

### WATER SUPPLY CATCHMENT AREAS

#### *Salinity: Whittington Interceptor Bank*

**MR McPHARLIN** (Mt. Marshall) [5.05 p.m.]:  
I move—

- (1) That in the opinion of this House the Government should immediately provide finance to enable a full-scale trial of the Whittington interceptor bank system in at least one of the water catchment areas which are the subject of clearing restrictions under the Country Areas Water Supply Act Amendment Act 1978.
- (2) The planning of the trial to be on a catchment area of a tributary creek under the supervision of Mr Harry Whittington in co-operation with the Public Works Department, the Department of Agriculture and the farmers concerned.

Members will be familiar with this motion because it has been on the notice paper for some time. The problems of salinity in water supplies and salt encroachment cause us a great deal of concern. The problems are spread throughout the agricultural areas; they are not confined to any one area. They have been recognised for a considerable time and it is necessary that some form of control be implemented to decrease salinity in the water supply.

Several members interjected.

The **SPEAKER**: Order! Will the House come to order! The *Hansard* reporter is having difficulty hearing the member on his feet, and so am I.

**MR McPHARLIN**: Farmers have had field days in association with the Department of Agriculture on this problem in an effort to try to do something about it.

I have had the opportunity to study both methods which has been advocated, one by the Department of Agriculture and the other by Mr Whittington and it appears that the latter provides some hope of a solution to the increasing salinity in water catchment areas.

Because of this and a discussion with Mr Whittington I arranged a meeting with the then Minister for Water Supplies (Mr O'Connor) in 1977. I introduced Mr Whittington to him and we had a lengthy discussion. The purpose of the

meeting was to discuss the proposal to place interceptor banks in a selected area of the Wellington catchment area to give them a trial to see whether they would be effective in controlling the salinity in one of those tributaries. I say, to the credit of the then Minister, that he thought there was merit in the suggestion. He saw there was nothing to lose and agreed to it. Mr Whittington explained to him what he had in mind and was given supervision of the planning of the project, with the co-operation of the Public Works Department and the Department of Agriculture if it became involved.

Mr Webster, an officer of the Public Works Department, was present at the discussion with the then Minister. The Minister indicated to me he would make finance available and the figure mentioned was \$10 000. That is the figure which was queried by the member for Warren when he moved a motion last week. On the same day I took Mr Whittington to the Director of Engineering (Mr Bob Hillman), who after discussion also agreed to the proposal. I then took Mr Whittington to meet the Director of Agriculture (Mr Fitzpatrick), the Deputy Director of Agriculture (Mr Smith), and Dr Peck of the CSIRO. Mr Webster was in attendance. Again we had a discussion and it was agreed there was nothing to lose by implementing a scheme on a trial basis. All those present at the time agreed to co-operate.

I went with Mr Whittington and Mr Loh of the PWD to the catchment area and after months of negotiation with members of the Public Works Department a site was selected for the trial. One of the properties involved was that of Mr L. Craig (Maxon Farm) and the other property was that of Mr McEwen. One of the reasons for selecting this site was that a monitoring unit was already installed there. In my discussions with Mr Whittington I said I thought it would be preferable to keep the costs to a minimum, and he gave consideration to a site where a monitoring unit already existed.

After some months of consultation and discussion with the Public Works Department it was agreed that Mr Whittington could go ahead and put in the banks in the Batalling Creek area. The banks were put in under his direction in January, 1978, at a cost of about \$2 000. I noticed in an answer to a question from the member for Moore last week that an amount of \$2 024 was paid to the contractor by the Public Works Department. Other costs were incurred later on.

The banks were put in after careful drilling, testing, and analysis of the soil. Planning was

undertaken with a view to catching the water as it fell and directing it quickly to the main stream which would then flow down to the dam. The object was to prevent that water flowing through the heavily salt-affected flats in the creek. The basis of the planning of the scheme was to decrease the salinity and improve the quality of the water which flows to the Wellington Dam in this particular tributary.

It was more than a demonstration. It was a pilot test to establish whether a water harvesting technique similar to that being used in the Tennessee Valley in the United States could effectively control the quantity of salt entering the Wellington Dam.

A young farmer from Tammin visited the United States last year to inspect the control measures in the Tennessee Valley. I was able to obtain for him an introduction to the Tennessee Valley Authority at Knoxville in Tennessee. He spent a couple of months with the authority and saw a great deal of what the authority was doing. When he came back he was enthusiastic about the operations and methods of Mr Whittington, which were in line with what he saw in America. He wrote to me recently seeking to obtain a couple of films of the Tennessee Valley to show to a school of young farmers which was to be conducted on Mr Whittington's property, and he said in his letter—

I feel the film has a lot to offer all fields of the environment, including the Public Works Department and its water supplies. And that the work of Mr Whittington is only the beginning of a new agricultural revolution. I only say this because of what I saw in the T.V.A. and also in a very big reclamation program of a desert in California called the San Joaquin valley which is now one of the most productive valleys in the U.S.A., supplying all types of foods and cotton production.

That young farmer is now working with the WISALTS group and is backing the operation 100 per cent.

Data have been obtained from the control measures in the Batalling Creek area and if they prove this type of control is effective it is logical to say it would be preferable to extend the system over a far larger area and monitor it to assess its effect.

The purpose of an interceptor bank is to keep the water in motion once it has started to move and prevent it becoming stationary in low or hollow places. The banks prevent the water passing through soil types in which large

quantities of salts have accumulated over a number of years.

The area of Batalling Creek is 16.6 square kilometres. The catchment area which is being monitored is only 0.1 square kilometres. Figures taken from the report which has been issued by the Public Works Department—they are not my figures or Mr Whittington's figures—show that 584 millimetres of rain fell on the area during 1978. Over the total area the input of water was 9.690 million cubic metres, and over the interceptor area covered by the banks it was 58 400 cubic metres. The measured output of the total area was 513 000 cubic metres, and in the interceptor area it was 6 029 cubic metres. The chlorine or salt input in the total area was 40 700 kilograms, and in the interceptor area 245 kilograms. The chloride output over the total area was 1.175 million kilograms, and in the interceptor area 475 kilograms. These figures are taken from the pilot test. From them we can calculate what the total figures would be if the whole area were controlled by the bank system.

From these figures it can be claimed that if the interceptor banks had controlled the total area, the bank system would have yielded an extra 483 000 cubic metres of water to the dam and the salt content would have been reduced by 1 096 150 kilograms. Those figures were taken from the report. It is difficult to understand how some of the conclusions are arrived at by the departments.

Another aspect of the report is that none of the recordings was made inside the interceptor experimental area. That was an oversight and I will refer to it later. Eleven bore holes have been drilled for the purpose of evaluating the quantity of water, the rise and fall, and so on. All the bore holes were numbered. There are now more than 11. I understand something like 20 bore holes have been drilled.

If all the data in the trial to evaluate the quality and depth of the water moving down the slope are desirable, it might be asked what we are trying to monitor. If we are trying to monitor the water movement down the valley from some five kilometres up the valley and some 200 metres above the valley floor, those bore holes will do a good job. If on the other hand we were trying to monitor the water coming from beneath the interceptor drains, the data would be completely irrelevant and the bores would be completely under the influence of water coming down the valley. No bore holes or tests were made within the control area on Mr McEwen's property (CG 2529).

It was stated that it was envisaged the data would come from the major gauging weir, which is some 300 metres down from the interceptor bank, which forms the head of the control area. I discussed the matter with Mr Whittington. I understand he had discussed it with Public Works Department officers and it was agreed that it was undesirable to carry out unnecessary monitoring, but that the monitoring should be carried out where genuine results could be obtained in the control area. It was agreed that if it was desirable to monitor the water moving down the slope and under the interceptor bank, bore holes would have to be drilled on Crown grant 2529, to which I referred previously. One bore hole would need to be between the preliminary bank and the control bank, and the other would need to be placed below the control bank so that water coming down from the hill would not affect the monitoring. That system would give the accurate monitoring required.

This trial should be carried out in any area which is subject to the Country Areas Water Supply Act. It is not intended that monitoring of salinity levels in the control area should be carried out by taking pasture counts. It has been established already that pasture can grow where soil salinity levels are higher than those desirable for reservoir catchment areas. The object of the trial is to find a method by which to reduce the salinity level, rather than to grow pastures.

It has been assessed that if the total area had been under the control of the interceptor banks, the output of water from the catchment area could have been increased by almost 200 per cent, and the salinity level of the water could have been decreased by up to 90 per cent. Surely that is what we are aiming for: a decrease in the salinity of the water being diverted to the dam.

Most people agree that the reason salt accumulates on the flats is that water collects in low areas, which become waterlogged. Oxygen is forced out of the soil, and without oxygen the soil structure collapses. Then the solids or soil particles settle and compact on the clay pan or hard rock base. Over the years the waterlogging builds up, and the saturation point of the soil slowly reaches the surface. The continuing process of the settling of the solids causes salts to be squeezed upwards. As the process continues accumulated salts near the surface are picked up by the water and washed down into the catchment areas. When one examines the report of the Public Works Department, one finds this is referred to, although perhaps not in great detail.

In the report of the Public Works Department reference was made to table 5. If one studies that

table one finds it shows that if all the water entering Batalling Creek from the shallow subsurface was cut off by interceptor banks and no action was taken to control the deep groundwater flow, high stream salinities could be expected for at least the next 300 years.

It is proposed that the system under trial could be extended to cut off the water from the higher slopes, which would avoid penetration to deeper groundwater, and this would be effective in cutting off that supply. When we look at the figures we find there is nothing to show where the deep groundwater is running into the creek.

It is also stated in the report that less than 10 per cent of the salt being discharged into Batalling Creek comes from the shallow subsurface soils. This again illustrates that the banks are designed to catch the less saline water, and that the flow of water through the shallow subsurface soil is much greater than the deep groundwater flow. This shows that the scheme is doing what it was designed to do, and it proves that the shallow subsurface flow does not carry a high concentration of salts. That is what the scheme is all about.

Some criticisms have been made regarding the effectiveness of this scheme, yet after analysing the tables presented in the report the only conclusion we can draw is that it has been proven to be effective. The report appears to be rather narrow in its analyses; and it appears that those responsible for writing it missed the main object of the scheme inasmuch as it was aimed at being a harvesting technique. It is a different system from that applied by WISALTS on farming areas.

Another report has been prepared by Mr A. Conacher of the Department of Geography, University of Western Australia. He apparently examined the PWD report and made constructive comments in respect of the banks installed in the Batalling Creek area. In his report he raised some pertinent questions regarding the effectiveness of the banks.

Mr Conacher offers some constructive criticism. He says the bank layout could be improved. He believes the banks have been proven to be sufficiently effective for further trials to be implemented.

I would like to refer to some of the comments Mr Conacher made in his report. As I said, he referred to the design of the banks; and I have pointed out that the purpose of the banks is different from the system applied to farming properties. Of course, on farming properties a drain bank can be installed to run water away

into a lake system, or a creek; or else there is a level bank which holds water where it falls and prevents it from running to lower levels. Mr Conacher referred to the intention of the design of the banks as being to increase the amount of the throughflow to the creek and to keep the water from passing through the heavily saline valley floors.

On page 5 of his report he comments that the results of the work are most encouraging. He says he wants to consider the other shortcomings in the PWD report. He goes on to say that about 88 per cent of the rainfall is unaccounted for, 2.1 per cent is distributed as surface runoff, 8.2 per cent is distributed as shallow subsurface throughflow, and 1.7 per cent is distributed by deep groundwater seepage.

Mr Conacher says that evapotranspiration and soil storage would not account for the remaining 88 per cent of the rainfall, which suggests that the data needs to be re-examined. He comments further in respect of the throughflow and groundwater components and suggests they may be subject to considerable error.

He then refers to a trial which he says is nowhere near adequate in the area in which it has been carried out. He says it should be extended to give a wider coverage over a large area so that accurate monitoring can take place and accurate results may be obtained. If this were done the effectiveness of the trial could be proven one way or the other. It would mean, of course, that the banks would have to be installed right up to the highest point of the slope.

Mr O'Connor: How many hectares would that cover?

Mr McPHARLIN: The area is over 16 square kilometres in respect of the scheme in question but, of course, catchment areas vary in size.

Mr Conacher then refers to table 4 of the report prepared by the Public Works Department. His comments in this respect are most interesting; and I have noted them and checked the figures. He says that if the amount of rainfall distributed as throughflow—that is, the throughflow which is the water running down to the shallow subsurface—is 4.8 times greater than that distributed to deep groundwater seepage, and if the quantity of salts distributed to the stream by deep groundwater seepage is 19.4 times greater than that distributed by throughflow, it follows that any increase of the throughflow discharged to the stream would reduce the stream's salt concentration. Those figures are taken from data and tests referred to in the Public Works

Department report. I refer to table 4 on page 23 of the report.

Further, if a much more substantial diversion of throughflow were to result in a significant reduction of deep groundwater seepage—that means, of course, if one puts the banks through to the tops of the slopes—one would not have the water running down; it would be caught by the banks and would run down into the creek. Such an action would improve the quality of the stream water further. However, the system that is applied there, of course, is really too small to give us the sorts of results that we were looking for. Mr Whittington endeavoured to keep costs down—and I think that was one of his objectives. I remember discussing the matter with him. In retrospect, I believe we could have extended the scheme further than we did.

Mr H. D. Evans: What amount did Mr Whittington understand he had to spend?

Mr McPHARLIN: The member for Warren was not here a while ago. The figure quoted to me by the Minister was up to \$10 000.

Suggestions have been made for the improvement of this system. Of course I have mentioned one of those—that there be an improvement in the layout of the banks. There could be extension of the banks up the slopes, right to the tops of the hills. In addition, there could be a monitoring such as the engineers and the officers of the Public Works Department think desirable to obtain the required results.

It is encouraging to learn that an analysis has been made. It is encouraging also to read some of the comments that have been made by the Public Works Department. In that regard, Mr Conacher indicates that he believes the method is showing sufficiently encouraging results for a further expansion of the trial.

A number of other reports referring to the problems of salinity and the problems of salt land encroachment in a number of areas are available. As I said earlier, it is a tremendous problem and a serious problem. In moving this motion, I am doing it with all the sincerity I can muster, because I believe in what I am saying. I believe it is necessary for action to be taken now. We should not wait. Many hectares of land are going out of production each year. I have received letters from farmers; I have had discussions with WISALTS and others. I can give percentages and the total hectares of farmland going out of production.

This situation has developed into an adversary situation. That is unfortunate. I believe it is necessary for all those who have views on control

measures to co-operate. They should work together, because the problem is so important that it should not be the subject of diversity. It should be the subject of co-operation and assistance, with all parties concerned working together to try to achieve what we all desire—the control of salt land encroachment and salinity.

One of the arguments that has developed, which seems to be the crux of the matter, is that the scientists say it is a rising water table which is causing the spread of salt in many areas of farming land. The tests which have been done by the WISALTS group indicate that that argument is erroneous. Other people do not agree that is the reason for the spread of salt in many areas.

I have a report compiled by Mr Conacher. In that he says—

It is the relatively recent appearance of this perched water—

A perched water table means that the water goes down to a hard pan underneath the surface; it does not go any further, but flows down and accumulates in the low levels. The report continues—

—which first manifests itself in wet spots and waterlogging, preceding the formation of surface salt crystals—which is considered to account for the widespread belief in the rising water table theory. In fact the groundwater table has not risen in any strict sense (in nearly all cases examined in the field it is unable to do so, being confined by the overlying impermeable hardpan); rather, a new, perched, soil water table has developed.

That is the crux of the argument that is causing a great deal of dissent in some areas. Until some settlement or compromise is arrived at, and until there is a realisation that the opposing sides should co-operate and work towards the results we need, the salt problem will continue. I have always advocated the need for co-operation. There is a need for all interested parties to work together.

I have another paper prepared by Mr Conacher. In that paper he is reporting on salinity problems in south-western Australia.

Mr Tonkin: Is he a sound man, do you think?

Mr McPHARLIN: Well, he is a senior lecturer in the Department of Geography at the university. I have met Mr Conacher on one occasion only. He appears to have devoted a lot of time and study to this problem. He has prepared a few papers, and he has presented them in various places. I am not

sure of his qualifications; but on my reading of his papers, he seems to have the facts.

I will make brief reference to some of the tests conducted by Mr Conacher. In relation to the theory about the rising water table he says—

Yet, strangely, to the best of my knowledge there is no published, substantial empirical evidence to support this widely accepted hypothesis.

Tests were carried out on bores in a number of areas. Those bores were monitored to see whether this hypothesis was correct—to see whether the claim was borne out. Mr Conacher's comments are as follows—

Most monitored bores have shown a decline in groundwater table levels following bauxite mining in the State forests, and in only one case was a rise recorded (up to 2.0 m between 1975 and 1977).

