

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 25 November 1980

The SPEAKER (Mr Thompson) took the Chair at 1.45 p.m., and read prayers.

HOSPITALS

Staff Cut-backs: Urgency Motion

THE SPEAKER (Mr Thompson): I have received the following letter—

Dear Mr Speaker,

In accordance with Standing Order 48, I hereby give notice that when the House sits this afternoon I desire to move a motion "that the House do now adjourn" for the purpose of debating some matter of urgency, as provided for in Standing Order 47.

The matter of urgency that I desire to have debated is the government's decision announced last night to sack 248 hospital workers.

It must be regarded as a matter of urgency because this is the last sitting week of the Parliament before the decision is to take effect. Unless the matter is debated this week, the Parliament will have no opportunity to influence the government's course of action before it is implemented.

Because it is the last sitting week, the normal processes of private members' day are not available to the Opposition to raise the issue and I can see no alternative to the urgency motion as a means of raising this matter of vital public importance.

It is also urgent because the government's announcement has provoked widespread alarm among the public and those likely to be affected. It is clear there is an expectation among these people that the Parliament should consider the issue immediately.

The Leader of the Opposition endorses this proposal.

Yours faithfully,

The letter is signed by Barry Hodge, MLA, member for Melville.

I have agreed to this debate proceeding subject to the conditions that there be no more than four speakers from each side of the House, that each speech be no longer than 20 minutes, and that at the conclusion of the debate the member who moves the motion should rise and seek leave of the House to withdraw the motion.

Seven members having risen in their places,

MR HODGE (Melville) [1.51 p.m.]: I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Yesterday the Western Australian Government announced that the staff in public hospitals would be cut by 248 to allow for the 5 per cent pay rise awarded recently to nurses by the Western Australian Industrial Commission.

This move, unprecedented in our State's history, means that by March 1981 there will be at least 160 fewer nurses and 88 fewer support staff available for the care of patients in our public hospitals. The reduction of 248 is only the first instalment. By the end of the year a total of 410 hospital staff will lose their jobs.

There is no heavier a responsibility on a Government than to care for and adequately safeguard the public health of its citizens. This Government has abdicated its responsibility by this outrageous decision.

The present crisis in our public hospital system need not exist at all. That crisis has been brought about by the actions of this Government. Either the Government has been badly misinformed, or it is grossly incompetent in allowing this situation to develop. On the other hand, it could be argued that this plan has been implemented deliberately and has been brought about by the Government for political purposes.

If, as the Government claims, it did not know about the pay rise, and for that reason it did not budget for such rise, possibly someone has been negligent. The Minister for Health has a responsibility to advise the Treasurer on these matters. This Minister has shown himself to be weak and ineffective.

Mr Grewar: Rubbish!

Mr HODGE: If the Minister knew about this pay rise, he has been grossly negligent and he should resign.

Mr Bryce: Hear, hear!

Mr HODGE: This pay rise has been in the pipeline since May. Anyone with any knowledge of the industrial situation would have known that this pay rise would be granted. Nurses in South Australia and in other States of Australia either have been granted similar pay rises or are actively pursuing them at the moment.

If this Minister had had a grasp of his portfolio, and had known what he was doing, he would have advised the Treasurer of the pay rise. The Treasurer may have been advised of it. We do not know whether the Minister advised him. I suspect he did not know of it. If the Treasurer was

advised, he was very irresponsible in not budgeting for this increase.

If this situation was not brought about by incompetence and mismanagement, I suggest it was probably a plan designed to blackmail and intimidate the Royal Australian Nursing Federation. It was probably thought to be easy pickings to try to put the pressure on the nurses and so, through them, to exert pressure on the more powerful Public Service unions.

As I said, this application for a pay rise was filed last May, and obviously the Minister for Health did nothing about it although he would have known of it. His advisers would have told him that in every other State of Australia, the nurses' unions are pursuing similar wage claims.

In South Australia the nurses were granted a 5 per cent wage rise. In Tasmania the rise was \$8 per week across the board for all public servants. In the other States such wage claims are being pursued actively.

The Government introduced a Budget to the tune of \$1 857 million. No-one can tell the Opposition that the Government if it had been genuine could not have found the necessary money out of that Budget to pay for the nurses' pay rise.

Mr O'Connor: Do you know how much it put into health?

Mr HODGE: The nurses' pay increase would be 0.27 per cent of the total Budget.

Mr O'Connor: Is that the amount for health?

Mr HODGE: The Premier offered to rewrite the entire Budget to provide some drought relief for the farmers. I would like to quote from an article which appeared in *The Sunday Times* of 4 October 1980 which reads as follows—

The State Government is prepared to revise its Budget—announced only Tuesday—to provide relief for WA's drought-stricken farmers.

The Premier, Sir Charles Court, made this clear yesterday as the drought—threatening to cost the State \$400 million—showed no signs of breaking.

Quite rightly the Treasurer was prepared, if necessary, to rewrite the Budget to provide extra relief for drought-stricken farmers. Surely the State public hospital system is at least as important as is the provision of drought relief? In fact, is it not more important?

Mr B. T. Burke: Jobs aren't, according to the Government.

Mr HODGE: Certainly the Opposition believes that the health and welfare of the public are just as important. This Government, to score a political point, is prepared to jeopardise the health and welfare of the public, to say nothing of the jobs of all these workers. There is no doubt that the efficiency of the public hospitals is going to be undermined, and undermined severely. Miss Gardiner, the Secretary of the Royal Australian Nursing Federation, has been quoted on several occasions as saying this. She was again quoted in today's edition of *The West Australian* as follows—

Miss Gardiner said that health services in WA were already pared to the minimum, and any cuts would be disastrous for patient care and worker safety.

Of course it is not only Miss Gardiner and the union who have been saying that; in fact, the Premier himself said that very thing a few weeks ago, despite what he said on commercial radio stations today.

On 15 October the Premier issued a news release as follows—

Because of a marked drift away from private hospital insurance over the past 12 months, admission demands at major public hospitals are putting pressure on staff and sometimes exceeding the number of beds immediately available.

Australia might be going through a period of low birth growth, but one would never think so at King Edward.

The number of deliveries at the Hospital over the last 12 months increased by 25 per cent and is now running at a rate of 5 000 a year.

So in October the Premier was well and truly aware that hospitals were operating under great pressure. The Minister for Health also acknowledged that fact when he replied to a question I asked him on Tuesday, 18 November. In his reply to question without notice 443 he said—

There has been an increase in the number of patients being treated in public hospitals in the last several years; I think in the last two years the increase in the teaching hospitals has been in the vicinity of 12.5 per cent.

The cut-back will cause some deterioration in the services at teaching hospitals; —

That was the Minister for Health saying—

The cut-back will cause some deterioration in the services at teaching hospitals; that

cannot be denied because if there were to be no deterioration whatsoever in the services it would indicate there was excessive staff levels in the hospitals.

The Premier today has been trying to convince the public that there will be no deterioration in hospital standards and that the health and welfare of hospital patients will not be threatened. Of course, that is just not true, and the statements I have have quoted prove the point I am making.

Another aspect of this sordid affair is the vote of no confidence, the slap in the face, which the Government dealt to the Western Australian Industrial Commission. Only 12 months ago we heard the Minister for Labour and Industry when he introduced the new Industrial Arbitration Act make a lot of comments about the Government's abiding by the umpire's decision. The Government might as well have saved its time and the time of the Parliament because on several occasions it has shown that it does not have the remotest intention of abiding by the spirit or the law of that Act.

Mr O'Connor: We will abide by it.

Mr HODGE: The Government put Commissioner Johnson in an invidious position. It did not take the opportunity to put forward the Government's argument in the public interest. It did not even do that, and yet the Government claimed that the matter is so important it is prepared to cut back and sack 248 people. As I said, when the Attorney General had the statutory right to appear before the commission to put the Government's argument in the public interest, the Government did not even bother to take that opportunity.

Yet afterwards, when the decision went the way it did, the Government had the cheek to criticise the umpire and to criticise him very severely. How low can it get! Of course, this is not the first time that the Government has ignored the umpire's decision. We all know the cowardly attacks the Government made on Senior Commissioner Kelly a few weeks ago when he made a decision that did not please the Government.

The Government might as well abolish the Western Australian Industrial Commission, because obviously it is not going to play by the rules the Government itself drew up. In those circumstances it seems to me to be futile to continue with the Industrial Commission, because if the only increases which the people in Western Australia will be allowed to accept in future are national cost-of-living adjustments, there is no point in having a Western Australian Industrial Commission.

The nurses' pay rise which is disputed by the Government was granted within wage indexation guidelines. The Government has tried to paint a picture to the public to the effect that this pay rise is an exorbitant wage grab which is not within the wage indexation system. However, the rise was not outside the indexation guidelines; it related to a most comprehensive work-value case which was put before the commissioner, and the commissioner in his wisdom saw fit to grant a 5 per cent increase. It is a lawfully awarded pay rise which was well earned and well deserved.

Mr Davies: And long overdue.

Mr HODGE: Yes, indeed it was. This Government is setting out to frustrate the Industrial Commission and to frustrate the thousands of public servants and other workers who play by the rules and rely on that commission for pay increases.

The Government cannot convince the Opposition it has no alternative but to sack 248 staff. As far as the Opposition is concerned, that is just not on. We would be happy to co-operate in any way the Premier saw fit. If he would like to reintroduce any part of the Budget to make an adjustment to provide for this pay rise, the Opposition would co-operate with him. The Government has an obligation and a responsibility to the people of the State to ensure that public hospitals are adequately manned. Public teaching hospitals have had no staff increases for five years, and yet a dramatic increase has occurred in the number of patients the hospitals are supposed to be able to look after.