In another research program, 70 wheatbelt farmers who have salinity problems on their properties were interviewed between 1970 and 1972 and asked (amongst other questions) whether there was any long-term historical evidence of increased water levels in their farm wells and bores. (In passing it should be noted that even if water levels had risen this would not necessarily substantiate the hypothesis, since the actual pathways of water movements into the wells and bores would still need to be established). No such evidence was found in the York-Mawson area, 100-150 km east of Perth (Conacher and Murray, 1973, p 51). In the Dalwallinu-Pithara area (250 km north-northeast of Perth), which has experienced a rapid increase in the areas affected by soil salinisation over the past 15-20 years, water levels had risen in five bores and wells, fallen in three, had remained unchanged in 13, and in 30 cases the farmers did not know (Conacher *et al.*, 1972, Table I). The authors concluded that in that area 'there is no conclusive evidence of a widespread rise in the groundwater table' (p 5).

That argument is continuing between the two main protagonists. There is a need for understanding between the parties so that the results we all want may be achieved.

In the last 30 years Mr Whittington has spent a great deal of time in achieving what he has achieved in this field. He has worked closely with the Department of Agriculture for many years. He is prepared to speak highly of the work the officers of the department have done with him and for him. Over a great deal of time, when Mr

Whittington found he was not obtaining results, he applied the methods which he now advocates. He says that these methods have not been proved in a short time of testing. I have a report which indicates it took eight years before he saw the results he was seeking. That involved eight years' expenditure of his own money and eight years of his own work. Over a period of 30 years, this system has been put to the test, and it has shown results.

There are people who do not believe that what Mr Whittington is saying and what the WISALTS people are doing is effective. There are those who say that the results have not been proved. I was informed two days ago that the membership of WISALTS has now reached 900. I was informed also that hundreds of farmers are constructing interceptor banks in many areas. Those banks cost approximately \$1 000 a mile. It is not possible to give an accurate figure because of the variation in soil types and the depths to which excavation is required. The figure of \$1 000 a mile is a rough one.

Many farmers who have been engaged in the industry all their lives have endeavoured to control the spread of salinity in the soil on their properties. They have found that Mr Whittington's system gives the results they want, and they are prepared to spend money to give the system a trial. I know of farmers who tried the system some time ago and they are now repeating the process. They believe that it is the solution to what has concerned them for a considerable time.

Farmers do not spend large sums of money lightly. They do not go into such systems with their eyes closed. They study a system thoroughly before spending any money and they are very careful in their planning. They consider a system carefully before they try it on their own properties.

Many miles of these banks are being installed at the present time. It has been proved that the system works. If any member of the House desires, he may easily make arrangements to inspect the operations. He can go and see the banks being installed. Members would be most impressed with the results of this work.

I would like to refer to the restrictions in the water catchment areas referred to in the motion. There is a need to examine the system which has been applied in the Wellington catchment area. It would be a step in the right direction if, with the co-operation of the farmers in the water catchment areas concerned, a system of the type I have mentioned, allowing a percentage of clearing and at the same time installing control banks in

selected positions, was utilised. This would offer encouragement to the farmers and it would go a long way towards making up for the dissension caused by placing controls in these particular areas.

We would like the farmers to be allowed to continue to clear the land so their properties are viable propositions. Such a system would also offer a solution by which the salinity of water in the catchment areas could be controlled. However, a system of clearing controls and installation of banks should be administered with the co-operation of the farmers and the departments concerned.

Nobody is opposed to reducing the salinity of our water supplies. However, the system used should be operated on a co-operative basis so that the landholders and the departments concerned are satisfied with the results.

It is to the credit of the former Minister for Water Supplies that he allowed the installation of a bank system in the Batalling Creek area. In the short time it has been operational, it has proved the benefit of the scheme.

I believe the Government is prepared to examine the situation further so that a scheme may be adopted which will be satisfactory to everyone concerned. At the present time Professor Holmes is examining the WISALTS and interceptor bank systems in the Batalling Creek area on behalf of the Government. He is in Perth now after spending some time in the field. I hope he will make a report in the not-too-distant future. I hope also he has approached the matter with an open mind, examining what has been done, and listening to the people involved. It is vitally important that the experts realise a number of farmers support the system. These men are experienced farmers and they are thoroughly conversant with the problems. They should be heeded.

I believe we have a system which offers far more hope than any previous one. I am aware the Forests Department is advocating reforestation. I know some people view this as the answer to the problem. However, in my opinion it is impractical to advocate reforestation over large areas of farmland when a better system is available. Reforestation can be a very costly exercise.

A figure of \$600 a hectare for reforestation is contained in the report on the Collie catchment area. I question that figure, because I believe it would cost a great deal more than \$600 a hectare. The cost of the bank system we are talking about needs to be analysed as it is dependent upon the terrain and the type of soil in the area. I would

hazard a guess, however, that the cost would not be much greater than that of reforestation.

There is a great deal more I could say about this matter, because I have had much experience with it. I could refer to a number of Press reports and quote water flow figures in some of the areas where the banks have been installed on farm properties. I could tell members about the personal views of the farmers who are most enthusiastic about the scheme. These farmers are repeating the process on their properties and they will continue to do so, irrespective of the criticism levelled at them.

Mr O'Connor: How much time would Mr Whittington be spending on this matter?

Mr McPHARLIN: This man conducts schools on the system. Only three other people have "A"-class certificates. Mr Whittington travels around as much as he can. He has his own farm to look after. He is not out all the time, but he is out a great deal of time. There are three others who help and who go out advising farmers, so giving Mr Whittington some time at home. He flew to my place recently and examined some surveys I had done. This is the sort of thing he does all the time.

I trust the House will give earnest consideration to my motion and that the Government will favourably consider it.

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

Mr COWAN: I formally second the motion.

MR O'CONNOR (Mt. Lawley—Minister for Labour and Industry) [6.09 p.m.]: I think it would be fair to say that every member in this House is concerned with the salinity problem throughout the State. There are many areas of the State where this problem is creeping into farming land, creeks, rivers, and our general water supplies. I think we would all agree that the future prosperity in much of our farming country depends in some way on our being able to curb the increase of salinity.

I intend to discuss other aspects of this problem tonight which indicate we should be a little careful in just how quickly we move into the suggestions contained in this motion. I do not in any way criticise Mr Whittington for what he has done and for what he is doing. He is very sincere in his work and a number of people have indicated that the results he has achieved have been very satisfactory from their own point of view.

We must also realise there is a difference between curbing salinity of farmlands and curbing salinity in our water supplies. We can see that the department and Mr Whittington are at

variance on how to tackle the problem. It is important we know the right manner in which we should tackle the problem and in which direction we should head.

The member for Mt. Marshall has moved for an immediate full-scale trial of the interceptor bank system. He has already mentioned that the Government has not been lax in this area. He made the point that in 1977 when he brought Mr Whittington to my office I mentioned that the Government and I accepted that there was a great problem with salt creeping into properties and that we were concerned as to what we could do to assist farmers. I asked Mr Whittington what he wanted to do, how he intended to go about it, and what sort of money would be required. He indicated that approximately \$10 000 would be needed to establish a trial that would give some indication of what the position would be in due course.

Subsequently, as was pointed out by the member for Mt. Marshall, discussions were arranged with Mr Hillman and other members of the department in an effort to ascertain the best area for a trial to be held and just what should be done. At that time we had—and still have—grave concern regarding the salinity creeping into the Wellington Dam. The suggestion was made that that area be tried. We wanted to see whether Mr Whittington's scheme could do something about salinity in that area.

The actual spot was selected by Mr Whittington himself and it was considered to be a good area as far as runoff was concerned. The trial is now in its second year. As I said, it was supported financially by the Government. The banks were put in by bulldozers under the direction of Mr Whittington to ensure they were established in the right places so that the best effect could be achieved. The area had other suitable requirements such as gauges and bores. Three additional bores were sunk. Mr Whittington objected to where some of the bores had been placed and so others were established to his satisfaction.

Some time later he approached the Minister explaining that insufficient money was available. When asked how much additional money he needed he replied, "\$3000" and the Minister's reply was, "You have it." That clearly indicates the Government's stand. It indicates the Government is concerned with the problem of salinity and that it is trying to do something to overcome this problem.

There is a great difference between salinity on farmland and salinity in creeks and rivers. From



the information provided to me by the department it seems the Whittington interceptor banks are used to run the salt off the ground so that the ground becomes suitable for grazing or pasture.

The problem in the Wellington Dam area started in 1950 when clearing commenced; clearing was severe by 1960. It seems that the water levels started to rise and the underground water is very much saltier than the surface water. There is only a very small percentage of salt in the top 1.2 metres of soil. Much of the salt has been deposited by rain over hundreds of years. Members might know that rain contains about 80 parts per million of salt and over a period of time this salt accumulates and seeps underground.

Mr Davies: Isn't the environment able to cope with salt of that quantity?

Mr O'CONNOR: Not in all cases. When the water rises it brings the salt up with it which seeps into the streams and rivers. The department has indicated that it would take a long time—up to 300 years—to clear up this problem—that is, if it could be satisfactorily cleared up at all.

This indicates some of the differences between salinity on farmland and salinity in creek and stream beds.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Mr O'CONNOR: Prior to the tea suspension I indicated that the Government was certainly interested in the Whittington operation. I am pleased I have so many listeners on the Opposition side!

Mr Ridge: Only little but mighty.

Mr O'CONNOR: When discussing this matter earlier this evening I made it very clear that the Government was interested in the scheme. The Government has provided money and expertise from within its department to assist Mr Whittington. The department provided finance for an area selected by Mr Whittington at Batalling Creek to construct the interceptor bank and it was indicated that when he requested further money this would be provided.

Mr Whittington's scheme has had little chance to be proved because it is only in its second year of operation and at this stage it would be difficult to give any realistic details of the results. However the departmental officers believe there is a substantial difference between arranging to clear salt from farming land as against a creek bed area or stream because of the variation and the large amount of salt they claim is in the deeper underground waters. The department claims—and I do not believe Whittington refutes this—that when the clearing does occur the water rises and then moves into the streams.

As a result of the interest shown the Government has appointed a Professor Holmes from the Flinders University to study the problem. Professor Holmes is in Western Australia at the present time. He is a professor of soil science and a man regarded very highly in this particular field, not only in Australia, but throughout the rest of the world also. Professor Holmes will try to ascertain whether the trial that has been carried out by Mr Whittington is adequate, whether the project should be abandoned, whether it should be extended or a new trial commenced.

In view of these aspects and the fact that Professor Holmes will report to the Government, I believe it would be premature to proceed with the motion requesting that finance be provided for a full-scale trial of the interceptor bank system. The department has requested Professor Holmes to advise whether Mr Whittington's project is adequate and whether in his opinion the trial should be proceeded with. I have requested that he confer with the Department of Agriculture, CSIRO and any other interested people in this field to advise me so that the department can ascertain what should be done.

I do not think any member would refute that Mr Whittington is sincere in his efforts. In fact many farmers have been using the interceptor bank system—which has probably cost them millions of dollars—and some for as long as 30 years. So, as far as the department is concerned, we should be able to ascertain from those workings what has been done in the farming areas, whether this is satisfactory on farming areas, whether this is satisfactory on farming properties over a period of time, and whether it is satisfactory in particular soils or farming areas.

The Government has spent in the vicinity of \$30 000 in the Batalling Creek area on Mr Whittington's project to provide special gauges, sample bores and maintenance of the bank system. Since these interceptor banks have been installed some 500 samples have been taken in this area to ascertain results. As the project is in its early stages it would not be appropriate to make an assumption now of the position. Although I have indicated clearly that the Government is concerned and has been supporting Mr Whittington's scheme up to this stage, it will be some time before we receive a definite analysis of the position of the banks and the salinity in the streams. Until Professor Holmes reports to us we will not know exactly what the position is.

The member for Warren indicated that an international symposium on salinity should be

convened. The Cabinet subcommittee consisting of senior officers of the department has been working for some time to prepare a conference of this nature. Letters have been sent to the Salinity Laboratory in California to obtain the names of people who should be present at a symposium such as this.

At the moment Dr Mulcahy from the Department of Conservation and the Environment is in the United States to make inquiries to ascertain who should be present at this symposium.

The motion, as presented by the member for Mt. Marshall, states that the Government should provide funds to enable a full-scale trial of the Whittington interceptor bank system. I believe that at this stage it would be premature, especially prior to Professor Holmes' report, and therefore I oppose the motion.

**MR GREWAR (Roe)** [7.38 p.m.]: The salt problem has been of major concern in Western Australian agricultural areas. Hundreds of thousands of hectares of farming land have been lost as a result of salt encroachment. Regrettably this loss has involved some of our more fertile land in the agricultural areas. Probably much of this land would not have been cleared had we known the problems that would arise. Farmers over the past 50 to 60 years have watched land being affected by salt encroachment. This problem is not new to agriculture. In fact it has occurred in many countries developing land. The problem has been widely studied and in many cases solutions have been found.

In most cases the methods used have involved the flushing of the soil with large quantities of fresh water. However in our system of agriculture we do not have water surplus available to carry out this type of technology. There are other methods involving engineering drainage schemes. Unfortunately our type of agriculture precludes this type of technology on economic grounds. We must live with this problem and try to find the solution to it. We know ultimately, that in the higher rainfall areas our salt problems will disappear but it will take several hundred years for that to occur. In drier areas it could take even tens of thousands of years.

Considerable experimentation into this problem has been carried out by farmers and the Department of Agriculture. Recently Mr Whittington proposed a new technique. The farmers have become desperate and they have tended to cling to any suggestion put before them which appeared to be a solution, the same as

farmers have done in the case of many other situations.

The trouble stems from the translocation of stored salts downward following the clearing of native vegetation. These salts have built up over a long geological period. Native vegetation is the most efficient means of preventing a rise in the water table, and until clearing takes place problems do not occur. The natural vegetation is usually replaced with crops and pastures, which allow more water to percolate downwards through the soil, taking with it the salt which eventually reaches the water table. At that stage there is a rise in the salinity of the water table and when the water table rises to the surface, or near to the surface, there is a manifestation of the salt problem.

The problem varies considerably according to the soil type involved, the rainfall—the amount and the incidence—the topography of the country, and the depth of the water table. In the catchment areas of our major dams throughout the south-west we have had an increase in the salinity of our water, and also we have had a rise in our water table. That water table eventually reaches the streams and they become saltier than they were before clearing took place.

The increase in salinity was the reason for the Government's restrictions on clearing in the south-west. The bans were an attempt to prevent the problem becoming any worse, and to prevent our south-west rivers turning saline. Further clearing in these areas will manifest the problem.

The solutions and theories propounded by the Department of Agriculture have been studied thoroughly. I refer members to an excellent publication produced by Clive Malcolm which explains the salt problem simply, fairly, and factually. It is available in the Parliament House Library and I recommend to all members to read it.

I would like to suggest some methods of combating the salt problem. Firstly, we could do nothing and let the problem go away. In high rainfall areas that would be over a period of 300 years and, in dry areas, it would be considerably longer. That would be the defeatist attitude.

Another suggestion is to utilise the water more efficiently where it falls. Ideally, we should simulate the native vegetation which uses the water very efficiently. We could replace our forests with better pasture plants—perennials—in the same situation which would utilise the water. We could improve our annual pasture species by introducing more efficient water users. We could encourage better growth with more fertilisers. We

could encourage the planting of trees under the agro-forestry system of agriculture.

A third method would be to expedite drainage in order to speed the transport of the saline water to the sea. In most cases this technique would involve considerable engineering technology, and would be very costly. Possibly it would be practicable only in situations where water was required for domestic purposes.

From my understanding of the Whittington system, it seems impossible to comprehend how this method of interceptor banks would be a solution to the water table salinity problem. From what I know of the interceptor bank proposal the only advantage would be to intercept surface water or water above our subsoils preventing this water from waterlogging on lower slopes.

We have a much cheaper method, by using contour banks. As the Minister has explained, the Public Works Department has conducted an investigation into the Whittington scheme at Batalling Creek and monitoring has been carried out over the last two years. I will admit the monitoring has been carried out for a limited time, and I do not think has been long enough to observe any positive results. However, a trend has appeared in the figures which the PWD has produced. That trend substantiates the theory that the Whittington interceptor bank system will not be a solution to the problem. It is not working. We have the proponents of the Whittington scheme now offering the excuse that the trial system was not properly laid out. They have suggested a modification, including a whole series of banks along the sloping land of the catchment areas.

I have studied the PWD report and I believe it is scientifically factual. The member for Mt. Marshall is most sincere in his endeavours, but he has misread the whole salt problem of the catchment areas.

If water is intercepted, and allowed to percolate downwards, that must result in a rise of the water table and increased stream salinity. Nothing else can happen. If, as the member for Mt. Marshall has suggested, every drop of surface water is trapped and discharged into a stream, that would simulate the native vegetation. That system would work but it would involve considerable earthworks. I suggest other methods should be used, such as a more vigorous pasture growth and contour banks if necessary.

I believe we must wait on the report from the Public Works Department, and also study what Professor Holmes has to say before we commit the Government to further expenditure.

Before leaving this subject I want to stress caution to the farmers of this State who believe that the interceptor bank system is the cure-all. The fact that 900 farmers have carried out experiments with the interceptor bank system on their farms, does not necessarily mean the system is right. The appropriate authority is the Department of Agriculture. Its officers are scientists, and they have studied the problem not only in Australia but world-wide. They are trained in this field. The interceptor banks cost approximately \$1 000 per mile—or per kilometre as the member for Mt. Marshall stated—and that money could be wasted. When I was an officer with the Department of Agriculture I saw many farmers fly off at tangents and use chisel ploughs, rippers, keyline cultivation, and fertiliser fads. The passage of time has disproved all those systems.

I reject the motion until further evidence is available from Professor Holmes and the Batalling Creek experiment.

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

## ELECTORAL: REPRESENTATION AND CONSTITUTION

### *Appointment of Select Committee: Motion*

MR STEPHENS (Stirling) [7.49 p.m.]: I move—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report on—

- (1) The system of representation of electors in both Houses of the Parliament of Western Australia and in particular the value of—
  - (a) the weighting of the non-metropolitan vote;
  - (b) the establishment of provincial town quotas for larger centres outside the metropolitan area;
  - (c) the re-definition of the metropolitan boundary;
  - (d) the election of Members of the Legislative Council by proportional representation on either a State-wide or a regional basis.
- (2) Whether there is a need for amendments to the Constitution—
  - (a) to provide for the better settling of deadlocks between the two Houses of Parliament;

- (b) to place any restrictions or prohibitions upon the power of the Legislative Council to defeat financial measures such as bills, imposing taxation or appropriating revenue;
- (c) to provide for the Legislative Assembly to be elected for a period other than three years.

The questions of electoral reform and the Constitution are both matters of prime importance. Perhaps it is for this reason they tend to be ignored or put aside by members of this House.

I would like to make a few remarks with regard to representation. All of us see ourselves as representatives but it is obvious the word has different meanings, and when it is used by different people it may mean different things. I wish to look at various usages of "representation" as defined by the esteemed British Professor A. H. Birch, author of *Representation*.

Professor Birch finds four usages of this term. Firstly, it is used to mean an agent whose task is to defend or promote certain interests defined by his principal. A representative of this kind is a delegate working to instructions. Secondly, it is used as in the phrase "representative sample", in the way that Parliament may be representative of society because it has the same proportion of doctors, lawyers, farmers, or even unionists.

Mr Pearce: What do you mean by "even unionists"?

Mr STEPHENS: I am quoting Professor Birch. Thirdly, there is symbolic representation in the way that a person may represent a large group symbolically; for example, the appointment of consumer or union representatives on the boards of large corporations.

Professor Birch has another definition of "representation" applying specifically to politics, and this is the one developed by the English Whigs in the late 18th century. The essence of their position was that if Parliament was to be the centre of power, the members of Parliament must be free to act as they thought best in the interests of the nation. Professor Birch says members of the British Parliament cannot be regarded as delegated representatives because they do not act under instructions. Apparently he has not seen this House in operation. On neither side of the House do we see members using, in Burke's words, "unbiased opinion, mature judgment or enlightened conscience" when deciding their attitude to measures before the House; but we see members acting merely as numbers, or in the

"delegate" meaning of the word "representation". Parliamentary government has become Executive government.

Sir Mark Oliphant, former Governor of South Australia, says—

My simple assessment was that the rigorous discipline, within the parties that mattered in our system, could mean the end of democracy in this country. We elect a man because we feel that he will represent us best in Parliament, but once in Parliament he does not represent us any more at all. He represents only his party and like an obedient sheep he wanders into the division lobby to which his party is directed by the whip whenever it is necessary. That is not democracy.

Few if any members of this House could say they have not been forced by this system to vote against their personal opinions. This is not democracy and it is certainly not the representative government which is supposed to have arisen since the time of Edmund Burke. It is an interesting and perhaps salutary lesson to read what Burke had to say on this point. In a speech in 1770 he said—

For my part I shall be compelled to conclude the principle of Parliament to be totally corrupted, and therefore its ends entirely defeated, when I see two symptoms: first, a rule of indiscriminate support to all ministers because this destroys the very end of Parliament as a control, and is a general sanction to misgovernment, and secondly: the setting up of any claims adverse to the right of free elections for this tends to subvert the legal authority by which the House of Commons sits.

These symptoms could also apply to this Parliament, and it is to electoral reform and reform of the operation of this Parliament that I wish to address the bulk of my remarks.

The question may be asked: Why reform? Some will say our electoral system has served us well and for a long time, and that there is no clamour from the public for change at this moment. That may be so and it does not mean this is not the best time to reform. N. Johnson, an Oxford lecturer, says—

If society lets the chances for deliberate change pass by for too long, then it may reach a situation in which real change can be achieved only through force or revolution. Surely it is wiser to contemplate genuine and creative change before that pass has been reached.

There is evidence that Parliament as an institution is losing respect and that politicians are being increasingly derided. I am sure every member has been made aware of that fact. The status of politicians has sunk to the level of used-car salesmen, and I say that with due respect to ex-used-car salesmen.

Mr Jamieson: Many of them are used-car salesmen, as a matter of fact.

Mr STEPHENS: In an editorial on the 29th March, 1976, *The West Australian* said—

There is growing evidence of disquiet among Australians at the way the institution of Parliament is functioning as an arm of democracy. More and more the parliamentary system is coming under scrutiny and suspicion. The behaviour of politicians (of all persuasions) is one reason why the public is losing confidence in the system. But there are others—and in W.A. one of them is the nature of representation.

The editorial goes on to discuss vote weighting and other points which I will raise, and concludes—

The longer inequities and anomalies persist the more the confidence of the people in the parliamentary system will diminish.

This is a serious prospect. How can we sit in this House if the people have no confidence in us or the system? Government can govern and survive only if it is based on consent.

There are two reasons that this motion seeks an inquiry into the system of representation in this State, instead of putting forward one single solution. Firstly, in electoral matters all members of both Houses and whichever party have the right to a say on an electoral system which obviously concerns them intimately. Secondly, and more importantly, the people of the State should have the opportunity to put forward suggestions on the type of system they might prefer. It has been a long time since electors had any direct say in these matters.

The Legislative Assembly was set up with 50 members in 1899 and the last major change was in 1922. Since then only minor change has taken place, with no inquiry or questioning of the system. The changes which have been made were small and motivated largely by party political interest on both sides. Edmund Burke is quoted as having said of parliamentary reform—

The keeping it as a political plaything to be taken up or laid down, just as best might answer the purposes of ambition or convenience, was what could never be right

and what ought not be endured. This reform of Parliament was a pretty subject for men out of office to handle; but he observed that when they got into place, they did not choose to meddle with it; or rather they thought it wiser to extol it to the skies, to talk of its expediency, but always to find an excuse in regard to the time, declaring that the proper opportunity was not come.

Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Crane), it is sad that in the 200 years since he spoke this has not altered. In the short term, political advantage may be an attractive proposition, but in the long term the prestige and respect of Parliament declines. This prospect should be of concern to all members of this House; indeed, to all those with an interest in the continued stability of our whole society.

The weighting of the non-metropolitan vote is a matter raised continually, and it has been the cause of a few letters to the Press over recent times.

Over recent years the Australian Labor Party has discovered the principle of one-vote-one-value, at the same time as it lost the small country seats it once held. The weighting of rural electorates is a well accepted principle in this State, with its vast areas but concentrated population. Let me quote a former Premier who said—

I do not quarrel with that basis of representation in Western Australia, because this is a very vast State; the people in the outback have communication difficulties, their community of interest is different; and therefore I have no objection to their having a louder voice in the government of the country than the person in the metropolitan area.

These words were spoken by Mr John Tonkin, in 1965, and if members wish to read them they appear in Volume 171 of *Hansard*, page 1970. They show that Labor's attraction to the principle of one-vote-one-value is recent.

The weighting of rural electorates is a feature in Canada, in New Zealand, and even in the home of parliamentary democracy, Britain.

Mr Bertram: When was it established in the USA?

Mr STEPHENS: In Great Britain, the Acts of 1944 and 1958—while stating that electorates are to be as near as possible in size to the electoral quota—also state that the rules can be modified where special geographical or other considerations make it desirable. They then go further by making provision for the deliberate over-representation of Scotland and Wales.

In a recent British general election, the electorate of the Western Isles had an enrolment of only 22 040, and the largest district, Antrim South, had an enrolment of 113 645. A similar situation applies in Canada. It is quite apparent that the weighting of voting is still approved in other countries, particularly in those that have followed the Westminster system.

Australian Labor Party members are fond of quoting the decisions of the United States Supreme Court in *Baker v Carr*, 1962, and *Reynolds v Sims*, 1964. We should recognise that these judicial rulings were directed against extremes of disproportion so great as to result in the undesirable effect of stultifying two-party competition, and, in the case of some States, giving permanent power to a rural minority.

The *Baker v Carr* decision, in 1962, directed a redistribution of the State Legislature, which was operating on boundaries unchanged since 1901. The situation in Western Australia has never been carried to such extremes, but some reform is necessary.

*The West Australian* agreed, and in its editorial of the 29th March, 1976, it said—

That does not mean applying the principle of one-vote-one value, which would lead to absolute domination of the state by the metropolitan area. But the present grotesque loadings should be broken down.

In this House on the 14th April, 1976, I said—

Having said that I support the weighted vote principle I am also prepared to concede that there is room for reform.

In the same speech I referred also to the need to alter the Constitution in regard to the position of the Governor and the need for legislation to prevent the abolition of the upper House without holding a referendum of the people. I am very happy to see that the Government acted on both those suggestions, and provisions to this effect are now on the Statute book.

I still support the same view, but rather than offer a solution to the vexed question of the weighing of the non-metropolitan vote, I wish to refer this matter to a Select Committee. A Select Committee, composed of representatives of all parties, would be the most equitable way to deal with the problem. I feel confident that, in a committee atmosphere, a workable compromise would emerge.

I worked on the South Coast Fisheries Study with a committee that was representative of all political parties. I found that outside the glare of the political spotlight the members involved

worked in a spirit of compromise with the aim of obtaining the best possible result. That system worked admirably, and I can see no reason that a Select Committee of the nature I am suggesting in this motion could not work along the same lines.

Another question such a committee could consider is the possibility of a quota for provincial towns outside the metropolitan area. Centres such as Bunbury, Geraldton, Port Hedland, and Albany, perhaps could have a quota somewhere between that of the metropolitan area and the present rural quota. This would be a reasonable concept, as some of these electorates are of a similar size to metropolitan electorates, but are a distance from Perth.

Consequently, a quota between that of rural seats and metropolitan seats seems quite fair. Community of interest would best be served if all the suburbs of provincial towns were included in those electorates rather than the present situation where surrounding rural electorates have some urban encroachment. These suggestions could best be considered by a Select Committee.

The next point is the redefinition of the metropolitan boundary. The Electoral Districts Act, 1947, divided the State into three areas: metropolitan, agricultural mining and pastoral, and the north-west. This much is reasonable; these areas of the State exist, and it is quite fair that they have special representation. However, the present definition of the metropolitan area means that several country seats are, by any other definition, parts of the metropolitan area. The speech of Mr John Tonkin to which I have already referred comments on this point. After saying that he had no objection to the country person having a louder voice than the person in the metropolitan area, he said—

But I do object most strenuously to a person in Kelmscott being regarded as different from a person in Gosnells.

That appears on page 1570 of Volume 171 of *Hansard*.

That was Mr Tonkin's comment in 1965. The situation in 1979 is the same as it was then; at the last election there were 15 942 constituents in the electorate of Gosnells, and there were only 7 411 constituents in the electorate of Kelmscott. You will agree, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Crane) that this situation makes a mockery of community of interest. There is no discernible difference between Gosnells and Kelmscott when travelling along Albany Highway. In fact, part of the electoral boundary between Gosnells and the Darling Range is the Albany Highway. On the

one side of the road is the metropolitan area, and on the other side of the road is the country area; a very arbitrary division.

There are other anomalies in this unrealistic drawing of the metropolitan boundary. The seats of Rockingham, Dale, Darling Range, Kalamunda, Mundaring, and Moore, are either wholly metropolitan area, or have a large component of metropolitan voters. The seat of Moore is historically a rural seat, but it includes much of Wanneroo—the fastest growing local authority area in the State. In the last election half the electors of Moore were metropolitan residents, and with the growth rate in Wanneroo, at the next election Moore will be a city seat with a few under-represented farmers as far up as Moora. Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Crane) you, from your position, would recognise the truth of that statement.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Crane): I can assure the member they are not unrepresented.

Mr STEPHENS: I did not mean unrepresented in that sense; I meant it in the sense of the balance of city representation against country representation.

Rockingham, Joondalup, Armadale, and Midland are being developed by the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority as subregional centres of the metropolitan region. However, those areas, with the exception of Midland, are electorally in the country. There seems to be no logic or reason, other than electoral advantage, in the present boundaries. Some parts of Wanneroo are in the city, while others are in the country. A similar situation occurs in Rockingham-Kwinana, and Armadale-Kelmscott.

Mr Barnett: Which part of Rockingham is not in the metropolitan area?

Mr STEPHENS: The member for Rockingham might know. In the case of Armadale the boundary runs right through the middle of a shopping area. On one side of the road is the country electorate of Dale, and on the other side is the city electorate of Gosnells.

Mr Barnett: I have some sympathy for what you are saying, but get it correct.

Mr STEPHENS: No doubt the member for Rockingham will contribute to the debate later.

Mr Barnett: If I feel it worth while.

Mr STEPHENS: I will not comment on that interjection.

Members may say that the boundary has to be drawn somewhere, and that is perfectly true. However, we should show some consistency and draw the line for the metropolitan area in the

same position as the MRPA draws it; and bear in mind that authority was set up with planning responsibility over the metropolitan region.

When proclaimed, the boundary of the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority included 26 local government areas, including all of Wanneroo, Mundaring, Kalamunda, Armadale-Kelmscott, and Rockingham-Kwinana—all areas which are totally or have large parts classified as non-metropolitan under the Electoral Districts Act.

Mr Pearce: Armadale-Kelmscott is part metropolitan and part non-metropolitan.

Mr STEPHENS: Well, the member can prove me wrong later.

For one purpose, planning, those areas are classified as metropolitan; but electorally they are non-metropolitan. It is interesting to note that the Australian Bureau of Statistics once had its own definition of the Perth statistical division, but it has now changed its definition so that it is identical with that of the MRPA. This House also should change to the same definition for three reasons.

The first reason is that the new boundary would coincide with local government boundaries. Secondly, the boundary would be consistent with the boundaries of the MRPA and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Thirdly, and most importantly, the overwhelming majority of electors live an urban way of life and have the same community of interest.

It is better to have a few rural voters in a predominantly metropolitan seat than to have a situation like that in Moore where a large country seat is dominated by a concentrated urban region. If the boundary of the MRPA—a more logical one—were adopted, then obviously the proportion of rural seats to metropolitan seats would have to be altered; but this aspect would be best left to a Select Committee.

Many words have been spoken on the need for the reform of the Legislative Council, perhaps even more than on electoral reform for the Legislative Assembly.

The present system in the Council has been virtually unchanged since 1963 when the State was divided into 15 provinces instead of 10, and adult franchise with compulsory enrolment and compulsory voting was introduced. In 1976, as we all know, the number of provinces was increased to 16.

Before the 1965 election the Legislative Council had a property franchise; in fact, Western Australia was the second-last State to abolish

property franchise, the last State being South Australia.

Since then, however, South Australia and New South Wales have reformed their upper Houses; but Western Australia retains a system in which the largest province, North Metropolitan, had an enrolment at the 20th January, 1977, of 84 942, and the smallest province, Lower North, had an enrolment of 5 743. That is a ratio of 15:1. Some rural weighting is fair and desirable, but proportions like 15:1 are far too extreme.

An editorial in *The West Australian* of the 29th March, 1976, said—

The worst aspect of the present system is its application to Legislative Council provinces in which non-metropolitan electors exercise about three times the voting power of their city cousins. Council weighting should be no greater than exists for Assembly seats.

The Australian Labor Party has put forward proposals at different times for the abolition of the Legislative Council. More recently it has proposed that the Council be elected by proportional representation. The first suggestion is untenable and would never be agreed to by the people of this State. However, the second suggestion has some merit.

Mr Pearce: Except that you didn't vote for it when we proposed it.

Mr STEPHENS: Perhaps the argument presented at that stage was not sufficiently convincing.

Mr Pearce: It takes six months to convince you.

Mr STEPHENS: A scheme of proportional representation for the Legislative Council could achieve two ends; it could make the House more democratic and also could help it better to achieve its professed function of being a House of Review. The Australian Labor Party proposal is to elect the Council by proportional representation on a State-wide basis, and although a case can be made for this it would not seem logical to have regional vote weighting for the Assembly but not for the Council. It would not be difficult to follow the suggestion of *The West Australian* that Council weighting should be no greater than exists for Assembly seats.