Of course, we have all seen the letters and articles in the Press about people being required to wait up to four hours to have a simple prescription filled at Royal Perth Hospital. We have read about the time one must wait to see a speech therapist—11 months at some Government hospitals—and we have read how one must wait six months to see an eye specialist. This is an incredible bungling of the administration of the hospital system, and it has occurred under the stewardship of this Government.

What sort of deal has the Government been able to get from the Commonwealth Government? The Minister for Health tries to blame all these things on the Commonwealth Government. I saw a letter he wrote to a community group in which he tried to pass the buck onto the Federal Government for the 11-month wait to see a speech therapist. He said it was all the fault of the Federal Government, but that is just not true. This State Government has a responsibility to look after the public health and

the public welfare, and it cannot pass the buck to Canberra even though it would dearly like to do so.

Apparently the State Government has been placed under such stringent financial controls by its Liberal Party colleagues in Canberra that it cannot seem to make ends meet.

I think this attack on the nurses will misfire on the Government. It should stop and think again. Obviously the Government thought it was taking on a non-militant, peaceful union which would cave in under the pressure. The Minister for Health visited the office of the Royal Australian Nursing Federation and put forward the outrageous proposition that the federation should apply to the Western Australian Industrial Commission to have payment of the wage rise deferred until next year.

Mr Parker: That shows how naive they are.

Mr HODGE: He wanted a lawfully awarded pay rise to be deferred to next year; and this is on top of the fact that the Government was not sufficiently interested in the first place to make a submission to the original hearing through the Attorney General.

Mr Bryce: How would he go if he suggested to his mates that they defer profits until next year?

Mr HODGE: That is not the end of the proposition the Minister put to the federation; he told Miss Gardiner that even if the federation were prepared to apply for a deferment of the wage rise, he still could not guarantee sackings would not occur and he still could not guarantee the Government would not oppose the application of a pay rise next July. What sort of deal is that? What a hide this man has even to front up at the doorstep and offer such an insulting proposition.

Mr Young: You have been misinformed.

Mr HODGE: I have not been misinformed at all.

Mr Young: We will see.

Mr HODGE: While the Minister might be lacking in efficiency and competence, certainly he is not lacking in hide.

Mr B. T. Burke: And you have flayed it for him a few times lately.

Mr HODGE: He has thoroughly deserved it. He has a hide to put that sort of proposition to the nurses. He has tried to wriggle off the hook since that became public, and he now says it was not really a Government or Cabinet proposition, but was his own proposal.

Mr Young: You have been misinformed, haven't you?

Mr HODGE: The Minister will have an opportunity to respond.

The crisis which has developed in the hospital situation need not have developed, and it can still be averted. This is an artificially engineered crisis and the Government is behind it. This Government and the Premier can still back down. I know the Premier does not back down often; we all know his performance in respect of Noonkanbah and Tresillian and all the other shameful episodes that make up this man's history. Perhaps he could make a start, turn over a new leaf, and acknowledge that on this occasion the Government is wrong, it is out of order, and the public do not deserve the sort of treatment which is proposed. Perhaps he will be prepared to reconsider the matter.

The amount of money involved is peanuts. The Premier could find all sorts of money if he wanted to. When it comes to Noonkanbah and other pet projects he can find the money. He is prepared to lavish money on himself and his personal propaganda staff; an unprecedented growth has occurred in the Press corps and the privileges accorded to the Premier's staff. Perhaps he could have a close look at his own position and see whether he will reconsider it. The Opposition is prepared to accept any reasonable proposition put forward by the Premier which will result in the Parliament reconsidering the appropriate section of the Budget. We believe Parliament could easily continue to sit, and we are prepared to sit for as long as it takes to ensure that nurses receive the wage they are entitled to receive and public hospitals receive the funding to which they are entitled. I was absolutely shocked and horrified to hear the announcement yesterday about staff cuts. I do not know how this Minister can sit there with a grin on his face—

Mr B. T. Burke: He doesn't care about jobs.

Mr HODGE: —when the livelihood of 248 staff is in jeopardy. My phone ran hot last night; I had people crying on the phone to me.

Sir Charles Court: Oh!

Mr Davies: Look at them laughing! It is absolutely disgusting!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HODGE: People suffering great emotional distress phoned me last night; they are people who are worried sick about losing their jobs. They have been loyal and faithful servants to their employers, and it is about time this Government returned some of that loyalty in the form of removing the threat which is hanging over the

heads of staff. It should accept its responsibility and provide the adequate finance which is so urgently needed.

MR YOUNG (Scarborough—Minister for Health) [2.09 p.m.]: I think the first thing this House ought to do—

Mr Hodge: Is accept your resignation.

MR YOUNG: —is examine the veracity of the statements of the member for Melville to see whether he is capable of telling the truth.

Mr B. T. Burke: Don't start that business.

MR YOUNG: The member for Melville had 20 minutes during which he was heard in silence.

Let us examine firstly the visit to the Royal Australian Nursing Federation which was initiated by me yesterday in respect of this matter, simply because I had no intention of taking the matter to Cabinet as a final solution without giving the federation an opportunity to consider the situation of the nurses and other people who might lose their jobs. Therefore, I rang Miss Gardiner and made arrangements to see her. We had a conversation which concluded with my dictating a letter to her private secretary.

Mr Pearce: "Dictating" is the word, you blackmailer!

The **SPEAKER**: Order! The member for Melville was heard in virtual silence. Indeed, the only interjections I observed were those which came from his own side in support of what he was saying. It is appropriate that the same opportunity be granted to the Minister for Health.

Withdrawal of Remark

MR YOUNG: Before I continue, I would like the member for Gosnells to withdraw the word "blackmailer".

The **SPEAKER**: Order! It seems to me that the word "blackmailer" may be one that has or has not been accepted. I will ask the Clerk to turn up the list.

MR YOUNG: It does not matter, Mr Speaker; I do not have sufficient time at my disposal. I withdraw my request.

The **SPEAKER**: Order! The Minister will resume his seat. I am informed the word has not been ruled on one way or the other. It seems to me the Minister for Health is able to defend himself and I do not believe it is necessarily unparliamentary to use the word in that way.

Sir Charles Court: It was scurrilous!

Debate Resumed

MR YOUNG: The fact that the word "blackmailer" was used at all in this House is a disgrace. It would seem a couple of members opposite do not want me to quote the letter. I dictated this letter to Miss Gardiner's private secretary in her presence, and the letter was typed by her private secretary on her typewriter; it was signed by me in their presence.

The member for Melville said that when the matter became public, I tried to wriggle off the hook by saying it was not a Cabinet decision. The letter, in part, reads as follows—

Obviously the conversation and this outline of it is my own view of what might be done to overcome the problem existing as a result of the Government's determination to adhere to its Budget policy with respect to the increase recently granted to nurses. It is therefore not the view of or a proposition from the Cabinet or the Premier.

Possibly, the member for Melville was not informed of the contents of the letter. However, does that not call the whole conversation into question? Did the member for Melville know about the letter?

Mr Hodge: Yes.

MR YOUNG: So, either the member for Melville told an untruth to the Parliament, or was told an untruth by Miss Gardiner.

Mr Hodge: Rubbish!

MR YOUNG: The member for Melville just said that, after the matter became public, I tried to wriggle off the hook by saying it was not a Cabinet decision, but I had already said that in the letter.

Mr Hodge: You did.

MR YOUNG: The letter was dictated in the morning, before the matter became public. It is unparliamentary to use the word "liar", so I will not call the member for Melville a liar; however, I do suggest that—

The **SPEAKER**: Order!

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

MR DAVIES: Mr Speaker, I request that the letter be tabled at the conclusion of the Minister's remarks.

The **SPEAKER**: Order! I ask the Minister for Health to table the letter when he concludes his speech.

Debate Resumed

Mr YOUNG: Mr Speaker, not only will I table the letter; I will read it as well.

Several members interjected.

Mr B. T. Burke: Why don't you answer the question relating to the number of jobs you are going to confiscate? Why don't you get onto the issues, you flea?

The SPEAKER: Order!

Point of Order

Mr CLARKO: Mr Speaker, the member for Balcatta called the Minister for Health a flea. It is normal for him to use intemperate language, but I do not think it is appropriate in this place, and I ask for a withdrawal.

Mr Pearce: It is disgusting for you, as Chairman of Committees, to ask for a withdrawal.

The SPEAKER: Order! There are two matters on which I should like to comment at this moment. The first matter to which I refer is the practice which has been followed by a number of members in this House to interject whilst I am on my feet dealing with a particular point of order. This is a practice I do not intend to tolerate any further. I have warned members directly in the past and I now say emphatically that I have warned members for the last time. I intend to name the next member who interjects whilst I am on my feet, when it is clear I have been asked to deliberate on a point of order.

As to the second matter, the member for Karrinyup has asked for a withdrawal of the word "flea". I agree that that type of language is unparliamentary, and I ask the member for Balcatta to withdraw.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I am happy to withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Debate Resumed

Mr YOUNG: I can see this is going to be a long and tortuous path. In addition to the fact it has been proved beyond a shadow of doubt that either the member for Melville told an untruth to this Parliament or was himself told an untruth by Miss Gardiner, there is another matter on which he has been misguided. He said that I would not guarantee there would be no sackings. I said I could not guarantee there would be no sackings as from 1 July 1981. I thought I had made it very clear that if the Royal Australian Nursing Federation was prepared to go to the Industrial Commission and ask that the pay increase be paid

only from 1 July 1981, the status quo would be retained until then.

Mr Skidmore: You would have to be joking.

Mr YOUNG: The member for Swan says that I would have to be joking. I have been accused by the member for Melville of being naive. I am prepared to admit after I see how the matter has been misrepresented that it was naive of me to give the Nursing Federation the opportunity to go to its members and consider the matter before I went to Cabinet.