This could be done by electing by proportional representation members from the three electoral regions in the same proportions as for the Assembly seats for those regions. This State almost adopted proportional representation as far back as 1907, when the matter was referred to a Select Committee. One of the books referred to

by that Select Committee was entitled *Representation* and was written by Lord Avebury. Lord Avebury said—

Among the various systems which have been proposed I believe, with the proportional representation society that the single transferable vote is on the whole the best; that any country that adopts it will secure the three great requisites of Representation; namely, power to the majority, a hearing to the minority, and lastly, what is of scarcely less importance, the representation of every considerable party and section by its best and ablest leaders.

Other States have adopted proportional representation for the upper House, the most recent being New South Wales where the first directly elected Council in that State's history now exists. In Tasmania a system of proportional representation has existed for the whole of this century.

Mr Jamieson: That is in the Assembly.

Mr STEPHENS: Yes. Proportional representation would enable the Legislative Council better to achieve the historic function of upper Houses; that is, to act as Houses of Review for legislation.

The way the Legislative Council functions is largely determined by the Constitution, and this is another area of our system which could profitably be examined by a Select Committee. Members of this House know the provisions of the Constitution, and I will not go into detail about them. However, certainly there are sections in the Constitution which could be examined profitably by a committee.

Perhaps there may be a better way of resolving deadlocks between the Houses. The current situation with regard to financial Bills is that the Council can reject but not amend them. The Council can send the Assembly to the polls, but it is not itself obliged to face the electorate. As the editorial in *The West Australian* of the 29th March, 1976, said—

The Council is one of the most strongly entrenched Upper Houses of any Parliament. It has the same powers as the Australian Senate but not the same obligations. Council members could refuse to grant Supply to a government, yet be immune from the consequences of such a step. At the least the State Parliament needs double-dissolution machinery that could be invoked if that course were ever taken. The longer inequities and anomalies persist the more the



confidence of the people in the parliamentary system will diminish.

That indicates good, sound common sense.

The confidence of the people in the parliamentary system has diminished and will continue to do so unless reform is considered and implemented. At the moment the Legislative Council merely gives a cursory glance at legislation from this House and passes it. We all know how long they sit in the other Chamber.

Historically the Council, which has for its entire history been held by non-Labor Parties, has rejected legislation only when there is a Labor Government in the Assembly. This is not democracy, and it is certainly not reviewing legislation under the present Government. The Council sits for very few days in any year but this need not be the case if a few simple reforms were instituted.

The Senate was once in a similar situation but two reforms have improved the prestige of the Senate and increased the respect of the general public. These were the introduction of proportional representation in 1949 and the setting up of a committee system on a bipartisan basis throughout the 1960s, which of course continues to this day.

If the Legislative Council could adopt these reforms, it would once again regain a central place in the government of this State in the same way as the Senate regained its lost prestige in the 1960s. A committee system in the Legislative Council would enable it to act truly as a House of Review; looking closely at legislation, reviewing past legislation, overseeing some aspects of the Public Service and conducting inquiries where submissions are sought from the public. Ample precedents for all these activities exist in the Senate. Let us put the Legislative Council to work; it could fulfil a valuable function.

The longer reform of the electoral system and the functioning of Parliament is delayed the more difficult it becomes. Attitudes towards reform, no matter how well-intentioned, run aground on the rock of party electoral advantage, which is the reason the motion seeks a Select Committee. A committee could invite public submissions, consider them carefully and, after a time, would be bound to reach compromise agreed to by all parties.

The alternative to reform is to keep the system as it is and watch Parliament and politicians sink even lower in the eyes of the public. This is unacceptable.

Our system is based on the consent of the governed. How far can the confidence of the

people in the parliamentary system diminish before it can be said that we do not have the consent of the governed? The people must be shown that the parliamentary system is organic and dynamic, capable of change and reform or else their confidence in the system will continue to diminish.

There was a time in the long history of parliamentary government since Burke when a member could stand up in a Parliament, make a speech, and persuade the members of the House of the correctness of his cause, then a free vote would be taken. It is sad that the members of this House, even if they agree with what I have said, will not act accordingly but will wait for the Whip's instructions.

As S. E. Finer says—

The House as such has been reduced to the role of a pianola playing out jaded tunes that have been recorded elsewhere.

Mr Davies: Sales tax has been reduced on pianolas.

Mr STEPHENS: This is not parliamentary government, it is not representation, and if the trend continues it will not be democracy. Parliamentary government is a great institution and has a long and glorious history, but to survive it has to be capable of change and reform. A Select Committee of the House with representatives from all parties would be a step along the right path. Western Australia once led the rest of Australia in electoral reforms and Australia led the world, but the world and the rest of Australia have passed us by.

I submit my motion for the consideration of the House. I sincerely hope the Government will allow its members a free vote so that the House can pass judgment on the arguments put forward in the debate which will ensue.

Mr Skidmore: I thank that is a reasonable request.

Mr Sibson: Members opposite are never allowed a free vote; they are led by the nose!

Mr Jamieson: You will get yourself punched on the nose if you keep that up, and it will not be by me.

Mr STEPHENS: The only time the member for Bunbury ever speaks in this place is by interjection from the back blocks; I do not know why he bothers to sit in this Chamber.

I commend my motion to the House and trust that it receives favourable consideration.

Mr COWAN: Mr Speaker, I formally second the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr O'Neil (Deputy Premier).

## ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT BILL

### *Second Reading*

MR JAMIESON (Welshpool) [8.27 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill contains only one proposal; namely, to add to ballot papers the party designations of the candidates in the election. However, the Bill is not as simple as that statement might indicate, because a number of things must be done to ensure party designations are properly appended to the ballot paper.

This proposition has been advanced in this House on several occasions previously—usually by members representing the Pilbara. Back in the 1950s, the next member for Pilbara (Mr Rodoreda) introduced a Bill such as this. However, he met with little success; he got through some of the Bill, but it eventually lapsed because there were complications in some of its clauses. The cause was taken up in the 1960s by the next member for Pilbara (Mr Arthur Bickerton), but again the legislation failed to reach the Statute book. However, there was some debate on that occasion.

Since that time, the matter has received some consideration in the other Chamber in that last year the Hon. Robert Hetherington sought to introduce this principle in a private member's Bill. However, the Bill was not explicit; it contained only the principle and needed follow-up legislation to bring the idea into effect.

This Bill lays down what is a valid application accompanying a candidate's nomination. It sets out very clearly how this valid nomination and qualification shall apply; it deals with the authorisation of endorsement and the registration of parties. "Party" shall, for the purposes of this Bill, be considered to be a registered body of at least 20 members which has applied to the Chief Electoral Officer to be registered as a party with a party name.

The name of the party and the name and address of the person entitled to endorse the candidates will have to be submitted to the Chief Electoral Officer at specific times so that that officer will be informed and can inform his returning officers of the identity of such persons.

Under the Bill, the Chief Electoral Officer is empowered to adjudicate on questions of similarity in names for which registration is applied. In that way, the public will not be misled.

The Bill also requires that the names registered are of a practical size for printing on a ballot paper. One could not have a name with half a dozen words in it, otherwise there would be complexities in printing the ballot paper with "Smith" and the name of the party alongside. That matter has to be attended to in a manner that would be suited to the purposes of the Chief Electoral Officer.

After the Chief Electoral Officer has received such an application, the provisions of the Bill require that the Chief Electoral Officer publish in the *Government Gazette* a notice of intention to register. Fourteen days will be the time specified for objections to be lodged. Any objections lodged would be heard by a magistrate, who would consider whether there were just grounds for such an objection.

If the Chief Electoral Officer refused to register a group as a party for the purposes of this Bill, he would have to serve notice on the applicant. Under those circumstances, the applicant would have the right to object to the Chief Electoral Officer's rejection, and the applicant could apply to a magistrate for the purpose of having his registration considered further.

The decision of the magistrate in the cases of adjudication on behalf of the Chief Electoral Officer or on behalf of the applicant would be final, and it would not be able to be contested further in law. This could be reasonable. One would not want to take these matters to the Privy Council.

Under the provisions of the Bill, there would be no registration after the issue of writs for an election until the return of such writs. The times for application and appeal would govern the time in which such applications could be made. Such times would be set out in the regulations associated with the Act, should the Bill become law.

There would be provisions for the alteration of registration to cover the appointment of different personnel to authorise the party candidates. Those provisions would be included in the regulations. No further application would be required in such circumstances. However, if a group wanted to alter the name under which it was registered, naturally it would have to go through the normal *pro forma* application for registration, with the required times for objection. Normally a group would be registered for a three-year period, and the registration would be renewed after that time. There would be advice from the Chief Electoral Officer that renewal was required.

The Chief Electoral Officer would also have power to cancel the registration of an organisation which became defunct or which failed to register. That is a normal procedure to which the Chief Electoral Officer would have to give attention.

Candidates who were not members of a registered party would have the word "Independent" printed after their names on the ballot papers. This would indicate clearly that such people were not associated with any party.

For a number of years, there has been a desire in this State to indicate to the voting public which parties the candidates represent. It is all very well to say that in most instances how-to-vote cards are available. However, there are occasions when people cast an absent vote in electorates other than those in which they are enrolled. They are entitled to know the party designations of their candidates. Such people are entitled to know whether their candidates represent the Liberal Party, the National Party, the National Country Party, or the Labor Party. However, the provisions of the present Electoral Act do not permit officers of the department to give such information. That is one of those things that are forbidden.

During the first election in which I was a candidate, I recall that some people who were absent from my electorate voted in Carnarvon. They asked the presiding officer if he could tell them who the Labor candidate was. He said, "No, but I can tell you who the Liberal one is." Of course, that wink was as good as a nod to a blind horse. They thought the officer was trying to influence them, and they reported that to me. I am sure that was not so. I am sure the officer was trying to give them the office. There were only two candidates, so if one was from the Liberal Party it stood to reason that the other one on that occasion would be the Labor candidate.

I do not think departmental officers should be forced to such subterfuges. They should be permitted to indicate clearly the information that is required. The best way to do that is to print the information on the ballot paper.

Members would be well aware that in Federal elections voters are permitted to find out the names and party designations of all the candidates in the State. A voter may cast an absent vote in any polling booth in the State. All booths have a list of candidates for the voter to peruse. Those lists clearly indicate the party designations of the candidates.

I do not think the Federal Act extends to the registration of parties. I have never heard of the Labor Party's having to take out registration.

Nevertheless, the voter has indicated clearly to him what political party the candidate belongs to.

At present our *pro forma* nomination includes "party designation", so that the nominee indicates the party to which he belongs. The nominee can choose to do that if he wishes. There is no compulsion, as I understand it. However, the provision for such information is on the departmental form.

I suggest that if it is good enough in a Federal election to indicate to the voters for which parties the candidates purport to stand, surely in a State election it is just as important for people to know the political affiliation of the candidates.

This matter requires common-sense consideration. Such a move would be of assistance to the voters. It would not be of advantage to any political party. I cannot accept that the argument that it would be bad for the State can be sustained. Indeed, it appears to me that it is high time we stopped kidding ourselves. We should become more sophisticated and indicate to the public the political affiliations of the candidates.

In the less educated countries, we find that very often voters are forced to cast their votes in relation to some sort of sign—the sign of a bull, or the sign of a crocodile, or whatever it be. Those symbols indicate the parties to which the candidates belong. This seems to get them by fairly effectively, especially when compared with our system which, with educated electors, looks rather poor when we consider the number of informal votes that are registered.

One could suggest that some of the informal votes which come forward during an election are due to a person being unsure of the party designation of the candidates. In some cases people are inclined to put in a voting slip which has not been correctly filled in or not filled in at all. Those members who have scrutineered the counts will be aware of this. Some people go along to the polling booths merely to meet the obligations of the Act. They have their name crossed off the roll and do not bother to lodge a formal vote.

The Bill aims to overcome some of the many problems which exist. This particular problem may arise more in country areas or small polling booths as most of the larger booths are manned quite effectively. As far as other electorates are concerned, the bigger booths generally have a good deal of detail from the principal parties at least as to who the various candidates in those other electorates are. As long as the people know the address for which they are enrolled when they go to one of these other booths to record a vote

the officers at the booth can determine which electorate is involved and what the party designations of the candidates are. This is particularly so after a redistribution, when people do not know the party affiliations of the candidates in their electorates.

I can see no reason for people getting their hair in a knot with such a proposition being before the Parliament. As I indicated before, I have trepidation in trying to amend the Electoral Act. It is usually the attitude of parties opposite that there is some catch in such a measure; there is some endeavour to reap political gain for one's own party by such a move. As far as I can judge, this measure would treat parties equally. It would detail to people needing the information just what category of candidate they were voting for. The measure contains specific regulations with respect to the time people have in which to appeal and in which to do various other things. This information can be very easily obtained by reading the provisions in the measure.

The Bill is basically to define clearly on the ballot paper the political affiliation of each and every candidate standing at an election. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr O'Neil (Deputy Premier).

### ANIMALS IN SOUTH-WEST

#### *Report: Motion*

**MR H. D. EVANS (Warren)** [8.45 p.m.]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should take immediate action to have the Agriculture Protection Board and the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife investigate reports of the existence of large cat-like animals in the South West of Western Australia which are reputed to have killed significant numbers of sheep and wildlife; to report on and make recommendations to the House regarding their findings.

Twelve months ago when I first had my attention drawn to a series of attacks in the lower south-west I would have been too sceptical to bring this motion forward in this manner tonight. Since that time and as a result of the accumulated material that has been shown to me over the course of the last 12 months, I believe there are such a number of unexplained points that it is more than time some action was taken in this regard—more action than has been taken up to the present moment.

I shall draw members' attention to a number of points which up to this stage are unexplained, having regard for the fact that in Australia we have an increasing problem; a problem which was introduced many years ago, probably by well-meaning settlers. I refer to foxes, rabbits, and quite a variety of noxious weeds.

The House should give consideration to a number of these aspects, such as the following: visual sightings which have been recorded; the extent of killings; the number; the area over which they have extended; the manner in which the killings occurred; the manner in which the carcasses have been eaten; the ineffectiveness of trapping and poisoning; the tracks that have been found; the hair that has been presented; the reports of strange cries of large animals at night; the presence of animal faeces—or scats—of a catlike nature; the size of the strides; and the reaction of other animals to predators of this kind. This information has been gathered by people who have had some experience in this field; including four Americans, a private veterinarian, and the operator of the dogs on a recent chase.

I know the APB has published a report which has been available through you, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Sibson), and there are several points in regard to this report that should be aired; but first I shall deal with some of the points to which I have already referred.

I have copies of sheets that were circulated to anyone who had had an experience with any strange animal in the lower south-west. I have over 30 reports to which I can now refer. The detail required in these sheets included such things as the place, the date, the time, the size, the colour, the locality, the description, and the evaluation or estimate of what the particular creature was in the eyes of the viewer.

It is interesting to note the areas involved which can be gleaned from these reports. They include areas such as Northcliffe, going back as far as 1963; Pemberton in 1966; Wellington Dam; South East Latham; North Borden; Capercup; Harris River; Collie; Donnybrook; Grimwade; Palgarup; Duranillin; North Dinnup; Cordering—three reports; Donnybrook; Witchcliffe; Bokal; Denmark; Arthur River; and South Collie. That will give an indication of the extent of the area over which such animals have been seen.

I will not give the full details of the reports of sightings. By way of illustration, I shall mention three of the reports and refer to the salient points in each. In the first case I wish to mention, the animal was sighted 12 miles south-east of

Latham. The name of the farmer is shown on the report. The animal was sighted in an open paddock of scrub and the general appearance of it was "light brown with tail half curled up, large pad approximately two inches in diameter." The pad mark was estimated. As far as the size of the animal is concerned, the report says, "Twice as large as the biggest domestic cat I have ever seen." The report goes on, "In your opinion was the animal doglike, catlike, or otherwise?" The answer to that question was, "Definitely catlike." The most outstanding feature mentioned in the report was, "the tail position. Pad size left in the sand."

Mr Nanovich: How did it meow?

Mr H. D. EVANS: The further question is asked in the report, "What distance were you from the animal?" And the answer is, "Approximately 50 yards."

Sir Charles Court: I did not think you would be conned so easily.

Mr H. D. EVANS: Bearing in mind one must have proper regard for the time of the sighting, the appearance of the animal, the light at the time of the sighting, and everything else involved, I suggest the Premier should not treat this as a laughing matter. He should discuss it with some of the people who signed the reports of sightings before he ridicules them.

Some people to whom I shall refer later are quite adamant about the matter. They have lived in farming areas all their lives and have had wide experience with foxes, dogs, and feral cats. They would not be inclined to make an error of this nature.

If members disregard half the 30 reports I have mentioned, they must agree that the matter still requires explanation. I do not believe members opposite should laugh at the matter out of hand.

Perhaps the Premier would like to talk to such farmers as Mr Putland who saw one of these animals at a distance of 20 metres in good clear torchlight. Mr Putland is regarded in the district as being completely reliable; therefore, the consensus is, if Mr Putland saw something, something was there.

The same situation applies with a man like George Wheeler who, although over 65 years of age, has, over the last 40 years, been called upon by his neighbours to trap dogs which appear in the area. He has lost hundreds of his own lambs and he has been unable to trap the animal responsible for the killings. He caught a fleeting glimpse of something, but he was not prepared to try to identify it. It is certain that a man of his experience would have trapped a dog, fox, or feral

cat. That is the sort of situation which should be explained.

Before scorning the reports which I am quite happy to table, members should look at the matter seriously. I have received further reports and one relates to the Scott River area where my brother-in-law, in whom I have absolute confidence, was camping. He was awakened by a very loud screech. He said the cows brought their calves close to the hut. He considered it to be a terrifying experience. He heard the screech again about half a mile away. He has never heard that type of sound before or since.

Another farmer whose veracity and integrity cannot be doubted is Ross Muir of Manjimup. A couple of his lambs were killed. Their heads were crushed and a dog is not capable of doing that. All the farmers in the area are aware that a dog could not get his teeth through the skull of a full-grown lamb. This actually occurred. This man lost a pet kangaroo at the same time also.

These people are prepared to stand by their reports of sightings. Therefore, I am not prepared to regard the matter with the same levity as the Premier displays. In excess of 1 000 sheep and lambs have been killed in the area from the Wellington Dam south, including Cordering. The number of sheep lost in that area has been assessed at over 1 000. It is interesting to note that some of the losses have been as high as 400 out of 1 100 in one particular area. Foxes do not kill like that. Every farmer in the area who has had experience with sheep grazing knows that is the case.

I should like to point out that some of the animals were killed outright. One farmer lost three fully-grown wethers which were partially eaten. The rib cages of the sheep were chewed from the back bone, apparently with ease. A dog or fox would not be capable of doing that.

Mr Grewar: A dingo would do that.

Mr H. D. EVANS: Had a dingo killed these sheep it is certain it would have been trapped. I must point out also that dingoes are not prevalent in that area and the method of killing, by attacking at the back of the neck, is not the manner in which dogs or dingoes kill.

I have a written report by a private veterinarian who considered the lambs taken to him were not killed by dogs, foxes, or feral cats. He has signed the document and points out also that the mouth pattern of the animal which killed the lambs would not correspond with that of a dog, fox, or feral cat. However, he considers the animal which killed the lambs to be of the cat family.

The veterinarian measured the incision of the fangs and he estimated it was an inch to an inch and a half deep and the puncture marks approximately an inch and a half apart. He also saw fang marks which went through the skull of one of the animals. No dog, dingo, or fox would do that. He said the strength of the jaw of the animal which killed the lambs was considerable and the method of killing was biting at the back of the neck. The vertebrae of the lambs were fractured and he referred to the teeth marks and the mouth pattern. That is the report of a private veterinarian.

I asked this man whether he would allow me to quote his report as being his professional opinion and he said he was quite agreeable.

Mr Grewar: Were any tracks seen at all?

Mr H. D. EVANS: Some tracks have been seen. Some casts have been made, but I am not prepared to claim what they are. They have been given to me as being casts of tracks and I have them here. The APB has suggested they are not the tracks of cats. However, the APB's opinion differs from the opinions I have received from other sources and to which I shall refer. The number of tracks have not been considerable, but these casts have been taken. I could indicate the difference between a dog, cat, and fox; but most members would be aware of it. Whether or not these are distinguished enough to make a firm identification I am not sure, but I am certain I could not do it. The manner in which carcasses have been eaten is in itself rather unusual.

In the main the animals are eaten from the shoulder back towards the loin or from the hock upwards and in the case of small lambs and kangaroos only the feet are maimed. The suggestion has been that it could have been wild pigs but no wild pig would eat in that manner. Foxes certainly do not either. The manner of eating is an unusual sort of operation and so perhaps someone such as the Premier could offer an explanation. The eating pattern is not consistent with those that are already known.

I refer to the cries and screeches that have been heard by one person. Others, especially in the Dinninup area, are quite firm in their statements that the noises they have heard are nothing like those of a dog, fox, wild boar, or feral cat, because they know these sounds. These people are quite sincere in their statements and their bona fides without question are beyond reproach.

Mr Crane: Have they tape-recorded it?

Mr H. D. EVANS: Not to my knowledge. That would be quite interesting.

Specimens of faeces have been found—scats, as they are known in the trade—and a number have been collected and forwarded to the Museum, the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, and the APB. Acknowledgement has not been received from all these organisations. As a matter of fact, only a couple of the half-dozen have been received or acknowledged. Traces of hair have been found in some of these scats but there is some conjecture here as to the identification of the particular cat family because there are many different types.

I do not know whether the scientific apparatus in Western Australia is sufficient to identify this but it seems that it is not beyond the realms of science to make some conclusive determination. Whether or not this has been prosecuted in the fullest manner, again, I do not know.

With respect to the trapping of animals, I refer to the situation where George Wheelan—I cite him because he is a man of many years' bush background—last year lost some 700 lambs to this animal. He has trapped over a period of months and even though he is a dogger of great renown—he is the person to whom the district refers when a dog has come into the area—he has been unable to trap the animal. In his opinion if it had been a dog he would have caught it.

In 1978 the farmers of the area were concerned that a great deal had not been done to rectify the problem. A meeting was called and a committee set up—it is known as the Cordering Cougar Committee—in Moodiarrup. I was unable to attend but I understand that the signatures for the petition were obtained without any great effort.

Mr Old: What date was that meeting?

Mr H. D. EVANS: It was a meeting earlier this year; I think it was the one the Minister attended.

Mr Old: I attended the same meeting as Wally. You should have been at that one!

Mr H. D. EVANS: This was the second meeting. A circular letter dated the 5th April—which I believe members of this House received—was sent out indicating the response to the meeting held on the 27th March. It stated that over a period of 18 months some 1 800 lambs and sheep had been lost. Of course the frustration of the farmers involved had increased quite considerably. Regrettably, there has been friction and a resultant deterioration of public relations between the APB and the committee. The deterioration has developed to such an extent that the committee has virtually refused to have anything to do with the APB, which is a most unfortunate situation. I can appreciate the

reasons for the committee's dissatisfaction but believe it is most regrettable that the body which is making formal and official attempts to overcome this problem is not involved fully.

A report on the APB and Department of Agriculture involvement in the cougar investigation was made and I would like to quote a number of points. The first is as follows—

At the time the first serious reports were received, about a year ago, a dogger was despatched to the area to carry out investigations and any control operations that were necessary. Baits and traps were laid and it became obvious that our dogger was not welcome in the area.

That statement is significant and it is unfortunate that the committee did not believe this was so. In the first instance, the farmers offered the dogger the use of a washing machine; they offered to put his caravan under shelter; they supplied him with a television set, and they accommodated him in the community. So to say the dogger was not welcome in the area is not factual. This has probably caused the further deterioration in the relationship between the APB and the committee.

A technician visited the area on several occasions but did not see anything to lead him to believe there was an unusual predator in the area. He took photographs of footprints with five padmarks found in the sand. This was considered unusual. He also examined a tree that the committee felt was marked by the scratchings of a cat and he took samples of hair found nearby which were subsequently identified as cat hair.

The technician offered to provide back-up facilities which the farmers in the area felt could be useful.

An American who has had experience with large cat families in the United States indicated that the tree was one which would be used by a she-cat and kittens. The casts of the footprints shown to the same American, although rejected by the APB, could well have been those of a large cat. Photographs of the cat's track actually had been sent to the Museum. The Museum admitted they were cat tracks, but doubted their authenticity.

The APB brought the American into the area and he told the officers of the APB that he considered the tracks could well have been those of a cougar. He offered to train dogs, having had experience in that regard in the United States. He subsequently brought in two other Americans from Montana. They were even more experienced than Mr Newman and they seemed to be of the

same opinion; that is, that it could well be that these animals did exist.

Of the scats sent to the APB, at least four or five have not been identified to this time. There has not been an official departmental report on them. In this regard, the report refers to the droppings of cats.

The APB purchased a pair of image intensifying binoculars to help in the search for the animals. The binoculars cost several thousand dollars, but on arrival they were found to be faulty and were returned to the manufacturers in the United Kingdom. I understand similar binoculars were used in the research into rabbit control. They were never offered for use in the search for cougars. The APB did assist in the purchase of a night sight. I believe this present incident was instrumental in that piece of apparatus coming to Western Australia. Subsequently, it has been used with an appropriate rifle.

When the problem first became obvious in 1978, the APB was instrumental in locating Mr Bob Newman, an American who had spent many years hunting cougars in Montana, in the United States of America. He was taken to the area and discussed the likelihood of cougars being present there. Subsequently the APB paid his expenses to return, with horses, to examine the area. The report does not state that Mr Newman told the APB he considered there were cats in the area. There is additional information by way of supportive material and films, and that reference is perfectly correct. That is some of the work done by the APB.

I would like to allude to the comment that from the 8th May this year two officers have been in the area. From that date an officer was provided with assistance from the APB. As a result of his investigations he was unable to turn up any evidence to indicate the presence of cat-like creatures.

The report stated that the greatest losses occurred where farm management was low, where there was insufficient hand-feeding, and where vaccinations were not regularly administered.

That is an unfortunate statement because the area included some of the best managed properties in the south-west. I have with me a letter which is worth reading to the House. It is open, and it is signed, and when I mention the name of the person who wrote the letter I do not think anyone will question its authenticity or the capability of the particular farmer. The letter reads—

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir,

We have had strange killings of lambs with broken necks and crushed heads and large wide teeth marks. Only a few have had chest eaten and all rest killed with broken necks.

Early lambing ewes had to be shedded as killings were occurring 150 yds from homestead.

Our first killing was six years ago and thought it to be foxes but have poisoned dozens and killings still continue.

Muled and tailed lambs up to 8 weeks old have been killed.

That would be most unusual for a fox, as farmers would know. The letter continues—

Within 3 days 2 different men have sighted a strange type animal in same area in car headlights have picked up bright eyes never sighted before. They described the animal the size of a large dog, cat like with a long tail.

That letter is signed by Bob Jackson. The Jacksons have turned out some of the finest animals and their husbandry is beyond question.

The report goes on to say that no-one can claim these killings are as a consequence of poor management; that does not add up. The report also states that most of the lambs presented for post-mortem examination showed typical fox damage. That is not entirely correct on the experience from the veterinary investigations. A veterinarian in private practice, who has examined a number of lambs, gave the professional opinion that the damage was not caused by foxes. The report states that whilst in many cases the intestines had been removed, that is not usual in the case of cougars. It does occur regularly when pigs are involved. It states that there are numerous foxes, dogs, eagles, and wild pigs present in the area.

We are not dealing with babes in the woods; we are dealing with farmers who have spent their lives on their properties. They know their farms, they know their stock, and they know the bush. They do not know the actions of the creatures mentioned here.

Eagles will do strange things, but they are easily identified. There is no question when a pig attacks a carcase. It is a messy eater and readily identifiable.

The report states that veterinary investigations failed to turn up any evidence of predation by a large cat-like animal. I can simply refer again to the veterinarian who has made a professional judgment, and who is prepared to be quoted. The

report continues and states that, alternatively, if an unknown predator is present it is not having any substantial effect on the livestock in the area. If the demise of well over 1 000 animals, during the last couple of years, is not having an effect on the livestock I would like to know to what extent the impact must be felt. That is the position.

On the question of tracking dogs, it is to the credit of the APB that two dogs were made available and taken down when sightings were made. Originally the APB made arrangements with the owners of trained German shepherd tracking dogs to travel to the area whenever a positive sighting was made by a "reliable" person. To date, two such visits have been made but no success has been obtained in finding evidence to support the reported sightings. However, one particularly large and outstanding German shepherd followed a scent through rugged country for eight to 10 miles, and the owner (Mr Richardson) considered he had definitely been following a cat. I think there were nine previous trial runs in which the animal had reacted in much the same manner. Mr Richardson is the President of the German Shepherd Association and I think he would be quite reliable. The dog was following the track from 8.30 to 11.30 a.m. before it was called off because the APB officers had another commitment in Perth.

Mr Davies: Lunch?

Mr H. D. EVANS: No, they had a legitimate reason to return to Perth.

Mr Jamieson: Someone lost a bird from his aviary and they had to come back.

Mr H. D. EVANS: Mr Richardson is an experienced dog handler and he considered the dog was following a cat scent, for which the animal had been trained.

I am perturbed about the deterioration of public relations and the subsequent abrasiveness, to the extent that the committee will not have anything to do with the APB. The farmers became frustrated when the previous dogger laid baits when a spate of killings was reported in July, 1978. In October or thereabouts the dogger returned for one and a half days and then left the district. He returned early this year saying he had poisoned two dogs, and he produced the skulls. For some time he would not tell the farmers in the area where the remains were, but when he told them the location of the carcasses of the dogs five experienced people who knew the area went to the exact spot indicated and could not find them.



They claim that had the dogger poisoned two dogs which were causing damage he would have been racing around showing them in the district, not coming back four months later and saying, "I got these when I was here last October." The questioning of that story is understandable, and no doubt it accounted for the attitude those committee members expressed. It was felt the problem was not being treated seriously and was being approached in a rather cavalier manner.

The Chairman of the Agriculture Protection Board virtually repeated in the Press the statement which was released to the member for Bunbury and to which I have referred. I indicated there were a number of disparities in it. There was the question of the dogger who was sent into the area on the 8th March. It appears he was not a qualified tracker in any way. His experience in that field was rather limited but his experience in public relations and handling people was even more deficient. Because of his method of interrogation and some of the stories he spread around in the area, the committee finally decided it would have nothing further to do with the APB.

That is a fair summary of the points which have been made. There were indications over a period of at least two years before the matter began to be raised seriously. It can be said on the part of the committee that the actual sightings can be discounted and may be open to distortion, but reliable bush people have made sightings at distances of up to 10 yards. Perhaps half of them could be discounted but the remaining half of those reports should have been investigated thoroughly. All those people should have been approached and their reports should have been followed up in a scientific and professional manner to decide what weight could be placed on them.

I make the point that the matter has not been handled in a scientific, professional manner. The absence of tracks is an element of weakness, but if it is a large cat the tracks probably would not be easily found. I have done a little reading on the North American mountain lion, which appears to be a very secretive and elusive animal. An American, Mr Newman, in many years of hunting them has never seen one in the wild. It is not until they are shot that it is known for certain what they are.

The number of carcasses brought in for inspection during the period the veterinarian was in the area—only 15—does not reconcile with the number of killings in 1978. But once again there was a further escalation of killings in Boscoville and subsequently in Chowrup. The number of lambs is open to question. Some lambs die, and

foxes, being scavengers, take them. A number of lambs could have been weak or diseased. That cannot be discounted. It is a factor which must be taken into account in relation to the attitude of the committee.

The committee did not acknowledge the assistance it obtained in being given the use of the nightscope. That is a matter which should have been applauded, not hidden. At the same time, the job the APB has done over the years is regarded with the highest esteem.

I must report some facts here so that we have the picture full and clear. The result of the examination of the scats and the interpretation placed on it indicated that no acknowledgment was received in most cases. I point out too that the record of the sightings was not analysed in a true professional manner. An approach was not made to those people who were prepared to come forward to say that they had actually experienced a sighting, or some other unusual circumstance, and I quote the case of Mr Jackson in this regard. He had had that experience for six years, but he was prepared to say something about it only when a committee was established and the matter became more generally known.

I point out too that the officer of the Agriculture Protection Board who was sent down to handle the matter as from the 8th May was not well chosen at all. I will not go into detail on that point unless I am called on to do so.

It was claimed also that two dogs had been poisoned, and the particular operator was reluctant to show where the further remains were. I feel that a more scientific approach to the problem is warranted. If no further steps are taken, the problem could continue for some considerable time, and it could reach such proportions that it will be difficult ever to overcome it. If animals do exist and they breed, the farmers will have to learn to live with a continual problem. In the case of an animal which can adapt itself to the climatic change from the Arctic Circle to Arizona, and which has access to the amount of food that the Australian sheep flock represents, the potential danger is enormous.

The matter is of some urgency, and the levity of the Premier did him no credit. Up to the present time the investigation has not been adequate. The Agriculture Protection Board took some good initiatives. Dogs were made available, Mr Bob Newman—an American with some authority—was called in, and a nightscope was procured. However, there is room for a more detailed, a more scientific, and a more thorough approach to the problem. For this reason I believe

that the Agriculture Protection Board and the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife must go further. They should secure the services of a CSIRO scientist.

Many matters are still unexplained, and the stakes are high. It is all very well to say that it will be all right, but, if it is not, the rural producers of this State will pay dearly for many years. For that reason I commend my motion to the House.

**MR OLD** (Katanning—Minister for Agriculture) [9.34 p.m.]: I have listened with great interest to the member for Warren. He told a story I have heard many times before.

**Mr H. D. Evans**: You have been into the area a couple of times I believe.

**Mr OLD**: It is a story with which I am not unfamiliar, and one which certainly has been of some concern to many people in the area described by the member for Warren.