The member for Melville claimed that people were telephoning him and expressing fear at the prospect of losing their jobs; he said that some people were even crying on the telephone. People have telephoned me, and have cried on the telephone to me. However, a number of people have telephoned me and said, "I first knew about the increase when I read it in the newspaper. However, the very same day I read that I might lose my job. I do not want the increase."

Mr Pearce: What rubbish! I do not believe a word of that.

Mr YOUNG: It happens to be true. Do members opposite seriously believe nurses would ring them and tell them they did not want an increase? The nurses would know what would be the reaction of members opposite. Do members seriously believe nurses would telephone the member for Melville, the member for Fremantle, or the member for Swan with that sort of request? Of course they would not.

Mr Davies: How many people telephoned you to say they did not want the increase?

Mr YOUNG: I do not deny that some people have telephoned the member for Melville and cried about the prospect of losing their jobs. Is it not also reasonable that people expressing the opposite point of view should telephone me, or other members on this side?

Let us examine this whole question of the alleged deterioration in our health services.

Mr E. T. Evans: You are an abomination.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! There are one or two members who have continued to try to drown out the Minister's remarks. That is quite unreasonable, and I ask those members to restrain themselves.

Mr YOUNG: The member for Melville claimed there had been a deterioration in our health services, and in the standard of hospital care offered in Western Australia. It is appropriate to quote the following statement in

the letter I dictated to Miss Gardiner's private secretary—

The Government also realises that it would be detrimental to the general service offered by our hospital system if any further cuts were to be made in staffing levels of any kind.

I have said both in this House and elsewhere on a number of occasions that, of necessity, taking people out of the system must result in some small deterioration in the standard of our hospitals.

Mr Hodge: I hope the Premier is listening to you. That is not what he said this morning.

Mr YOUNG: However, I must emphasise to the member for Melville and the other members of this magic triangle opposite who do all in their power to attack when somebody is trying to get over his message, that any deterioration in standards in our teaching hospitals will be minimal. It will still leave them the best teaching hospitals not only in this country but also in the world.

Mr Davies: That is rubbish!

Mr YOUNG: Every member opposite knows that is true. The Leader of the Opposition knows it is true; in fact, when he was Minister for Health he constantly made the same statement.

Mr Davies: That was because I was the Minister; the system has gone downhill ever since.

Mr YOUNG: The system has improved since those days. There is no shadow of doubt in anyone's mind that our hospital system is the best in the world. People have only to travel overseas and see the standards offering in other countries to know that we have the best system; for the price, there is nothing to compare with it.

What we as a Government must face up to is the expectation of the community. We must ask ourselves: Can we afford to continue to have the best hospital system, and the highest standard of teaching hospitals in the world at the fees which are charged? The community has told this and other Governments that they expect the best system in the world; they believe they are entitled to it. I do not blame the community for adopting this attitude. However, at the same time people are telling the Prime Minister, the Premier, and every other member of Parliament that they do not want any more increases in Government charges, fees, and taxes.

However, the people who go to the Industrial Commission—who, in fact, are queued up already to go to the Industrial Commission—do not accept this point of view. They say, "We can go to the public well as many times as we like. Go to

the well. Dip into next year's loan funds", or, "Take the money from next year's schools, next year's hospitals, and next year's roads. Finance it from anything." In the course of his speech, the member for Melville said virtually, "All you have to do is find it." He said the Opposition does not accept the move. The member for Melville and the Leader of the Opposition, or anyone else, have never said where the Government can find the money if it does not have it.

Opposition members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr YOUNG: They have accused the Government of having no confidence in the Industrial Commission. The fact that we are not prepared to raise any taxes within our budgeting to finance increased wages does not change the situation in respect of the Industrial Commission. We accept the ruling of the Industrial Commission. We accept it when the Industrial Commission tells us we have to increase the wages.

Mr Hodge: Rubbish!

Mr YOUNG: We will pay the increases to the 98.5 per cent or thereabouts of the people left. But it is clear that the people who made the application to the Industrial Commission do not care about the 1.5 per cent of workers who will lose their jobs.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr YOUNG: That is the plain fact of the matter. That is the situation which is supported by the members of the Opposition.

Mr B. T. Burke: Can I just ask you one question?

Mr YOUNG: No. I have had enough questions.

The SPEAKER: Order! There are far too many interjections in this House. A moment ago there were two members interjecting at the one time, and that is not acceptable to me.

Mr YOUNG: I have had enough of the interjections. I have wasted enough time. The Opposition has wasted my time, so I will not oblige the members.

Mr B. T. Burke: But those people made the application before they knew they would lose their jobs. What do you say to that?

Mr YOUNG: There is a queue of people at the door of the Industrial Commission already. They know what the Government policy is. They know very well that others will lose their jobs.

Mr B. T. Burke: This application was made in May.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has been subjected to far too many interjections in his speech so far. I point out to the members of the House that the member for Melville was heard in virtual silence. I believe it is only fair that the Minister should be given a fair go.

Mr YOUNG: There is a queue of people at the Industrial Commission, and there is another queue of people expecting to lose their positions as a result. They know very well what the Government's policy is, and the situation in respect of the current Budget. In effect, they are saying to their members, "We don't care about the few who are going to lose their jobs. We are going ahead. We are going to have the work-value cases tested by the commission. If the commission grants it, the Government will have to find the money in the Budget or some of you lose your jobs." The Opposition subscribes to that sort of thing. It is quite happy to have that sort of situation.

Mr B. T. Burke interjected.

Mr YOUNG: I have made it clear that the Government will not do that sort of thing.

I have figures I want to quote so they will be recorded in *Hansard*. I want to inform the House exactly what money is being spent on health and hospitals in this State of Western Australia. From 1974-75, the increase for the six financial years to 1979-80 in hospital expenditure has been from \$144.7 million to \$318.8 million. That is an increase of more than 100 per cent. The gross expenditure on the public hospital system in Western Australia has increased from \$285 million in 1978-79 to \$318.8 million in 1979-80. That is an increase of \$33 million. The total health expenditure in 1979-80 was 39.99 per cent of the total Budget of this State.

The people who say that we do not care about the health of the people in this State should take heed of that. The member for Melville is a classic example. He talked about this Government not caring about the health of the people. This Government, more than any other, has cared about the health of its people, if one boils it down to what we are talking about. Firstly, we are talking about the best hospital system in the world. Let it be recorded in *Hansard* that nearly all the members of the Opposition laughed their heads off when I said that; so that is their impression of that fact.

I say our hospital system is the best in the world. However, we have to take into account the matter of money. We must have money available to pay this wage increase for the nurses; and when one considers the increase in expenditure in

hospitals in this State over the years, and compares the facts with the things that have been said by the member for Melville who claims that we do not care, one realises the situation becomes an absolute farce.

Mr Parker: How much money have you wasted on QE II?

Mr YOUNG: We have to face up to what the community expects. The community has the right to expect a good health system, a good hospital system, and an Industrial Commission that does the right thing. More importantly the community has the right to expect the trade unions will serve properly the needs of the people who receive the increases to which we have referred.

Mr T. H. Jones: Tell us about the Royal Perth Hospital building programme deferment. A waste of money!

Mr YOUNG: We have to face up to the fact that the community will have to meet these increased fees and charges or increases in taxation or cost cutting—

Mr Parker: How about reducing the doctors' wages?

Mr YOUNG: I have noticed that many people have said constantly, "We have to reduce the expenditure in the Government sector. We have no alternative."

Mr Bryce: Who says that on your side of the political fence?

Mr YOUNG: If members of the Opposition do not say that, then they are really saying that we should increase fees and taxes.

Mr Pearce: Rubbish! We are saying we could do it better than you can.

Mr YOUNG: The members who say that cuts should be made are the ones who want to make sure that the cuts do not take place in their own electorates.

So often we are confronted with a situation in which cuts have to be made and when the Government says, "Well, we will make cuts in X", there is a call that we should look for another area in which to make the cut. No area of cuts is universally acceptable.

Opposition members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is totally unacceptable, when the Minister is on his feet, to have one member starting to interject as soon as another member ceases. I will give the Minister an extra couple of minutes of speaking time, bearing in mind the fact that he has lost time because I have had to rise to my feet to try to restore order in the House.

Mr YOUNG: Thank you for that, Mr Speaker.

I will wind up by saying that the Opposition always seems to be saying, as Oppositions always do to Governments, "Whatever you do with the taxpayers' money is wrong. Wherever you make the cuts, it's wrong. Wherever you make an increase in fees to avoid making cuts, it's wrong." Although I accept, and I am sure the Government accepts, that it will ever be thus, and that members of the Opposition will continue with that sort of suggestion, whether or not it stands to reason, I am sure the Opposition will not blame me if I and other members of this House see this motion as humbug and Opposition rhetoric.

What we have been talking about today has been well known as part of the Budget strategy. We have made statements in this House on that subject. Either the Premier or I have answered questions about this matter, almost on a daily basis. This situation does not come as a shock to members of the Opposition; it does not come as a shock to the member for Melville. I do not have time to read the letter I have, but I will have it tabled. I do not know whether the member for Melville did not know of its existence or whether he chose to ignore it.

That is all I have to say on the matter. I refute the allegations made by the Opposition and recommend to my colleagues that they continue this sitting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The letter will be tabled.

The letter was tabled (see paper No. 414).

MR DAVIES (Victoria Park—Leader of the Opposition) [2.31 p.m.]: I am sure the Minister must have disappointed the Government just as much as he disappointed the Opposition in his failed attempt to explain the actions the Government has taken. If I could summarise his speech he said, first of all, that people had been ringing him saying they did not want to have the rise anyway. That might be so, but he did not say how many had phoned him. It might have been one or possibly two at the most; I would not expect the number to be more than half a dozen. Despite our request that he indicate how many, the Minister did not inform us, and I will pause now in case he should want to give the information to the House. The Minister is reluctant to tell us because I do not think it involved any more than one person.