I would like to point out that there has been no lack of co-operation or activity on the part of the Agriculture Protection Board. I have been involved in this particular exercise for the past 18 months or so, ever since Mr Earnshaw first telephoned and suggested that there was something a little different from the usual predator in the area, and that he wanted some assistance.

The first assistance he was given was help to obtain a night telescope from America as he claimed he could not obtain one here. I would like to point out also that the Agriculture Protection Board at that time decided to invest in a pair of night binoculars, and I emphasise the phrase "at that time". I understand that these are produced only in England at a cost of approximately \$8 000 a pair. Although the binoculars were ordered, delivery was not possible because the various armed forces on the Continent had placed orders for the whole of the very limited production of these binoculars.

However, we were fortunate enough—although that word "fortunate" should be quoted—to secure a pair of these binoculars. On arrival they were found to be faulty. They were never used at Cape Naturaliste or anywhere else.

The specific primary purpose of the acquisition of these binoculars was to assist the people in the area referred to by the member for Warren. After the exercise in the Cordering-Bowelling area, the binoculars were to be used for the observation of rabbits in the Cape Naturaliste area.

I admit that before this problem was brought to our attention there had been thoughts of

purchasing such binoculars. They are necessary to observe the experimental work being carried out in the Cape Naturaliste area, work which is known to quite a few members. To say that the binoculars were used at Cape Naturaliste and that they were never offered to assist in locating this unusual predator in the Cordering area is quite erroneous. I would like that to be understood by all members of the House.

**Mr Davies**: What area is that?

**Mr OLD**: The Cordering area is the one experiencing problems at this stage, but as the member for Warren pointed out, reports have been received from various areas throughout the State. In fact, sightings have been reported, not only in the areas enumerated by the member for Warren, but also as far afield as Carnarvon and Ravensthorpe. So the reports are nothing new; it just happens that they are now coming in from this particular area.

I would like to let members know of some of the actions taken by the Agriculture Protection Board, and I impress upon the House that there has been no lack of co-operation or action on the part of employees of that board. I resent the implication that the employees of the board have not done their job properly.

Before I eventually sit down, I want to give members some idea of what has been happening. When this matter was first reported to the Agriculture Protection Board, through me, a dogger was sent to the area immediately, and the zone control officer from Katanning was sent to the Darkan area. The zone control officer worked there constantly until he was transferred to Perth for health reasons. From memory the dogger worked in the Cordering area for some two months, and in the first instance he was well received. However, when he failed to produce the goods and he suggested some dog activity was occurring in the area, he was not well received. He trapped some foxes, and he was of the firm opinion that dogs were causing the problem.

The problem flared up again this year at lambing time. It is not only in that area that lambs are being lost. I am sure the member for Warren would be well aware that it has been a lean season right throughout the region; and that applies not only to the Cordering-Darkan-Bowelling area, but also to the Kojonup-Katanning area. Some heavy losses have occurred, especially by the farmers who lamb early. Much of the loss has been caused by mismothering because insufficient feed is available for the ewes.

However, I am not discounting the fact that some of the losses may be due to predation. We

decided after consultation to send a veterinarian into the area for three weeks—as a minimum term—to study the situation. We also sent a technician experienced in dogging and predation. To me it is quite a bold statement to say that a private veterinarian is now able positively to identify that the predation is not caused by foxes or dogs, because the departmental veterinarian from Narrogin whom we sent to the area is very experienced and well respected.

Mr P. V. Jones: I'll say he is.

Mr OLD: That has been substantiated by my colleague on my left, who happens to have a farm in the area from which that veterinarian came. In fact, the veterinarian was reluctant to leave Narrogin because of the amount of work he had there. He received co-operation at first, and lambs were delivered to him. He concluded that most of the lambs were predated postmortem and had met their death either through mismothering or lack of nutrition. Certainly some had been predated prior to death, but he found no evidence to indicate there was any animal apart from normal predators in the area. He came to that conclusion after studying marks on the animals and the way in which they had been killed.

I make the point that like the member for Warren I am not convinced there is not something unusual in the area. I have visited the area on two occasions in the lambing season during the last two years. In the first place I met Mr Earnshaw and a couple of his neighbours. In the second instance I attended a meeting at Moodiarrup. That meeting had been very well documented by a wildlife officer in Manjimup who could probably give us a report on its outcome.

When I visited the area I took with me the Chairman of the Agriculture Protection Board, plus officers of the board. We met Mr Gooding, who was acting officially in his job; and we met the committee at Mr Earnshaw's house and spent two or three hours there. Not only did the department supply a veterinarian and a technician on a full-time basis for a period, but also a senior officer of the Agriculture Protection Board was assigned to the task, and he was regularly in and out of the area whenever an alleged sighting or some unusual predation occurred.

Mr H. D. Evans: Was the dogger previously with the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife?

Mr OLD: No, he was Mr Gooding. The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife has taken part in this exercise also, but I am referring to the APB because it happens to be the subject of the motion.

Mr H. D. Evans: I am talking about the dogger you sent in there. What were his qualifications? Was he previously with the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife?

Mr OLD: I understand he was.

Mr H. D. Evans: Do you know his background?

Mr OLD: I know he is experienced, according to the Chairman of the Agriculture Protection Board. The member for Warren probably knows otherwise.

Mr H. D. Evans: I suggest you check that.

Mr OLD: I will, certainly. I am a little tired of the scurrilous remarks made in this House about the officers of my department and, in particular, tonight, about the officers of the Agriculture Protection Board. However, I will look into that matter.

I want to make a few points regarding what has been done. We provided the technical backup facilities to investigate the various problems, despite allegations by the member for Warren that this was not done. It is my understanding—and I am no more a scientist than the member for Warren—that the hairs of a cougar are indistinguishable from those of a cat. So even the APB, despite its technological advancements, was not able to tell the difference. It could identify the hairs as being from a member of the cat family, but that was it.

The officers of the APB obtained written information from the United States. We went to the trouble also of obtaining some audio-visual material which was presented to the meeting at Moodiarrup. Incidentally, I do not think the member for Warren was at that meeting.

Mr H. D. Evans: I think my apology was recorded.

Mr OLD: I merely said the member was not there; therefore he did not see the audio-visual material which was taken to Moodiarrup specifically for the utilisation of the committee so the people at the meeting could see and hear about the problem.

It has been established from the information we have received from America and also from the audio-visual material that a cougar after killing will take only the lungs, liver and heart. The predation in the area invariably involves the removal of the whole of the viscera. I am informed by the experts that is not indicative of the work of a cougar.

Mr Bob Newman was located by the APB and sent into the area as an alleged expert on mountain lions or cougars. He and his horses were transported there at the expense of the APB, and

he spent some time in the area. Incidentally, I have since had communication with another expert from the United States; I do not know how expert he is, but he tells me he is the supreme expert and that Mr Newman is no good.

**Mr Davies:** Modest to a fault!

**Mr OLD:** Absolutely. We could go on and on and send experts down there every week.

We have been trying to assist these people, and we have in no way denigrated their efforts or ridiculed their allegations. I find it incredible that the committee in its wisdom decided to have nothing more to do with the Agriculture Protection Board after the chairman issued what I considered to be a reasoned and well-balanced Press release. He suggested in his Press release that there was no evidence of a cougar in the area, but he said also there was certainly predation there. I find the committee's decision incredible, because the APB stands ready still to assist the people in the area. If the people want any research work done or any postmortems carried out on animals that have been predated, the APB is ready and willing to assist them.

Nobody can say the APB has not co-operated; if anyone says co-operation has not been forthcoming, the only alternative would be to be down there 24 hours a day.

In fact, the officer who virtually had been put in charge of the operation asked the committee what help it required. My understanding is that the committee said it would not be necessary to provide a permanent presence because the local people knew their own farms better than any incoming APB man could know them; they would call upon him and the APB if and when necessary. That is the way the exercise has been conducted.

Allegations have been made that there was a circus accident somewhere in the Donnybrook area in 1961 or 1962 and, as a result of this accident, some cougars escaped into the bush. Somebody even telephoned me from Collie and told me the name of the circus—I think it was a small rodeo and circus. Two men in Collie “well remembered” going down to let the cougars go. I got the APB to go down there and investigate these allegations. They interviewed the person who was supposed to be concerned and he said, “That is pure baloney.” As it transpired, a certain gentleman who attended the meeting at Moodiarrup and made some very unkind thrusts at me was the same gentleman who allegedly put these stories around.

It was established that the only animals owned by that circus—if one could call it a circus—were

a few horses and a couple of camels. I am quite sure that none of those animals or their descendants are causing the problems being experienced in this area.

**Mr Blaikie:** Perhaps if we cross a horse with a camel we finish up with a cougar.

**Mr OLD:** The APB has thoroughly investigated the possibility that an animal may have escaped from a circus. It has been established that between 1958 and 1974, only one cougar came into Western Australia, and that was with the Moscow Circus; they valued it too highly to let it go.

**Mr B. T. Burke:** A Communist cougar!

**Mr OLD:** It was a red cougar; probably it was under the ALP bed every night while it was here.

**Mr Jamieson:** No, it would have been under the Premier's bed in Nedlands; it would not have roamed from there.

**Mr OLD:** Under Commonwealth regulations, all exotic animals entering Australia with circuses are checked into and out of the State, and I can assure members that that particular cougar left the State.

Allegations have also been made that during the war, members of the United States Navy had cougars as pets on board their vessels. I must say if I were going to have a pet on a warship or submarine, it would not be a cougar.

**Mr O'Neil:** It would be a blonde.

**Mr OLD:** Yes, and if I could not get one of those, it would be a pussycat; but certainly, it would not be a cougar.

**Mr Jamieson:** That might be less dangerous than a blonde!

**Mr OLD:** At my age, that is probably quite true. We have checked out this allegation with the Department of the Navy.

**Mr Jamieson:** Have you checked it with the American Navy?

**Mr OLD:** They have no knowledge of any cougars being on ships. I have been assured by the Acting American Consul that the American naval historian has no records to substantiate these allegations. I do not know where these stories have come from.

**Mr O'Neil:** The investigation has been fairly thorough.

**Mr OLD:** Yes. I have also seen the cast of the tracks in the possession of the member for Warren. Quite frankly, I would not know if they were made by a cougar or a dog. However, the audio-visual material we received from America displayed the paws of cougars, and they did not

resemble the cast shown to me by the member for Warren.

The APB has also taken casts of the tracks of cougars at the South Perth Zoo, and has found no resemblance to the member for Warren's cast.

Mr B. T. Burke: Are there any cougars at the zoo?

Mr OLD: Yes.

Mr B. T. Burke: Are they all present?

Mr OLD: I can assure the honourable member they are checked each night and morning.

The member for Warren quoted Mr Newman as saying there were cats in the area; that probably is quite right. In fact, there are wild cats everywhere, so there are likely to be many cats in this region. However, that is not to say there are cougars in the area.

I do not take a hard line on this issue and say there are no strange animals causing problems in this region. I accept the veracity of the people who claim to have seen these animals; some of these people are known personally to me and I would not doubt they have seen something unusual.

It has become quite a thing down there for the local Press and the local experts to criticise the APB because it has not managed to find one of these strange animals. However, nor have the local people managed to locate one, and they are there all the time. People have sat up all night and claim to have seen these animals. At one stage, a person claimed to have shot one. At that time, I made personal representation to the Stirling City Council to allow the tracker to go down there with his trained Alsatian dogs; he has been to the area twice.

However, to say the APB officer had to leave because he had an appointment is not correct, unless my information is sadly wrong. I was told by the officer in charge of the operation—whose veracity I do not doubt—that the dogs simply lost the scent. Apparently they were quite excited for a while, but then they gave up the ghost; the dogs could not go on tracking if there was nothing to track.

I have an open mind and will continue to have an open mind on the events that have been taking place in this region. However, by his own admission, the member for Warren no longer has an open mind on this matter. I quote from the *Western Herald*—such as it is—as follows—

Descriptions by farmers of the damaged animals were consistent with fox, eagle and wild-dog attacks.

However, Mr Evans said earlier this year that he believed dogs or foxes were not responsible for the attacks.

He had previously kept an "open mind" but had been persuaded otherwise and wanted to have the matter decided once and for all.

In other words, the member for Warren by his own admission no longer has an open mind and therefore has put forward what I consider to be a biased case. Therefore I reject the motion.

In conclusion, I do not believe officers of the APB can be in any way criticised for the efforts they have put into this operation. They stand ready to continue their efforts to find this predator.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr B. T. Burke.

## PROPERTY LAW ACT AMENDMENT BILL

### *Receipt and First Reading*

Bill received from the Council; and, on motion by Mr O'Neil (Deputy Premier), read a first time.

### *Second Reading*

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to the second reading.

MR O'NEIL (East Melville—Deputy Premier) [10.01 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

It has been a common practice for many years in the drawing of wills, partnership agreements, and other instruments to confer on beneficiaries or parties the option to purchase land, partnership interests, or other property at the value assessed for probate purposes. The words used in individual documents may not always be identical, but the principle is the same in all cases.

Members will be aware that the phasing out of death duties is now imminent. This means that the assessment of value for the payment of probate duty will soon be a thing of the past and it will no longer be possible to give effect to provisions like those mentioned.

There are numerous documents in existence which contain such provisions and there is no doubt that this will create very serious difficulties for those involved in the administration of the relevant estates or agreements.

Death duties have already been abolished in Queensland; and a similar problem in that State was overcome by special legislation which, in effect, specified that a valuation would be made by a duly qualified person, instead of the

reference to the probate value. It is understood that this has worked well in Queensland, and it is intended to adopt the same procedure in Western Australia. However, it will not be obligatory in the first instance to accept any such procedure.

The Bill makes provision for a person having a proper interest in a particular valuation to apply to the Supreme Court for an order that such a valuation procedure should not apply. In the event of an order being made, the method to be adopted would be as the court directed.

The amendment proposed also takes into account cases where a similar provision makes reference to a valuation for the purpose of Commonwealth estate duty. As that duty is now abolished, the problem is very much the same.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Davies (Leader of the Opposition).

# **ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL**

## *Receipt and First Reading*

Bill received from the Council: and, on motion by Mr O'Neil (Deputy Premier), read a first time.

## *Second Reading*

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to the second reading.

**MR O'NEIL** (East Melville—Deputy Premier) [10.04 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill is designed to overcome certain problems which will arise after the 31st December, 1979, when death duty will cease. Assessment procedures will no longer be carried out by the Commissioner of State Taxation after that date and, consequently, the reference in section 14(2) will be redundant.

The estate of a person dying prior to the 31st December this year will still need to be assessed and, consequently, the Administration Act needs to retain its reference to the provisions of the Death Duty Assessment Act under which the amount of duty is assessed.

The amendment to section 29 is for the same reason, but applies to estates in which assets are located in more than one State of Australia. Up to and including the 31st December, 1979, estates in this category will still need to be assessed under the Death Duty Assessment Act.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Davies (Leader of the Opposition).

*House adjourned at 10.05 p.m.*

## QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

### FASTNET RACE TRAGEDY

#### *State Government Donation*

1167. Mr BATEMAN, to the Premier:

- (1) Relevant to the tragedy of the Fastnet race in the Admiral's Cup, can he please clarify as reported in the ABC News, to what appeal he donated \$5 000 of Western Australian taxpayers' money through the Agent General in London, Mr Slade?
- (2) Will he further advise when and who launched such an appeal, and where was it announced in our Press media?
- (3) Will he further explain how such an appeal would be administered as some of the people who lost their lives were not competitors in the Fastnet race?
- (4) Did the Western Australian Government also donate money to the recent tragedies in New Zealand and India?
- (5) If "No", why not?
- (6) Would he further advise why the Fastnet race tragedy was singled out for the donation of Western Australian taxpayers' money?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) and (2) The donation was made to an appeal launched by the Royal Ocean Racing Club and the Royal Western Yacht Club in conjunction with the Plymouth City authorities.

The appeal was mentioned in a report in *The West Australian* on the 17th August.

- (3) Distributions from the fund will be at the discretion of the organisers.
- (4) No.
- (5) No requests have been received to contribute to an appeal.
- (6) Because of the participation of Parmelia Yacht Race competitors in the Admiral's Cup and the wonderful co-operation received by the yachting fraternity in UK and on the continent for the Parmelia race.

I understand the Commonwealth Government has donated \$25 000.

## WATER SUPPLIES: BORES

### *Thornlie*

1168. Mr BATEMAN, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Are strong odours, fumes and gas smells still emanating from bores in the Thornlie area, in and around where once a chemical factory producing toxic substances was operating?
- (2) If "Yes", why has not something been done to prevent people using bores in this area?
- (3) If "No", will he have a full investigation undertaken immediately to establish what is causing the foul smells which are polluting the underground water in this area?
- (4) If not, why not?
- (5) Will he further advise why the Commissioner of Public Health still maintains that the herbicide 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T are non-toxic, when so many world health authorities claim they are a health risk?
- (6) If not, why not?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Yes. Odours can be detected in some shallow bores in the Thornlie area and in other regions where they have been sunk in filled land, in formerly swampy areas and are not related to the former factory.
- (2) These bores are not installed for the purpose of providing potable water and there is no health hazard in their use for other purposes.
- (3) and (4) Not applicable.
- (5) Neither the Commissioner of Public Health nor I have ever maintained that the herbicides 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T are non-toxic. He agrees with many world health authorities including the States of Queensland and Victoria and the National Health and Medical Research Council that there is no evidence that the use of 2,4-D or 2,4,5-T in Australia has ever caused harm to human health.
- (6) Not applicable.