The Minister then said we have the best hospital system in the world; anyone would think he was under oath and had to say so. He said it was too good for the people and it was time we started cutting down on the standard of our

hospital service. That is how I summed up his speech and I am sure everyone else would say exactly the same thing.

Despite all he claims has been spent on hospitals and despite the large increase in each financial year, the waiting queues in the corridors are longer, the waiting queues at the dispensaries are longer, the waiting times for specialist appointments are longer, and the whole health system is collapsing. Just to help it on its way, the Minister said that although we have allegedly cut the staff to the bone already we will now start to hack into the bone. That is precisely what is happening if the Government has been honest with the people in the past. The Minister has said the Government has made cuts over and above those which should be made. This situation is acknowledged in Press statements and in statements in this House. I have a statement in front of me attributed to the Premier to this effect.

It is acknowledged that the situation in many hospitals is acute; it is acknowledged that people have arrived at hospitals for appointments for elective surgery and have been sent home. I could take members to people in my electorate who have experienced this sort of thing. The Government has acknowledged there has been a general deterioration and it is now saying, "Let us make it a bit worse." That is the only answer the Minister can give.

He said it was ever thus. Of course it was ever thus. The Tonkin Labor Government had the same kind of financial strictures to put up with. The first thing with which John Tonkin was confronted when he became Treasurer of this State was a document given to the previous Treasurer a week before the election indicating that the State was broke. That is how that Government started off, yet look at what it was able to do.

The action of this Government since it brought down its Budget has destroyed once and forever the claim that it is a Government of sound financial managers. In fact, there is not a financial manager in it! Indeed, it has been rhetoric from start to finish. Remember the words "good housekeeping", "sensible application", "keep down taxes and charges", and "do what is right by the people".

Mr Hodge: "Leap into the eighties."

Mr DAVIES: That is right, "Leap into the eighties", but do not break your leg because you cannot get hospital treatment! That is just about what it means. "Lead with the Liberals" was another one.

This Government has shown complete irresponsibility in its handling of budgetary matters and, indeed, has abdicated all responsibility because it has said, "Whenever we are short of money we will simply hack off a few more staff, irrespective of the consequences." The Government was unfortunate that it had to start putting its policy into effect with nurses. We do not deny that we were warned about the policy, because the Premier spoke about this on page 8 of his Financial Statement. He said the Government would look after indexation increases only as that was all the Budget could manage.

We thought that was put forward in an attempt to frighten people into not seeking increases and in an attempt to inhibit the Industrial Commission—goodness only knows the Government has tried hard and often enough to do that. It has attempted to have things altered to its liking and when it has been unable to do that it has altered the law of the land. It did this in regard to the Industrial Commission; indeed, it is trying to do so again during the present session of Parliament.

Perhaps the Premier thought that if he gave a warning and received a bit of publicity about the matter no-one would dare seek an increase because people knew what would happen. Being the type of person he is the Premier, having made that boast, felt he had to put up a good showing; he thought he would probably win. Indeed, it is easy for him to win. He has only to bury his head in the ground as he has done on so many occasions and pretend that things are not as they are. Lo and behold, he hopes the whole thing will go away. Sometimes the position does calm down and people get used to the new situation.

But people will not get used to a situation when a Government which has been renowned for its application of additional charges and which has been renowned for the manner in which it has squandered money over the years in various ways carries on in this manner. I really do not want to go into too much detail because time is limited; but we will be watching with a great deal of interest the position in regard to the Noonkanbah finances and the costs involved. We have already been told we will not get an accounting of all the costs. We will look at the money wasted on abattoirs and see what might be done there. We might look at money wasted on overseas trips and money wasted on additional staff, postage, and telex machines in the Premier's office. All those things might be matters which could have been looked at and have something done about rather than our having the Government meddling with the health of the people in this State.

The Government obviously has lost control of its budgeting. The Minister said the situation was ever thus and I agree with him; Governments have always had to face up to additional and unexpected expenditure. But honest Governments have always made an attempt to place realistic figures in the Budget, figures they know they will have to meet; and they have budgeted accordingly.

The Minister asked us what we would do—put us into Government and we will show the Minister what we would do! We would certainly get things moving faster than they are in this State under this Government. We have had the shell of the Royal Perth Hospital north block standing empty for almost two years with little likelihood, apparently, of very much progress being made. That is not the sort of situation of which any Government can be proud. Now, when it has lost control of its budgeting, it is not taking the blame itself; it is not blaming the courts for awarding an increase. Indeed, the Minister has been generous enough to say he does not care what the courts award and that the Government would pay the increases awarded. The only trouble is that the Government will not pay the increase to as many people as it was previously paying.

Mr Parker: It is interesting to see the Minister has left the Chamber while you are speaking.

Mr DAVIES: The Premier said last night and again this morning that the unions should not be making these outrageous claims. I ask members whether in fact this claim is outrageous. According to the information which has been given by way of interjection in the House today and on other occasions, the claim being made is a normal follow-on which is about five years overdue. At least I have received a couple of rises in salary, apart from indexation, during the past five years, as have most other people. Therefore, the Government could only reasonably expect this to occur.

The Government should have known this would happen. The claim made by the member for Melville that the Minister was incompetent or sadly lacking in responsibility if he did not make known to the Treasurer at the time of submitting his estimates the likely charges which would be made in regard to salaries, is true. The Minister, as well as those within his department, would have known about this claim and the fact that it was pending, because it was made known last May, not on 1 October or 15 November. The claim was made last May and the decision was given only recently.

If the Government thought it should intervene in the hearing in the public interest, it had every right to do so, because it gave itself that right when it rewrote the Industrial Arbitration Act last year. Every Minister, including the Minister for Health, should have known about that. He should have known the Attorney General had the right to approach the Industrial Commission and state the Government's case in the public interest.

What happened as far as the Government was concerned? It took no interest whatsoever. That is an indication of the seriousness with which the Government treated the matter. However, it was fortunate the court was not as careless as the Government thought it would be in considering the Government's attitude. The Government conveyed through the media that it was not very happy about the rises and the commissioner took this matter into account, although a Government representative did not appear in the court. Anyone who has had the time or interest to read the judgment made by the commissioner will have noticed what he said.

I do not have the commissioner's judgment with me, but I have a report which appeared in *The West Australian* of Tuesday, 25 November, and as far as I can recall the situation, the report conforms with the comments made by the commissioner in his judgment.

Members would know where Commissioner G. A. Johnson came from. If anyone was aware of the Government's feelings or attitudes, Mr Johnson would be, because previously he was a Government employee. Commissioner G. A. Johnson said—

Capacity to pay from a Government point of view is clearly a matter of public interest in the context of the State's public hospitals, yet the Attorney-General apparently saw no need to seek leave to intervene and provide evidence on that matter.

What was the commissioner to do? He was conscious of the comments made by the Premier, but no representations had been made to him and he noted that in his judgment. He went on to say—

This does not mean that I have ignored the interest of the public—far from it.

I am acutely conscious of the financial constraints on hospitals, the current high work pressure on staff, with the possibility of even higher pressure if the staff is reduced.

Nonetheless, I believe it important that nurses be rewarded at a level commensurate with the skill, responsibility and dedication

expected of them by the general public for its health and welfare.

To his credit, Mr Johnson at least gave some attention to what he believed to be the Government's policy on the matter; but, like the rest of us, he must have been astounded that the Government did not attempt to intervene.

Let us turn now to the sound financial management which has been referred to and the fact that the Government has balanced its Budgets during the past five years or so. People believe the Government has done this in some sort of magical way; but one would have to be soft in the head to believe a Budget could be balanced exactly to the last cent or dollar when dealing with approximately \$2 billion. It is obvious a sleight of hand must occur and this is in fact the case, because money is available to the Government as a result of interest received from short-term investment moneys.

This year the fund increased by approximately \$44 million. At the end of the year, when the Government was short of money, it said, "We will have some of that short-term investment interest", and it then proceeded to balance the Budget and said, "We have balanced the Budget. Aren't we clever?"

After taking that action, at 30 June 1980, \$26.5 million was left over in the Budget account. The Premier said he always likes to keep a little in hand. Indeed, last week he said to me, "You would bankrupt the State! You would spend every penny of that money!"

Mr Nanovich: He was right too!

Mr DAVIES: What an inane interjection. This year the Premier spent every penny which had previously been held in reserve. He spent all of the \$26.5 million which was left over. Approximately \$17 million went into the Consolidated Revenue Fund so that it would balance, and \$9 million went to the General Loan Fund. On his own admission, the Premier has bankrupted the State.

At a later date we may once again take up the matter of the way in which money is invested in the short-term money market; but we have more important matters to deal with at the present time.

Earlier this year the Premier wrote to me and said he intended to amend the Act and he asked me what I suggested. I said, "I will make my suggestions when we see the amendments." However, we have heard nothing further about it. It is obvious the Government knows the claim we made last year is perfectly valid. However, we have more important things to deal with today.

The Premier has now spent all the money which was held in reserve previously and has said, "Do not despair, because during the present year more money will be available from short-term investments on loan and other funds which will become available to this State." It is likely that, by the end of the year, we could have approximately \$16 million or \$17 million, because over the past few years money earned by way of interest received on the short-term money market has ranged from \$3.1 million in 1970-71 up to \$17.1 million in the last financial year. Therefore, more money will be invested on the short-term money market, more money will be available, and some of it will be used to balance the Budget. This is a perfectly legitimate use of the money, if the Government wants to be dinkum.

If the Government tries to ignore all of these matters, it has lost control of the Budget. This Government has levied higher charges and has increased charges more frequently than any other Government which has been in office during the 20 years I have been a member of this Parliament. On other occasions I have listed the increases; but on the Premier's own admission, the estimated increases this year—this includes electricity, water rates, bus fares, in fact everything—will result in the Government receiving an extra \$112.9 million. The public are the ones who will have to meet those increased charges.

Indeed, the increases in charges will be greater than would appear, because the SEC has admitted already it will increase electricity charges by 12 per cent. Members should not forget that every time electricity and water charges go up, 3 per cent of the increase goes directly to Government revenue. It is a taxing measure.

The Government has had record sums of money available to it. This is borne out when one looks at the Financial Statement issued by the Treasurer on 30 June last. Members will see that last year some of the revenue was much greater than had been anticipated. It is clear also that, on occasions, expenditure was greater than had been estimated; but the Government still came out on the correct side of the ledger.

The point I am trying to make is that the Government is always fiddling with the Budget. I do not use the word "fiddling" in a disrespectful manner, because, for a number of reasons, the Government has to alter the figures it gives to Parliament in its Budget and there is always room in which to manoeuvre.

The Government is expected to manoeuvre within the constraints of its Budget and to ensure that it always has room to manoeuvre. There is no magic in balancing a Budget and a Government having room to manoeuvre. However, this Government has been the Government to impose on the people of Western Australia the highest charges for 20 years, and that situation has applied since I have been in this House. I believe the Government has decided it will not bother any more to carry out its responsibilities.

It has decided to pay legitimate wages but not to employ as many people as it otherwise might have been able to employ had it not been for the increase in wages. As has been said, the amount of money involved represents about 0.27 per cent of the total Budget. If the Government is unable to pay the increased wages it should resign, as should the Minister for Health because of his most inadequate reply to this House this afternoon.

MR GRAYDEN (South Perth—Minister for Education) [2.52 p.m.]: I wonder what the necessity is for the motion presently before the House.

Mr Bryce: You could not care less about the 248 people who will lose their jobs; you would not be the slightest bit worried.

Mr GRAYDEN: The converse is the case. I still wonder why we have before this House the so-called urgency motion. I understand that ostensibly we are talking about retrenchments, but the situation has not arisen whereby retrenchments are inevitable. The situation has been created by union leaders in Western Australia, and they have done so with the support of Opposition members.

Mr Harman: Sit down.

Mr GRAYDEN: The situation is as simple as I have put it. We are now wasting the time of this House during its last week or two weeks of sitting this year. Whether employees will be retrenched will be determined by the course of action that the unions and the Opposition in this State pursue.

Mr Parker: Are you saying the workers cannot get wage justice?

Mr GRAYDEN: The situation is as simple as I have put it. The unions and the Opposition in Western Australia must accept they have the remedy in their own hands.

Mr Parker interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr GRAYDEN: The member for Fremantle should be quiet!

The SPEAKER: Order! I will not accept during the speech by the Minister for Education the standard of behaviour which prevailed during the speech made earlier by the Minister for Health. It is unacceptable to have a continuous barrage of interjections. Members ought not assume that because they make an interjection they do not contribute greatly to disorderly behaviour in the House. What has occurred during part of this debate is that a member has interjected for a few moments and then another member from his side of the House has interjected for a few moments more. We are having continual interjections which are totally unacceptable. I warn members that this course will not be tolerated by me.

Mr GRAYDEN: As I said, simply no necessity exists for our having this debate—it is a waste of time. No possibility exists of people being retrenched if a certain course of action is pursued.

Mr Parker interjected.

Mr GRAYDEN: Most people on wages in Western Australia, irrespective of which walk of life they may occupy, receive only the normal Consumer Price Index increases which apply across the board. Those people do not try to go beyond that limit and therefore do not jeopardise their employment in the community. The situation is as simple and as cut and dried as that.

The remedy for the present situation is in the hands of the trade unions of Western Australia and members of the Opposition. The unions and the Opposition have inflicted upon themselves the wounds of which they complain.

Mr Parker interjected.

Mr GRAYDEN: The Opposition and the unions say there will be retrenchments, but the Opposition and the unions by making excessive wage claims will create such a situation. Opposition members know only too well that up till relatively recently in this country we had a degree of wage stability which was the envy of other countries.

In 1939 the Australian basic wage was approximately \$8.

Mr Parker: Eight dollars!

Mr GRAYDEN: A wage of \$20 was a princely sum in 1939.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr GRAYDEN: In Western Australia alone the principle of the basic wage has been established for well over 100 years. As I said, in 1939 the basic wage had reached \$8 and further increases were relatively gradual. Then of course we had the Whitlam era.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr GRAYDEN: In one year wages and salaries increased by approximately 33½ per cent. Of course now it has become the pattern for trade unions with the support of the Labor Party to put forward exorbitant wage claims. In the case of teachers we saw relatively recently the situation of a claim for a 20 per cent increase in wages being made. An interim increase of 4.3 per cent was granted but the teachers are now seeking a further increase of 15.7 per cent. The point I am making is that in Australia over a long period we had relative wage stability but now we have entered a period in which exorbitant wage demands are the order of the day. The result is that we will either have to increase taxes dramatically in order to cope with the situation or do what the Government is presently attempting to do. Of course, the Government has absolutely no real alternative. I repeat that the whole situation represents a self-inflicted wound upon trade unions and the Opposition.

Mr Harman: It is not.

Mr GRAYDEN: We have no need for retrenchments and no-one needs to lose his or her job. We have no need for sackings. Any retrenchments which occur will be the result of union wage pressure with the support of the Opposition. I will make a plea to the Opposition.

Mr Parker: Down on your knees.

Mr GRAYDEN: For the Opposition to ensure that no retrenchments occur in Western Australia it needs only to support the Government in a general appeal to the unions that they seek only CPI wage increases. If the Opposition did that there would be no threat of retrenchments. The Opposition should support the Government and say that as far as it is concerned the work force in Western Australia should seek only wage increases in line with the Consumer Price Index and that this should continue to occur during the economic period through which we are presently going. Is that not a reasonable course so that we can contain inflation? Is it not reasonable that we should create as many jobs as possible? That is what the Government has done, but its efforts are being negated by the actions of the Opposition and the unions.

It seems that the wage hike taking place during the last three or four years is without question some sort of down-under madness. This kind of madness is sweeping across Australia. Any person with any perception at all would know that this madness will lead only to inflation with all the evils attendant with it.

The member for Melville said that the Government's decision to live within its Budget

was an outrageous one. That statement is absolute nonsense. If that were the case, the member for Melville would have to advocate one of two things—deficit budgeting or the use of capital works money to cover the additional costs. He would have to be advocating one or the other.

The idea of deficit budgeting is completely out of the question. No person in any part of the world, under any circumstances, would advocate that people or Governments should live outside their means.

The other course of action would be to cut out capital works and to spend that money to meet current costs. I have never heard anything more stupid than that. If capital works programmes were cut out, people would be also deprived of employment. I would like that fact brought home to the bricklayers and the other people who are involved in the various trades within the building industry. People involved in those industries would not be happy with that decision. They would not be happy with the Opposition's suggestion that capital works should be abolished because they would lose their positions in order to increase the salaries of others' who are already holding jobs.

So, we get down to the question of good housekeeping; it is as simple as that. The Government has arrived at a Budget and is determined—like every responsible family in this State—to live within its Budget.

Mr Davies: The Government has lost control of its Budget.

Mr GRAYDEN: During the time of the Hawke Government there was not enough money to pay the huge number of teachers on its staff. The Hawke Government tried to live beyond its means and as a result of this was floundering around desperately seeking funds to pay its staff. The Opposition in this State is advocating a repetition of that period. How absolutely irresponsible!

Several members interjected.

Mr GRAYDEN: The situation which pertains to nurses at the moment will be repeated throughout the Government services. However, the Education Department is in a special category.

Several members interjected.

Mr GRAYDEN: There are 43 000 people on the Education Department staff; but that figure includes such people as gardeners and cleaners. There are 11 000 full-time teachers employed by the department.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr GRAYDEN: This year the Government will spend \$433 million on education from Consolidated Revenue and in addition to that sum, \$37.5 million will be spent on capital works. This amount covers only primary, secondary, and technical education. Of course, there is also a huge amount to be spent on our two universities, four colleges of advanced education, and WAIT. If we add the two amounts we will realise how much money is spent in Western Australia on education. We spend 23.4 per cent of the Consolidated Revenue Fund on primary, secondary, and technical education alone. When the Government says we will have to live within the 23.4 per cent allocated, the Opposition says we should go beyond that figure. What absolute nonsense to advocate that. The action the Opposition is advocating is highly irresponsible.

The Education Department will feel the effects of this Government's policy, probably to a greater extent than any other departments. We, in the Education Department, are assessing what the impact will be on our department. The thought of retrenchments is abhorrent to me and to the Government, but we must live within our means. We are ascertaining which positions will have to be abolished and what might be done to lessen the impact. The position will be properly assessed within a couple of weeks. Then, I will go to the union—and I ask the Leader of the Opposition in this House to come with me—to advise it that we have looked at the position in the Education Department and that possibly 125 teacher positions will have to be abolished for every one per cent increase in teachers' salaries. I will ask the Opposition to come with me and we will present this case to the Teachers' Union in Western Australia.

I will present the case to the Teachers' Union and its members will have to make the choice between creating jobs and wage increases.

Mr Davies: What nonsense he is talking.

Mr GRAYDEN: The Teachers' Union will have to decide whether it wants to increase the number of positions available within the teaching profession or whether it wants to abolish large numbers of positions in order to give some sort of increment to those in office. I challenge the Opposition to come with me.

Mr Pearce: I have already spoken to the Teachers' Union about this matter.

Mr GRAYDEN: The sum of \$433 million has been allocated to the Education Department this year and almost 24 per cent of the State Budget is made available for education. We cannot go

beyond that amount and of course we are now faced with the hard reality of the situation; that is, there is no real alternative.