**TRAFFIC: PEDESTRIAN OVERPASS***Albany Highway*

1169. Mr BATEMAN, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) With reference to my presentation to Parliament of a petition signed by over 3 000 people requesting an overpass or underpass to be constructed in Albany Highway, Cannington, to provide safety for pedestrians crossing Albany Highway, has he taken any action regarding the request embodied in the petition?
- (2) If "Yes", what action does he intend to take?
- (3) If no action is to be taken, will he give his reasons?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) to (3) The provision of pedestrian facilities is the responsibility of the local authority concerned. However, where large numbers of pedestrians are required to cross busy arterial roads, the Main Roads Department does provide a subsidy, particularly where significant numbers of school age children are involved. In the particular case of Albany Highway in the vicinity of Carousel, I have recently examined the matter and a recommendation has been made to the Canning Town Council that consideration should be given to the provision of a pedestrian overpass.

**WATER SUPPLIES***Forrestfield*

1170. Mr BATEMAN, to the Minister representing the Minister for Water Supplies:

- (1) Is reticulated scheme water to be provided in Hartfield Road, Forrestfield?
- (2) If "Yes", will it provide a service for the full length of the road?
- (3) If answer to (1) and (2) is "Yes", when can it be anticipated this service will be provided?
- (4) If answer to (1) and (2) is "No", is it proposed to extend the water main part of the way along Hartfield Road?
- (5) If answer is "Yes", how far is it intended to extend the main?

Mr RIDGE replied:

- (1) to (5) Reticulated water is available to urban properties in Hartfield Road, Forrestfield, south-east from Hale Road to within 70 metres of Lewis Road, but not to the rural land beyond this point. A water supply to the land in this rural zone would be subject to special agreement between the Metropolitan Water Board and the land owners involved, details of which have been supplied to their representatives.

**EDUCATION: SCHOOL***Onslow*

1171. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister for Education:

What is the nature of the renovations, improvements and additions proposed for the Onslow school during this fiscal year?

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

An officer from the Education Department visited Onslow recently to discuss upgrading needed with the school staff and parents and a number of suggestions are being explored with the Public Works Department. Details of proposals will not be available until tentative schemes being prepared by the Public Works Department are discussed at Onslow.

**RECREATION: DERBY***Facilities*

1172. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister for Recreation:

- (1) What sporting and/or recreational opportunities exist at Derby for participation by young people both male and female?
- (2) What facilities are available?

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

- (1) A youth education officer is attached to the Derby High School and he promotes sporting and recreational opportunities for young people. Youth clubs are conducted by church organisations in the town and the Community Welfare Department provides opportunities at the Bunja Walla Munga Hall.



The Kimberley Community Education Centre offers opportunities for young people to view recreational films and video tapes, to read magazines, and to interact in informal groups.

- (2) The following sporting and recreation facilities are available to young people in Derby—

An oval for football and hockey,  
2 cricket wickets,  
3 tennis courts,  
2 basketball courts,  
a swimming pool,  
a community hall,  
a golf club,  
a hot rod club,  
a gun club, and  
there are 2 squash courts under construction. Canoes are available in an equipment pool and an open air picture theatre is popular with young people.

#### HOSPITALS: PENSIONERS

##### *Extended Stays*

1173. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Will he explain the reasons for the introduction of new provisions for defining as "nursing home type patients" pensioners with extended hospital stays?
- (2) How will these changes operate in Western Australia?
- (3) What will be the effects of this change to the State Government?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Because of the lack of nursing home accommodation in most country areas, many nursing home type patients are cared for in acute hospitals. It is inequitable for such patients to receive nursing home care free whilst patients in nursing homes are required to contribute towards this care and treatment. The scheme will apply to all nursing home type patients, including pensioners.
- (2) Patients who have been hospitalised for more than 60 days and are assessed by their medical practitioner as not requiring acute hospital care will become nursing home type patients.

- (3) Based on available figures, this change will not have any significant financial effect on the net cost of operating hospital services.

#### WESFARMERS

##### *Karratha Agreement*

1174. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister representing the Minister for Lands:

Will the Minister table an agreement with Wesfarmers concerning trading at Karratha signed on June 28, 1972?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

A copy of the Wesfarmers Agreement dated the 28th June, 1972, was made available to the Leader of the Opposition on the 7th April, 1976, in response to his question. A further copy now is submitted for tabling.

*The agreement was tabled (see paper No. 298).*

#### HERBICIDE: 2,4-D

##### *Geraldton*

1175. Mr CARR, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Has he seen the article in the *Geraldton Guardian* of August 16 last, headed "Spray ruins crops say local growers"?
- (2) (a) Has he examined the cuttings of tomato plants provided by a grower from within 4 miles of the centre of Geraldton; and  
(b) does his department acknowledge hormone spray damage?
- (3) Does his department now accept the view that the new regulations introduced this year are unenforceable and ineffective?
- (4) Will he now agree to ban the use of 2,4-D ester?
- (5) If not, how does he justify this decision when his own department experts are advising cereal farmers to use alternative sprays as being more effective and more economical than 2,4-D ester?
- (6) Is it a fact as reported in the *Geraldton Guardian* article that results of clean air monitoring, in relation to spray usage will not be known until next year?

- (7) Have any samples sent to Perth for analysis been "lost" as suggested in the article?
- (8) Have there been any occasions when sample jars were not available?

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) The article has been drawn to my attention.
- (2) (a) and (b) The material has been examined by my officers and some slight damage has been observed.
- (3) and (4) No.
- (5) Alternative herbicides are recommended during the early stages of cereal growth, 2,4-D ester being a recommendation in the later stages of cereal growth. These recommendations apply throughout the cereal growing areas.
- (6) to (8) No.

## HEALTH: OPERATIONS

### *Complaints by Patients*

1176. Mr CARR, to the Minister for Health:

- (1) What redress is available to a person who claims to have been disadvantaged by an operation not being performed properly, e.g. an unsuccessful vasectomy?
- (2) What powers does the Medical Board have to conduct inquiries on behalf of aggrieved patients?
- (3) Where the Medical Board conducts an inquiry following a complaint from a patient, is that patient given access to the results of the inquiry?
- (4) If the answer to (3) is "No", how is such an inquiry able to be of any help to the patient?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (1) Redress may be obtained through the Medical Board or at common law.
- (2) The Medical Act.
- (3) Yes.
- (4) Not applicable.

## BANK HOLIDAY

### *Geraldton*

1177. Mr CARR, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

- (1) Does his department have the power to declare a bank holiday?

- (2) Has he received a request from the Commonwealth Bank Officers' Association for a bank holiday to be declared in Geraldton on the 4th September to coincide with the Sunshine Festival race meeting?
- (3) Do metropolitan bank officers have a special holiday relating to the Royal Show or to other events?
- (4) What other parts of the State have a bank holiday to coincide with a local show, or race meeting or similar local event?
- (5) (a) Has he received representations against granting the holiday to Geraldton on the 4th September, and (b) if so, from whom, or what organisation?
- (6) When does he expect to advise of his decision on the request?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) Under the Public and Bank Holidays Act, 1972, the Governor may, by proclamation, appoint a special day to be a public holiday or bank holiday or both.
- (2) and (3) Yes.
- (4) The proclamation referred to in (1) may specify a day or part thereof to be a holiday throughout the State or within a particular district or locality.  
In 1978, 42 shires, towns or localities and to date in 1979, 36 shires, towns or localities have been granted a bank holiday.
- (5) (a) Yes.  
(b) From associated banks in Western Australia which had obtained the views of the commercial and retail interests in Geraldton.
- (6) The Commonwealth Bank Officers' Association has been informed of my decision.

## LAND

### *Tenterden*

1178. Mr STEPHENS, to the Minister representing the Minister for Lands:

- (1) In view of concern expressed by the Cranbrook Shire and citizens in the

Cranbrook area, will the Minister review the decision to exchange a camping reserve with private land in the area west of Tenterden?

- (2) Is it fact that the site contains an Aboriginal burial ground?
- (3) Were the trustees of the Museum consulted prior to the exchange being approved?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) and (2) Notification by the Cranbrook Shire of existence of old graves on portion of Reserve 2096 the subject of land exchange was received early this week and immediate action was taken to ensure that work did not proceed on the land and for a departmental officer to attend a meeting called by the shire for today.
- (3) No. The museum was informed as soon as advice as to presence of old graves was received in order that appropriate action could be taken under the provisions of the Aboriginal Heritage Act.

## EDUCATION: HIGH SCHOOLS

### *English Literature Novels*

1179. Mr CRANE, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Who are the members of the advisory committee that chooses the novels for study for English and English literature in our high schools?
- (2) Who selects the people comprising the committee?
- (3) Are they representatives of groups or are they appointed as individuals?
- (4) Do they have the right to appoint proxies to represent them at meetings of the committee?
- (5) Does any Education Department officer have the oversight of this committee?
- (6) (a) Is an Education Department officer ultimately responsible for the books selected;  
(b) if not, who is?

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

- (1) For tertiary admissions examination courses textbooks are chosen by schools

from lists prepared by the joint syllabus committees for English and English literature.

- (2) Joint syllabus committees are composed of nominees of tertiary institutions, Government schools and non-Government schools.
- (3) They are regarded as representatives of nominating groups.
- (4) and (5) No.
- (6) (a) No.  
(b) Answered above.

## LAND

### *Wooroloo Training Centre*

1180. Mr HODGE, to the Chief Secretary:

- (1) Is location number 17969 adjacent to Linley Valley Road, Wooroloo, which is part of the Wooroloo training centre, and under the control of the Department of Corrections, being cleared?
- (2) If so, how much of this land has been cleared to date?
- (3) How much more will be cleared?
- (4) What is the purpose of the clearing?

Mr O'NEIL replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The area is approx 972 hectares. I am advised that 28.35 hectares were cleared before the department acquired the land and since that time an additional 194.40 hectares have been cleared.
- (3) 162 hectares.
- (4) To provide grazing for livestock for department use.

## RURAL INDUSTRIES RESEARCH FUNDS

### *Contributions*

1181. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) To what rural industries research funds do Western Australian producers contribute?
- (2) What amount of grower contributions went to each of these funds in the last year?

- (3) What was the total amount allocated from each of these funds for expenditure in Western Australia?

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) Western Australian growers contribute to the following rural research trust funds:

Chicken Meat Research Trust Fund  
Dairying Research Trust Fund  
Dried Fruits Research Trust Fund  
Meat Research Trust Fund  
Oilseeds Research Trust Fund  
Pig Industry Research Trust Fund  
Poultry Industry Research Trust Fund  
Wheat Research Trust Fund  
Wool Research Trust Fund  
Grain Research Trust Fund.

- (2) and (3) All the above funds with the exception of the Grain Research Trust Fund were established under Commonwealth legislation and are administered by the Minister for Primary Industry. The data required is not readily available but will be provided as soon as possible.

#### WATER SUPPLIES: CATCHMENT AREAS

*Land Clearing: Denmark, Kent, and Warren Rivers, and Wellington Dam*

1182. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister representing the Minister for Works:

- (1) Adverting to question 896 of the 7th August 1979 what is the total area of land which has been approved for clearing in:

- (a) the Wellington Dam catchment area where 233 applications have been approved;  
(b) the Denmark River catchment area where 30 applications have been approved;  
(c) the Kent River water reserve where 86 applications have been approved;  
(d) the Warren River water reserve where 179 applications have been approved?

- (2) How many properties have been purchased by the Government in each of these areas?

Mr RIDGE replied:

- (1) (a) 4 947.9 hectares of clearing in the Wellington Dam catchment has been approved in the 233 licences issued as follows—

	hectares
For agricultural use	88.0
For fencelines, firebreaks, farmers' dams and buildings	115.9
Pine plantations	597.8
Power lines, etc.	587.5
Coal mining	338.2
Local authority and departmental services	57.3
Clean up of land felled prior to legislation	2 328.0
Clean up regrowth	835.2
Total	4 947.9

- (b) 913.1 hectares of clearing in the Denmark River water reserve has been approved in the 30 licences issued as follows—

	hectares
For agricultural use	25.0
For fencelines, firebreaks, farmers' dams and buildings	41.7
Clean up of land felled prior to legislation	777.6
Clean up regrowth	68.8
Total	913.1

- (c) 3 248.2 hectares of clearing in the Kent River water reserve has been approved in the 86 licences issued as follows—

	hectares
For agricultural purposes	319.5
For fencelines, firebreaks, farmers' dams and buildings	56.9
Local authority and departmental services	7.0
Clean up of land felled prior to legislation	1 943.6
Clean up regrowth	921.2
Total	3 248.2

- (d). 4 728.4 hectares of clearing in the Warren River water reserve has been approved in the 179 licences issued as follows—

	hectares
For agricultural purposes	766.9
For fencelines, firebreaks, farmers' dams and buildings	52.0
Power lines	11.0
Local authority and departmental services	7.9
Clean up of land felled prior to legislation	3 453.6
Clean up regrowth	437.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 728.4</b>

- (2) Seven properties have been purchased in the Wellington Dam catchment, four in the Kent River water reserve and four in the Warren River water reserve.

### ABATTOIRS

#### *Sheep and Lambs: Potential Kill*

1183. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

What is the—

- (a) daily potential export kill;
- (b) annual potential export kill,

for sheep/lambs at each of the licensed abattoirs in Western Australia at the present?

Mr OLD replied:

Export abattoirs have an installed capacity to process in the order of 41 000 sheep/lambs a day which if used fully for 220 days would give a throughput of approximately 9 million per year.

Throughput seldom exceeds more than 80 per cent of installed capacity on a single shift basis and seasonal variations in supply of livestock do not permit even this level to be maintained for 220 days. If double shifts are introduced the throughput position would alter accordingly.

### WATER SUPPLIES

#### *Bridgetown*

1184. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister representing the Minister for Works:

- (1) What is the rate charged for domestic water when a normal building block at Bridgetown is involved?
- (2) (a) Is there a higher charge for domestic water where the block exceeds one acre; and  
(b) if so, would he please give details and reasons for the higher charge?

Mr RIDGE replied:

- (1) Domestic premises are rated at 7.5c in the dollar on the gross rental value, subject to a maximum annual rate of \$33 for properties with areas not greater than 2 500 square metres. This rating structure relates to all schemes operated under the Country Areas Water Supply Act.
- (2) (a) The charge for water used is the same, irrespective of the size of the block. However, there is no maximum rate where the block exceeds 2 500 m<sup>2</sup>.  
(b) The limitation of the maximum rate to blocks of normal subdivision size was introduced from the 1st July, 1979, to offset the additional cost to the department of providing and maintaining extra-ordinary lengths of water main to oversized blocks.

1185. *This question was postponed.*

### FUEL: SHORTAGE

#### *Primary Producers and Fishermen*

1186. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Premier:

- (1) Is it intended to give priority to primary producers in the event of a fuel shortage in this State?
- (2) Is it anticipated that supplies of distillate will be difficult to obtain in Western Australia at any time in the next 12 months?
- (3) Will commercial fishermen be given priority access to fuel supplies if supplies become difficult to obtain?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) In some locations only, and also very much depending on the behaviour of consumers at all levels as to whether they increase their purchases compared with, say, their last year's consumption.
- (3) Yes.

### MEAT: BEEF

#### *Marketing and Processing*

1187. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Is he aware that in a recent report on beef marketing and processing, the Prices Justification Tribunal indicated that considerable scope existed for improving the present system and effecting cost and price reductions?
- (2) If "Yes" to (1), what actions has he taken in introducing changes which will achieve the savings to which the Prices Justification Tribunal report makes reference?

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) and (2) As the honourable member is aware there is in this report a number of recommendations covering a wide range of issues which relate either to Commonwealth or to State responsibilities.

Action which has been taken to date in the area of State responsibility includes an examination into regional saleyards by the Rural and Allied Industries Council in association with my department. My department's market reporting service was also extended considerably in February 1979 and now covers the major saleyards throughout the State.

### PRISON: FREMANTLE

#### *Industrial Dispute: Police Officers*

1188. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Minister for Police:

- (1) Were two uniformed police officers instructed to be present outside the main gate of Fremantle Prison on Wednesday, the 15th August last?