Several members interjected.

Mr GRAYDEN: The Opposition is wandering around in the wilderness. There is absolutely no doubt about that fact. The hypocrisy of the case put forward by the Opposition is evident to everyone in this House. It is evident to the Press Gallery, the people in the Speaker's Gallery and everyone else present. The utter hypocrisy and irresponsibility of the case advocated by the Leader of the Opposition was evident when he said that this Government is renowned for increasing taxes, because in the next breath, he said we should be cutting taxes and at the same time granting these excessive demands.

Mr Davies: I was not saying that we should cut taxes.

Mr GRAYDEN: It is truly irresponsible and it appals me. It would appal the *Hansard* reporters and anyone who reads *Hansard*. The Leader of the Opposition stood up in this place and advocated wage increases and at the same time criticised the Government for its increases in taxes and charges. The Leader of the Opposition knows perfectly well that if the Government were to meet the increases in costs associated with wage increases, taxes and charges would have to be increased also.

The irresponsibility of the Leader of the Opposition and Opposition members has been displayed in this House and is plain for all to see. Probably the words spoken by the Leader of the Opposition should be displayed in prominent places in the House in order that visitors might see for themselves what sort of Opposition we have in this State. What the Opposition is advocating is stupid—absolutely plain stupid! How else could one describe the actions of the Opposition? On the one hand the Opposition is advocating all sorts of excessive rises in costs and, on the other hand, it is calling for a reduction in charges and taxes.

Mr Davies: You just missed the point.

Mr GRAYDEN: We ought to nail the words of the Leader of the Opposition to the mast so that he cannot wriggle out of what he has said. The course of action advocated by the Opposition most probably will not be reported in the Press, but it will be recorded in *Hansard*. When the Leader of the Opposition goes home tonight, perhaps in the quiet of the night he will think about what he has said. I would say that if the Leader of the Opposition has any conscience at all he will

writhe in his bed tonight. The situation is as farcical as that.

Mr Davies: You are a disgrace! Sit down!

Mr GRAYDEN: The situation is serious, and I repeat: If there are to be retrenchments in Western Australia, they will be a self-inflicted wound as a result of the actions of the unions in Western Australia which have the support of the Labor Opposition in this House.

I make one final plea to the Opposition to join with me when I go to the Teachers' Union and acquaint the members of that union of the situation in the hope that they will put jobs before an increase in wages for some of their members.

MR B. T. BURKE (Balcatta) [3.11 p.m.]: I suppose it is funny sometimes to hear the Minister for Education and Cultural Affairs when he gets to his feet. I do not intend to refer at great length to his speech, but I want to raise one serious matter, and I do not make the statement lightly. I personally have some reservations about his mental balance.

Mr O'Connor: That is nice!

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. I suggest to the member for Balcatta it would be better for him to confine his remarks to the question before the Chair, rather than to make his assessment of other members.

Mr B. T. BURKE: It is a pity the same yardstick was not applied when the Minister referred to what he said was the hypocritical stupidity of the Leader of the Opposition. Nevertheless, I make the point most seriously that I have strong reservations about the balance of this Minister.

Mr Grayden: I have strong reservations about a number of matters concerning you. I can assure you of that. This sort of vindictive statement is a compliment, having regard to the source from which it comes.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Firstly, let us look at the political dishonesty of which this particular episode reeks. It will be recalled that in April 1975 this Premier committed the State of Western Australia to a compliance with wage indexation guidelines as agreed to by him and his counterparts in the other States, and the Federal Government. I notice the Premier has not entered the debate, and he does not deny he agreed to the guidelines as laid down. About two years later the guidelines currently in force were adopted by the Industrial Commission—again there is no demurral by the present Premier. In fact, he accepted the guidelines as laid down providing for arguments on work-value grounds. Yet, now we

see the Premier going back on his word, and not denying it, in respect of nurses in the first instance and, as the Minister has foreshadowed, in respect of other categories of workers later on.

I ask members in this place how they can sit comfortably with a man who will give his word at one time, and then contradict his own attitude to the policy laid down.

Mr Grayden: How can members opposite sit comfortably with you?

Mr B. T. BURKE: How can members in this place adhere to the Premier's wishes when the Premier will say at one time he will accept certain guidelines, and then say those guidelines will result in the loss of jobs to people to whom they are applied? How does the Premier's Minister for Labour and Industry—industrial relations—feel after the statements which he has made, and which I will quote a little later, are compared with what is happening now? The Minister is aware that the nurses' application for an increase in wages was made in May, and that the new understanding implemented by the Premier was introduced in the Budget at the end of September. Those people who were making an application were not to know that the application would cost them their jobs, because the Premier had not then decided that would be the case.

Then let us turn to what has been talked about as "economic management" or "budgetary planning", and let us look at the budgetary planning and financial stringency acknowledged by this Premier who, when he went overseas, had full pages of our daily newspaper voca-dexed to him, thousands of miles across the world. That is the sort of financial stringency this Premier appears to favour. The Premier does not deny that when he went overseas full pages of a newspaper were voca-dexed to him, at the expense of taxpayers' money.

Sir Charles Court: It is news to me.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Premier was not thinking of any financial stringency when he read that information which was voca-dexed across the world at his whim.

He talks about financial stringency, while not one mention has been made about compassion for the people who will lose their jobs. Does not the Government think that those people have families? Are not those people mothers or fathers of children?

Mr Grayden: You are the one who will sack them.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Does not the Government believe that those people have children who need

to be fed, and who need to be clothed? What is the Government talking about when it talks about sacking people? Certainly, it is not shutting doors or moving furniture.

There has not been a word from the Minister for Health, or his raving counterpart, the Minister for Education, about the fact that we are playing with people's lives. In this instance we are talking about households, families, and breadwinners. But, in fact, that does not matter to the Government.

Let us talk about the financial stringency imposed by the Minister for Health who so rapidly fled from the Opposition spokesman on health and whose actions in this place have left this Minister without any credibility whatsoever. He has none left after his experiences with the Opposition spokesman on chiropractors, noise abatement, and the Swanbourne Hospital.

Mr Grayden: You should say that outside. You are cowardly.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I would like to know whether the Premier today is prepared to face up to the fact that his Government has lost \$5.78 million as a result of losses under the Industry (Advances) Act since 1974. How does the Premier feel about that sort of management? A total of \$5.78 million of taxpayers' money has been lost as a result of investments made by this Government.

Sir Charles Court: Tell us one industry you would not have backed up.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I will, but I ask the Premier to tell us how he feels about mistakes which have caused a loss to that extent.

Sir Charles Court: You tell us one industry you would not have backed.

Mr B. T. BURKE: These mistakes by the Government have cost \$5.78 million, and today the Premier is prepared to inflict upon 248 families in this State the sort of action he is carrying out. If that is the Premier's type of financial management, it is the sort to which we would not adhere.

Sir Charles Court: Tell us one programme you would have cut back.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I will tell the Premier some of the programmes I would look at. It is a pity the Minister for Health is not here because he presides over a department which has cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and has to a large extent failed. I am referring to the alcohol and drug rehabilitation programme. That is one area I would look at. The alcohol and drug authority programme has not been a complete

failure but has made addicted people out of those who previously had casual habits, and it has taken until the last month for the Government to enforce a restriction on the misuse of drugs which are handed out.

It has ignored, by virtue of its persistence, the availability of voluntary help and expert assistance in the community. That is one of the programmes we would look at. If Government members want to hear some of the other programmes we would look at, we would look at the abattoirs which are costing \$2.1 million a year to keep in mothballs.

Mr Hassell: And you would bring back the railways, costing \$2.5 million a year to run.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Is it not strange how, when we are asked to outline what programmes we would pare back, and we do so, we find that suddenly the Government does not want to acknowledge that we have made the concessions and we have named the areas.

One other thing I want to deal with now is the barefaced misleading of the public that was carried out last night by the Minister for Health—and repeated today by the Minister for Education—when he tried to equate one dollar in employment terms of capital works with one dollar in recurrent expenditure. We just cannot equate those items in terms of jobs, and the Minister knows that. A reduction of \$1 million in the capital works programme does not throw as many people out of work as does a reduction of \$1 million in the wages bill paid by the State. Perhaps the Minister for Health now wants to maintain that is not true.

Mr Young: I said people would be thrown out of work as a result of that particular policy, and I thought it was an absurd solution. Probably it is the stupidest solution I have ever heard.

Mr B. T. BURKE: That is not what the Minister said. The Minister said it was a case of Twocledum or Twocleddee, and he said that a reduction of the amount of money paid in wages could be equated with a reduction in capital works.

Mr Young: That is not true.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Of course that is the truth, and the Minister is having trouble facing the truth in the whole episode.

Let us see what sort of honesty lies behind this Government and its actions. We have heard the Government say that if there are to be increases outside the CPI flow-on figures, jobs will be lost. If the Government were dinkum about this, why did it not appear before the Industrial

Commission when this particular application was decided?

Let us see what Commissioner Johnson had to say, apart from those matters quoted by the Leader of the Opposition, about this matter. He said—

There are traditional methods of advancing capacity to pay arguments by respondent employers before this commission which, as may be expected, require the employer to provide complete information so that the Commission can assess that ability.

No attempt was made to support the bare claim of incapacity. The commissioner continued—

No attempt was made to support the bare claim of incapacity and I cannot accept that the respondents have discharged the onus placed on them in seeking to use that form of reply.

The Minister for Labour and Industry is here. Perhaps he can tell the Parliament why no representations were made to the commission at that time.

Mr Harman: Silence!

Mr B. T. BURKE: Obviously the Minister for Labour and Industry does not know.

Mr O'Connor: I will speak in due course.

Sir Charles Court: The Attorney General complied with what his requirement was under the law, and I do not think Commissioner Johnson fully appreciated that the Attorney General was doing his job.

Mr B. T. BURKE: I have just outlined what Commissioner Johnson said, but I will remind members again that he said, apart from the bare claim, no attempt was made to substantiate the basis of the claim put forward in respect of capacity to pay.

Why was not the Government prepared to demonstrate its incapacity? Perhaps the Premier can tell the Parliament that.

Mr O'Connor: It was adequately known.

Sir Charles Court: The Attorney General has a different role altogether.

Mr Hodge: The Premier's Budget speech; that was the only evidence the Government put forward.

Mr B. T. BURKE: If it was adequately known, why did Commissioner Johnson have occasion to say that no attempt was made to support the bare claim of incapacity? I cannot accept that Commissioner Johnson adequately knew of it.

Perhaps the Minister, having been acquainted once more with what Commissioner Johnson had

to say, can explain to the House why he was negligent in not putting forward the basis of the claim that was made.

Mr O'Connor: I will speak in due course on this.

Mr Harman: When?

Mr O'Connor: Today.

Mr Harman: Good, I'd love to hear you.

Mr O'Connor: I thought you would.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The fact of the matter is, the Government has victimised these workers, knowing full well they were not aware, and could not have been aware, of the fact that this increase in their wages would translate into a loss of jobs. The application was lodged in May, and the decision on that policy was announced in September, so they could not have known.

At the same time, the Government has illustrated very markedly exactly what the President of the Federal Arbitration Commission (Sir John Moore) had to say when he commented that some employers simply regard employees as wage plugs. He went on to say that unless both management and employees understand that they are dealing with human beings, with both their strengths and weaknesses, there is likely to be industrial trouble. If that is not exemplified in this dispute, exemplified by the Minister's failure to concede even a position of reference—no matter how oblique to the position of these people who have lost their jobs—then what is exemplified?

As far as the Opposition is concerned, there are several areas in which the money required in this case can be found, and as far as the Opposition is concerned, the losses sustained by this Government in those areas to which I have already referred would cover adequately the money needed. But no, this Government, after the election, intent on securing its political position, has tried to make victims and scapegoats out of these particular workers.

The Minister is not happy about having to put forward this proposition. The other day in this House we saw that he did not support the idea of the retrenchment of staff, and yet today we have heard him say that the retrenchments will not cause any disadvantage to the hospitals concerned. The Minister told us that there would be minimum detriment to the hospitals from the retrenchments. He very carefully did not read out the entire letter that he wrote to Miss Gardiner. Among the statements he made in that letter was the following—

Unfortunately the position is the Government also realises it would be

detrimental to the general service if the cuts were made in staffing levels of any kind.

Mr Young: I read that out.

Mr B. T. BURKE: So when the Minister speaks about the member for Melville misleading the House, and in the next breath—

Mr Young: You should have listened to my speech.

Mr B. T. BURKE: —the Minister gives the impression that these cuts would cause no detriment to the hospitals of this State—

Mr Young: Read it in *Hansard*. I did read it out.

Mr B. T. BURKE: As far as the House is concerned, the deliberate impression was created by the Minister that the reduction in staff would be made without any detriment to the hospitals concerned.

Mr Young: Back to the drawing board!

Mr B. T. BURKE: If the Minister is prepared to concede the point, let him tell us just what disadvantages will occur as a result of the retrenchments.

Mr Young: You were not listening to my speech.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Let the Minister tell us—

Mr Young: You would not let me do that the first time.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Minister did not say those things. He deliberately created the impression that these retrenchments would not result in any disadvantages in any sense to the hospitals affected.

Mr Young: I said, "minimal".

Mr B. T. BURKE: Minimal! The Minister does not use the word "minimal" in his letter.

Mr Young: You are in a lot of trouble.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The Minister used that letter to accuse the member for Melville of misleading the House.

Mr Young: You are in trouble.

Mr B. T. BURKE: Let us just summarise what the Government has done and what the Government is doing, firstly, in respect of the financial situation. We have seen that the Government was prepared to lose, by way of guarantees, more than \$5 million. We have seen the Government prepared to accept an alcohol and drug rehabilitation programme that is wasting thousands and thousands of dollars. On other occasions we have seen that the Government was prepared to manipulate the interest accruing from the investment of short-term liquid

securities. It is not willing to do so on this occasion to find money to pay the nurses.

The Government is not willing to look at the Alcohol and Drug Authority. It is not willing to revise its assistance programme which has led it to lose more than \$5 million.

The employees of this country are part of the economic structure that, during the past several years, has earned a decreasing share of the economic cake. Wages have been increasing at a much lower rate than ever before, and, in absolute terms, the share of the national wealth now being distributed in the form of wages is decreasing all the time.

As far as the Government is concerned, it is prepared not only to blackmail, but also to attempt to bludgeon these nurses into submission, and it could have picked on no worse a group of people of which to make an example. I am not sure whether the Government believes it can satisfactorily retrench workers from hospitals and maintain a satisfactory standard. Already the Minister has told us on other occasions of Federal health arrangements and insurance cover which are resulting in an overburden being placed on the hospitals in this State. Let the Premier say firstly how he can justify his stand on this occasion when he has squandered money on the voca-dexing of his own and other departments.

Let us hear the Minister explain why he cannot find the money when this Government has lost more than \$5 million in assistance to failed ventures. Let us hear him explain why he cannot find the money when the alcohol and drug rehabilitation programme has been a failure—and I have said that 10 times previously and the Minister has not even interjected to say it has not been a failure.

Mr Young: Would you substantiate your complaints about the Alcohol and Drug Authority in writing? I did not hear you enumerate the problems.

Mr B. T. BURKE: The alcohol and drug rehabilitation programme is a failed programme which has cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Let us hear why this Government can find money to maintain that programme, but cannot find money to maintain these jobs.

Mr Young: Will you specify under parliamentary privilege what the problem is?

Mr B. T. BURKE: I have listed already for the Minister's benefit the lack of supervision of addicts up till a month ago. I cannot be responsible for the Minister's business. I have listed already the fact that non-addicted people were being turned into addicted people by the

provision of methadone to them on a regular basis. If that is the sort of programme the Minister is prepared to allow to continue on the one hand at a cost of thousands of dollars to the taxpayer, while on the other hand he is prepared to sack nurses, then the Opposition will not go along with it.

Mr Grayden: That is absolute rubbish. I have never heard—

Mr B. T. BURKE: You are insane!

Mr Grayden: —so much absolute rubbish!

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

SIR CHARLES COURT (Nedlands—Premier) [3.31 p.m.]: I believe the moment of truth has arrived so far as the Opposition is concerned; it is the moment of truth in respect of its capacity or incapacity in relation to budgetary matters. I would have been much more impressed if instead of trying to take advantage of a cheap political issue which members opposite think they have on their own plate, the Opposition had come forward and presented concrete and positive suggestions as to how it would handle the situation and maintain budgetary responsibility.

Mr Davies: You got an indication of that from the last speaker.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The member for Balcatta waved his arms around and made all sorts of wild statements, but he was most reluctant to admit which part of the industrial advances programme he would abandon. He would find if he looked at the industrial advances to which he referred—and which have cost the taxpayer money—that some areas of this State would have very strong views about any Government that refused to come to the assistance of the projects in question. However, that is not what we are discussing.

At the outset let me make it clear this is not an attack on nurses. The Opposition has made this an emotive issue in order to try to create the impression that the Government is singling out nurses.

Mr Bryce: Hear, hear! Spot on!

Sir CHARLES COURT: The Minister for Education has laid it right on the line in the very bluntest of terms that all departments—

Mr Bryce: Except yours.

Sir CHARLES COURT: —and instrumentalities which want wage increases outside the national wage decisions will have to face up to the situation that is before us now. That warning has been served loudly and clearly.

In view of the fact that this is the moment of truth so far as the financial responsibility of members opposite is concerned, I want to explain to them that when the Government brought down the Budget it had two alternatives available to it. The Government opted for the course that is reflected in the Budget speech and the Budget papers, and which has been spelt out loudly and clearly so that absolutely no misunderstanding would occur. I have been challenged by the Civil Service Association and other bodies, and in the bluntest of terms I have told them the attitude of the Government; and we have gone to extreme lengths to try to explain this situation.

However, I will explain the situation once more to the Opposition so that it is in the record. When the Government brought down its Budget it could have followed one of two courses. The first course was to stretch the elastic to the absolute limit and to keep in employment as many people as possible—teachers, nurses, firemen, policemen, etc. On the other hand, the Government could have followed a course which is often followed—and is followed more often than not—which is to build into the Budget a reserve by cutting back on establishments as at 1 July 1980.

Mr Davies: You have done that every year for years.

Sir CHARLES COURT: Had the Government slashed the establishments—that is, the permitted number of people who may be engaged in the departments and instrumentalities; the number of teachers, policemen, firemen, nurses, orderlies, and the like—it would have built into the Budget a reserve so that if any increases occurred outside the national wage decisions up to a certain point, the Government could have paid for them and perhaps looked like young heroes; because at the end of the year people would have been able to say the Government had done a marvellous job because no-one was retrenched. They would have been able to say that the Government had absorbed all the wage increases for policemen, teachers, nurses, orderlies, gardeners, and the like, without having to put off one person.

However, what people would not say in that situation is that fewer people would have been in employment over the whole year as a result of the caution which was shown at the beginning of the year.

Therefore, the Government opted for the other course. We told the public and we told this Parliament what was the policy.

Mr Davies: Tell us why this year was different from any other year.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The situation has already been explained to the Parliament in the bluntest of terms. We told the Parliament we were not happy with the amount of money we received from the Commonwealth Government; we were not happy with the relationship between that money and the rate of inflation; and we were not happy with the increases granted last year.