- (2) If "Yes" who instructed them to be present?
- (3) Why were they instructed to be present?
- (4) Were other police officers stationed at any place within the close vicinity of the gaol?
- (5) (a) If "Yes" how many were there;  
(b) how were they equipped; and  
(c) what was the purpose of their presence?
- (6) Did the two officers outside the main gate have two-way radio equipment?
- (7) Were the policemen outside the gaol instructed to initiate radio contact with any other officers in the vicinity for any purpose or in any eventuality?
- (8) What was that purpose or eventuality?

Mr O'NEIL replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Duty officer.
- (3) For surveillance duty.
- (4) Yes—Fremantle Police Station.
- (5) (a) 35, including 19 normal Fremantle staff.  
(b) Normal accoutrements.  
(c) To be available for any emergency.
- (6) and (7) Yes.
- (8) To apprise the duty officer at Fremantle of any information available.

### PRISON: FREMANTLE

#### *Industrial Dispute: Civilian Staff*

1189. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Chief Secretary:

- (1) Who ordered civilian staff normally employed in the Department of Corrections' head office in Perth to Fremantle Prison on the morning of Thursday, the 16th August last?
- (2) Why was this order given?
- (3) Were these civilians trained in the security aspects of prison officer functions?
- (4) Had, prior to this, prison officers been warned to guard against the possibility of being held hostage by prisoners?
- (5) Was the possibility of any of these civilians being held hostage by prisoners considered?

- (6) Is it fact that the director of the department and the superintendent of the prison have mixed freely with the prisoners in the exercise yards during the past 10 days?

Mr O'NEIL replied:

- (1) Senior professional and administrative personnel were required by the director to report to duty at Fremantle Prison on the morning of the 16th August.
- (2) In order that there were sufficient department personnel in the institution to cover any eventuality.
- (3) Except for one, no.
- (4) and (5) The possibility of any staff being held hostage is part of the normal risk of working in any maximum security prison.
- (6) The director and other senior administrative staff addressed prisoners in the yard during the recent crisis.

#### PRISON: FREMANTLE

##### *Industrial Dispute: Exclusion of Officers*

1190. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Chief Secretary:

- (1) Were any prison officers excluded from Fremantle Gaol on Thursday, the 16th August last?
- (2) If "Yes" why was this done?
- (3) When the officers were permitted inside the main gate to meet with the director of the department, were they stopped before the second gate and were they denied keys usually given to them when they entered the prison?
- (4) If "Yes" why was this done?

Mr O'NEIL replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Those not on duty were not permitted access along with six other officers who, when spoken to by the superintendent, stated that they were not prepared to obey all lawful orders.
- (3) Yes.
- (4) Because they had not resumed duty but were gathered in order that they could be addressed by the director.

#### BANKCARD

##### *Stamp Duty*

1191. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Treasurer:

- (1) Is stamp duty charged on Bankcard transactions?
- (2) If "Yes" how is it imposed?
- (3) Is it fact that Bankcard transactions attract an interest rate of 18 per cent?
- (4) What additional interest rate, in percentage terms, does the stamp duty represent?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) Only if interest bearing credit facilities are provided.
- (2) When applicable imposed by section 112K of the Stamp Act.
- (3) I understand that the interest rate varies with the period involved.
- (4) Stamp duty is not an interest rate and the amount of duty payable would vary with the period of credit provided.

#### BANKCARD

##### *Interest Rate, and Competition*

1192. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Treasurer:

- (1) What steps has the Government taken to assure itself that the interest rate being charged on Bankcard is a fair and reasonable one?
- (2) Does his government approve of the arrangement which permits the Bankcard system to operate without more perfect competition being possible?
- (3) If not, what representations does he propose to make to the Federal Government on this matter?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) to (3) Bankcard is a national credit card arrangement which was vetted and approved by the Commonwealth Government. It is a matter for that Government to which the member for Balcatta should direct his question.

However, the Bankcard system seems to have general acceptance throughout the nation.

It is significant that the Rural and Industries Bank of this State—acting on its own initiative—made a decision to participate. I am advised it is satisfied with the results and the way the scheme operates.

#### CITRA CONSTRUCTIONS LTD.

##### *Payment to Westate Contractors*

1193. Mr TONKIN, to the Minister representing the Minister for Works:

- (1) Is the Minister aware that Citra which has been building bridges on the Paraburdoo road has not paid Westate Contractors thereby resulting in that company being unable to pay wages to its employees?
- (2) If the facts are as stated above, will the Minister investigate the possibility of withholding payment until assurances are given that Citra will pass the payment on to those to whom it is due?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) and (2) Citra Constructions Ltd. advise that it has terminated its contract with Westate Contractors. All money owing for work completed to date of termination has been paid to Westate by Citra and, in addition, Citra has paid directly to the 11 employees of Westate the certified value of unpaid wages.

#### HOUSING: LAND

##### *Balga*

1194. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Is it fact that a Government member of the Legislative Council has made representations to the State Housing Commission seeking that the commission's development bounded by Beach Road, Princess Road, Balga Avenue and Redcliffe Avenue, be made available entirely for private sale?
- (2) What are the commission's present intentions in respect of the development of this area?

Mr RIDGE replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No decision has been reached as to the future utilisation of this land.

#### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

##### RAILWAY: FREMANTLE-PERTH

##### *Closure: Brochure, and Bus Services*

1. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister for Transport:

Earlier this afternoon I did send the Minister a copy of this question, which is as follows—

Referring to his weekend comments, when he said he had asked for a brochure to be prepared outlining the Government's arguments for closing the Perth-Fremantle Railway, will he advise—

- (1) (a) Whether a brochure has been produced?
- (b) If so, how many copies have been produced, at what cost per copy, and the overall cost of the copies?
- (c) By whom the brochure is to be or has been produced?
- (d) How it will be distributed; that is, by mail or personal delivery, for example?
- (e) In which areas it will be distributed?
- (f) What the costs of distribution will be?
- (g) Whether it will be tabled?
- (2) Will he also advise—
  - (a) How many copies of MTT information relating to timetables and proposed bus services have been produced?
  - (b) The cost of producing the material per copy and overall?
  - (c) By whom it has been produced?
  - (d) The methods and costs of distribution?



(e) Where the information has been and will be distributed?

(f) Whether the information will be tabled?

I noticed the Minister tabled some documents this afternoon which could have been timetables or brochures. I have not had an opportunity to get my hands on them. They may answer my question in part.

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) and (2) In respect of the Leader of the Opposition's last comment, I did receive from Westrail timetables and a brochure for a linc bus service. I thought these would be of interest to the House and so I tabled those documents. As to the other information sought by the Leader of the Opposition, I indicate that I did not receive his question until I took my seat just before the House sat today. Much of this information is not readily available to me and I ask him to place his question on the notice paper.

## CONSUMER AFFAIRS

### *Packaging and Labelling*

2. Mr NANOVIH, to the Minister for Consumer Affairs:

I have given the Minister some notice of this question which is as follows—

What are the problems which are preventing the Government from making more rapid progress in improving packaging and labelling laws?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question, the answer to which is as follows—

In all of the State Governments, and even in the Commonwealth, the responsibility for legislation governing packaging and labelling is held by more than one Minister.

In spite of the recognised desirability for some changes in legislation, this divided

responsibility makes the attainment of uniformity immensely difficult. It has been advocated by some people that this Government should pursue its own course in the matter. Clearly this would be irresponsible because the bulk of packaged consumable items used in Western Australia come from NSW and Victoria. Changing the laws unilaterally in this State would simply add to the cost borne by consumers.

## RAILWAY: FREMANTLE-PERTH

### *Closure: Meeting in Cottesloe Civic Centre*

3. Mr PEARCE, to the Minister for Transport:

Did he send a letter last Thursday to members of the Armadale branch of the Liberal Party stating that their branch meeting had been cancelled and asking them to attend a meeting in the Cottesloe Civic Centre dealing with the closure of the Perth-Fremantle railway?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

I did not send any such letter and I am most interested to hear the member for Gosnells presenting the fact that he has now joined the Liberal Party.

Mr Jamieson: He is on the mailing list.

Mr RUSHTON: Heaven forbid that! The meeting referred to was called by the FOR group who I understand paid for the hire of the hall. The people supporting their cause numbered 70 or less, while the people supporting the Government numbered something like 350. I understand that people were free to attend the meeting. It seems ironical that the member is implying other than that took place.

## FUEL

### AVGAS

4. Mr GRILL, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of the serious AVGAS shortage throughout this State over the last few months and that AVGAS has been rationed in some areas and is unobtainable in others?

- (2) Is the Minister aware of reports that Iran will not be able to supply AVGAS to Australia until the early 1980s?
- (3) What steps does the Government intend taking to ensure adequate supplies of AVGAS to light aircraft operators throughout the State?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) Yes, I am aware that there used to be some shortage of AVGAS fuel in certain parts of Western Australia. I understand from the companies concerned that this shortage has been overcome and that the quantities which are imported allow for a reasonably comfortable supply—at least several months ahead. I stress—I think it is in the public interest—that when we talk about shortages in any type of fuel we must take into consideration the fact that, according to statistics, the sales of fuel generally this year varied from between 12 per cent and 20 per cent higher than last year. I do not think anyone would say there has been more activity in agriculture, industry, or even in aviation; so there is no doubt the large sales indicate there has been very serious stockpiling—that is putting it mildly. This works to the disadvantage of those who do not want or cannot afford to stockpile. Where shortages occur in this latter group they make their situation known publicly. The shortages are partly the fault of the public's behaviour.
- (2) It has to be understood that Australia has only one refinery which can produce aviation gas; that refinery is at Altona. Traditionally, and according to agreements, three companies supply Australia in geographical sequence; the east and north-east coast, the south coast, and the south-west and north-west coast. Those companies have an exchange agreement like they have with all sorts of fuels. They endeavour to carry out the deliveries in the required way while considering the contracts they have with various suppliers and distributors.
- (3) The Government's only power at present to deal with the situation is the legislation which the member's party—although the member may not have been here at that time—fiercely

opposed. I refer to the fuel emergency Act. Such legislation exists in New South Wales where it has in fact been used. Our legislation has not been used in this State. That is the only legislation whereby the Government has the power to deal with the situation by declaring an emergency, acquiring stocks, and going through the tremendously expensive exercise of storing and distributing the stock. The best the Government can do, and what it does do, is to confer with the suppliers—it does this regularly—and discuss the potential cause of existing shortages and prevail on the companies to have, outside their contractual agreements which they cannot negate, the stocks directed to wherever preference and shortages exist in agreed preference.

## BANKCARD

### Stamp Duty

5. Mr B. T. BURKE, to the Treasurer:

I refer the Treasurer to question 1191 on today's notice paper in which he replied to the question regarding Bankcard. Is the Treasurer aware that the generally accepted interest rate in respect of Bankcard is 18 per cent and that the imposition of stamp duty by the State Government on different transactions can result in this effective interest rate being increased to almost 70 per cent?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

In answer to the honourable member, I understand the going rate, as I have heard—and I am not saying this authoritatively—is 1½ per cent a month. Earlier I reminded the honourable member that one does not have to pay any interest at all if one's bills are paid promptly. That explains the wording used in the answer to the first of his questions, and for that reason the rate could vary considerably. I remind the honourable member, in view of the answer I have given, and which is correct, if one does not get into a credit situation the stamp duty factor does not apply at all. So it cannot be said off the cuff that there is a standard going rate because it varies with the transaction. Some people pay promptly and do not pay stamp duty.

Mr B. T. Burke: Credit is not extended beyond the normal 30 days unless stamp duty is imposed.

Sir CHARLES COURT: I said that unless there is a credit transaction there is no stamp duty to be paid.

Mr B. T. Burke: It is like saying that if you don't use Bankcard you don't pay interest.

Sir CHARLES COURT: Many people just do not go beyond the permitted date for payment and therefore do not pay interest or stamp duty.

## BANK HOLIDAY

### *Geraldton*

6. Mr CARR, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

In answer to question 1177(6), he indicated he had made a decision on the question of a bank holiday in Geraldton and had advised the Commonwealth Bank Officers' Association accordingly. Will the Minister advise me the nature of the decision?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

The holiday was refused.

## PRISONS: INMATE

### *Television Interview*

7. Mr B. T. BURKE, to the Chief Secretary:

I refer him to his answer to my question without notice yesterday when he said that he was unable to answer that part of the question which dealt with a reference to a Press release regarding the Department of Corrections, and the clearing of the Press release or adding to it. In the answer handed to me, the answer rules that the administration cleared the Press release but did not add to it. That part of the answer has been crossed out. I ask again, was he aware of the Press release being prepared by the administration, cleared by it, or added to it?

Mr O'NEIL replied:

The question was without notice. I crossed out that particular part of the answer because I was not aware of it and I said if the honourable member referred to something other than "a"

Press release I would give him a considered answer. I want to take this opportunity to bring to the attention of the honourable member that this was a typed answer to a question without notice; a part of which was crossed out by myself. If members on the other side intend to treat answers in that way, then I will refuse to answer any questions without notice.

Mr B. T. Burke: You do not answer them properly now.

Mr O'NEIL: I will never answer a question without notice from the honourable member again.

## HEALTH: CHIROPRACTORS

### *Registration and Training*

8. Mr HODGE, to the Minister for Health:

Over two weeks ago I directed a question to the Minister regarding the operations of the Chiropractors Registration Board and the administration of the Chiropractors Act. The Minister indicated he did not have an immediate answer. I would like to know: How much longer will it be before I receive his answer?

Mr YOUNG replied:

I am not sure which question the member for Melville is referring to. Is it the one on notice?

Mr Hodge: Yes, two weeks ago.

Mr YOUNG: To which I said a reply would be given in writing. A reply will be sent to the member when the information is obtained.

## RAILWAYS: ELECTRIFICATION

### *Friends of the Railways: Newspaper Report*

9. Mr SHALDERS, to the Minister for Transport:

Has the Minister seen an article in this evening's issue of the *Daily News* in which the FOR group claimed that the decision of the Government to obtain an independent assessment of the cost of electrifying Perth's suburban railways was a blatant window-dressing exercise? If he has would he care to comment whether he believes the organisation is ducking for cover?

Mr Tonkin: You won't get into Cabinet that way. There are four ahead of you.

Mr RUSHTON replied:

I am aware of the statement in the paper tonight and it is somewhat amazing that one person making the statement and who claims to be the convenor of the FOR is the endorsed Labor candidate for Cottesloe. It is also unacceptable that it is claimed by these people that the figures advised in the official report from the Commissioner of Railways have been fiddled and are misleading. I believe that these people are now trying to redress that situation so that they will have some escape when they are caught by their errors. In Saturday's newspaper a statement was made by Mr Darrold McCaskill, one of those reported in today's paper, and he destroyed his own case by this statement.

Mr B. T. Burke: You are assassinating his character now.

Several members interjected.

Mr RUSHTON: He is supposed to be the authentic source of information for the FOR on the electrification of the railways. On Saturday Mr McCaskill referred to fiddling by Westrail. He also said that in 1973-74 Westrail specialists made a study on electrification and the signalling system was estimated to cost \$5 million. However up to now the FOR statements have contained nothing about signalling. In fact they pooh-poohed the idea of any signalling costs being necessary in an electrified system. He destroyed his own credibility by his own statement. On his own figures the equivalent of the figure of \$5 million in 1973-74 would be at least \$10 million now.

Mr Jamieson: Would you debate signalling with him at the Perth Town Hall if we arranged it?

Several members interjected.

Mr RUSHTON: It is my understanding that Westrail, which does not profess to be any authority on electrification, made a submission to Wilbur Smith who in fact had got together an international group of specialists to carry out a transport study. Some of these were specialists on electrification. I attempted to make the situation clear by replying in the Press but my statements to the same paper on

Monday were not printed. I would like to clarify the position and say that the so-called spokesman for FOR is the co-ordinator of the Labor Party's attack and the railway union attack.

### *Point of Order*

Mr B. T. BURKE: Mr Speaker, is it orderly for the Minister to be bound by no restrictions at all in respect of the answer he is giving?

The SPEAKER: I am allowing the Minister for Transport the same degree of tolerance in answering his question that I allowed the member for Balcatta yesterday when he asked an extremely long question.

Mr B. T. Burke: Thank you, Sir. As long as we know it is a privilege.

### *Questions (without notice) Resumed*

Mr RUSHTON: I would like to make the House aware of the fact that the gentleman reported in the Press tonight used such a term as "fiddled" relating to the official report by Westrail. The figure was put at \$109 million, and now they are running for cover and making preliminary excuses because they have belittled the report by Westrail.

As far as I am concerned, the actions are despicable, and we stand firmly with Westrail in an endeavour to restore the good name it has had for many years.

We are not prepared to allow members opposite to besmirch the officers of Westrail by saying that they fiddled with the figures and were misleading in their official reports. I conclude by saying that members opposite have quoted from stolen documents, and the figure I have—

Several members interjected.

Mr RUSHTON: Let me conclude.

Mr B. T. Burke: We wish you would.

Several members interjected.

Mr RUSHTON: The unionists voted 2:1 against going on strike over this issue. That is the figure of which I have been advised, and it indicates that Westrail employees are sick and tired of the underhand methods used by the Opposition.

Government members: Hear, hear!