Take the case of policemen for example. As a result of the large increase they received last year we made an increase of 19 per cent in their budget this year, merely to maintain their establishment. Without employing a single extra policeman the budget was increased by 19 per cent. This matter was discussed very frankly with the police. They were told they cannot have it both ways. When a Government is facing an increase in revenue of something like 12 per cent and it is confronted with an increase in expenditure of 19 per cent, then it follows, as night follows day, that it just cannot continue to spend money. We allowed for that increase of 19 per cent.

We opted for what I believe is the sensible solution, and the one which provided the maximum amount of employment right from the beginning of the year. If the Opposition would prefer that the Government did it the other way, I would like it to say so. Had the Government followed the other course it would have entered this budgetary year with fewer people on the establishments and fewer people employed; and as increases came forward it would have paid them out of lost jobs.

Mr Davies: But you have been allegedly cutting back on staff for years.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The Government has opted for the reverse situation to most years and I believe the end of the year will produce a better net result so far as employment is concerned. We have said, "If you are not prepared to abide by the national wage case decisions—which everyone understands and in respect of which submissions are made at both State and Federal levels—then you have to expect retrenchments to occur in respect of increases granted outside the national wage indexations decisions." We have made it clear that applies to all employees, whether they be cleaners, firemen, policemen, teachers, nurses, and the like.

The other point I want to make is that never before has a planned reduction in a work force been handled with such sensitivity. Not a person has been sacked at this moment, and not a person will be sacked this side of Christmas. In fact, I do not know of anyone who will be dismissed before

the end of February, apart from dismissals which are the result of misdemeanours. We have handled this matter with a great degree of sensitivity, because we have to get the full benefit of this to flow into next year's Budget. Those who know anything about budgeting—and the Leader of the Opposition should as a result of his experience as a Minister—would know that the most delicate thing one has to worry about is the flow-on to the next year. That is something which haunts one all the time.

Therefore, the cut-backs which must occur in the establishments have been handled delicately and sensitively, and with a great degree of compassion by the Minister concerned. That is the reason the matter went back to the Minister twice before yesterday so that he could try to find the most sensitive way of handling it. To demonstrate the Government's compassion in the matter, we have come up with this proposition under which the full impact will not be felt until 1 March 1981. In the meantime, a lot of natural wastage will occur. This is a painless method by which to cut back on staff, and we have got until 1 March to allow as much natural wastage as possible to occur, and when we reach that date we will be facing an entirely different situation.

I remind members also that the suggested reductions in establishments deal with only half the impact on the Budget of this 5 per cent increase. That is a point I want to get across with some emphasis; and the Minister has been told to go back to the administrations of the several hospitals to see if ways and means can be found, by which to handle that situation between now and 30 June in a manner which will cause the minimum of hurt.

I remind members opposite that in addition to our normal problems, we have had the impact of the drought, which was dismissed lightly by members opposite, simply because we said we were prepared to readjust our Budget to cope with the drought situation. I also remind members we made an allowance in our Budget for something like \$5 million to go to drought relief, and we all know that amount will be at least doubled. In addition to that, we are going to lose \$6 million in rail freights. One does not need to be very smart to realise the impact of such sums on a Budget.

Some people say, "What are you worried about? You are working with a \$1 857 million Budget. You have plenty of room to manoeuvre." Of course we have, but only within the total figure. There is no magic about this; no-one can manufacture money with a bit of arithmetic or bookkeeping. The Budget is the disciplinary document which keeps Governments honest; that

is what it is all about. In the final analysis, the discipline of any Government by the Governor through the Premier of the day is through the Budget and Supply, and long may it continue to be so.

I emphasise again the sensitivity of the Minister for Health in this very difficult situation. It must have staggered and disappointed the Opposition that the Government did not announce that 248 people would be sacked next week or the week after. Instead, the Government has announced a planned programme; we have given everyone plenty of notice. The administration will have plenty of time to achieve the Government's target in the most appropriate areas, after taking into consideration the natural wastage which continually occurs due to retirement because of age or illness, or to people shifting to another State and the like.

Mr Pearce: It is this natural wastage which leads to youth unemployment, because jobs are disappearing. Why do you think there are so many unemployed young people walking our streets? It is because of your Government's policies.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The Minister for Health has handled this matter with great sensitivity and I think it is about time the Opposition acknowledged the fact. Some people ask, "Why must you make your cuts in the salaries and wages section?" I remind members that at this stage we plan to reduce the staff cuts to a figure which will contribute to only half the nurses' increase; we are looking at a number of alternatives for the balance.

However, if members opposite are suggesting we should cut back on repairs and renovations, they are playing a dangerous game. If repairs and renovations are cut back to an extreme extent, we will finish up later paying huge sums in terms of capital costs. One of my programmes has been to endeavour to improve the standard of repairs and renovations. These people who carry out repairs and renovations and keep our hospitals, schools, and other Government buildings up to standard are very important workers themselves. They are not confined only to the city; they also work in the fringe areas of the metropolitan area and out in the country. Surely they are entitled to some consideration.

I should like to give members opposite the figures relating to expenditure on repairs and renovations to make it clear why we cannot implement cut-backs in this area to any great extent. The figure allocated to repairs and renovations dropped from \$24 million in 1977-78

to \$16.6 million this year. When we allow for inflation, this can be seen to be a considerable drop. The figures indicate that the Minister himself, in an effort to have only a minimum impact on the wages and salaries section, already has taken such action.

Members should also keep in perspective the number of people who are likely to lose their jobs. The figure of 248 people should be related to the total work force of 25 000 under the control of the Minister for Health. That figure staggers some people and they say that it is about time somebody did something to get the number down. We are talking of only 248 people.

Mr Pearce: What about the families of the workers you are making unemployed? Why do you not consider their welfare? It is all very well to talk about people as though they were mere statistics.

Sir CHARLES COURT: I remind the member for Gosnells that, probably, there are a few hundred people in our hospital system and health services who should not be there in any case.

Mr Davies: That is as a result of the incompetence of your Government.

Sir CHARLES COURT: It may be that by having the Minister for Health more totally involved in the administration of these departments we achieve some of the economies which are so vital, and for which the public are screaming.

Far from being ungenerous to the health services of this State, this Government has allocated an increasing proportion of its Budget to this area. I should like to refer members to the figures for the last four years, which have been adjusted to exclude the years where the Department for Community Welfare was included in the portfolios of the Minister for Health. In 1977-78, \$321 million was allocated to the health field; in 1978-79, the figure was \$340 million; in 1979-80, it was \$383 million; and, in 1980-81, the figure is \$441 million. Is that a Government which is mean or ungenerous to its health services? Of course it is not. On top of that, our capital works expenditure runs into tens of millions of dollars.

I must admit I was aghast yesterday to read that some economist at the university had said, "Of course the Government can pay these wages. It should simply take them out of its capital works programme." No programme has been subjected to as much criticism by the Government or the Opposition as the capital works programme, because that is the area where we have less

money—some 40 per cent less in real terms—than we had four years ago.

The statement by this economist has been taken up and mouthed by some people in the community, who simply do not stop and think about all the issues which are involved. The people involved in our capital works programme are still people. They are the people about whom the Trades and Labor Council was so concerned only a few weeks ago; it was not so concerned then about the Consolidated Revenue sector of the Budget, but about people employed by the Public Works Department.

Mr Davies: All the chickens are coming home to roost as a result of your Government's incompetence.

Sir CHARLES COURT: I think the Opposition will have to go home and do a little thinking as to where it is going. It has acted quite irresponsibly on this issue. If members opposite want the Government to cut back on other works to pay the wages of the nurses and orderlies affected, let them come out and say so. It is easy for them simply to say the Government should not be making these cuts.

The Minister for Health was challenged when he said that a number of people had telephoned him expressing a contrary point of view to that put forward by the Opposition and the union. My phone was running hot last night, and the calls started again at six o'clock this morning from people who said they were nurses. They told me they did not want the increase and they did not want to lose their jobs, or see others lose theirs.

Mr Davies: How many people phoned you expressing that point of view?

Sir CHARLES COURT: I hope this next statement gets in the newspaper so that if someone disagrees with it, it can be denied: Only one of those people who telephoned me supported the attitude adopted by the union towards the increase, regardless of the effect such increase would have on their jobs.

Mr B. T. Burke: What choice do you think they have? They are faced with accepting a 5 per cent increase and the chance of losing their jobs. They have no choice.

Mr E. T. Evans: You gave them no choice!

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will resume his seat. This is another case of at least two members interjecting simultaneously. I ask members to restrain themselves to allow the Premier to be heard.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The people who telephoned me were responsible members of the

community who, with only one exception, gave their names. They expressed satisfaction with their working conditions.

Mr E. T. Evans: How many telephoned you?

Sir CHARLES COURT: They were much more concerned with having continuity of employment for the maximum number of people, rather than an increase in pay at the expense of a few.

If, for once, the Opposition adopted a responsible attitude and did not fail to acknowledge the Government is acting responsibly in its Budget, it would support the comments of the Minister for Education, Cultural Affairs, and Recreation and would join with him in trying to get a bit of sanity into the industrial situation. They would try to get people adversely affected to say, "For once, let us hold our breaths for a while and keep the maximum number of people employed."

The number of people who will lose their jobs is a mere flea-bite compared with the total work force under the responsibility of the Minister for Health. Some 248 people will lose their jobs either through natural wastage or dismissal of a total work force of more than 25 000, and with a health budget of \$441 million. The Government has acted very generously; however, it still must live within that budget.

We have complete contempt for the irresponsible attitude adopted by the Opposition, and oppose the motion.

MR BRYCE (Ascot) [3.50 p.m.]: To follow the Premier in this debate, I find I must start at the point where it is necessary to give the lie to just two of the things he said—two of the essential points on which he hung his hat during the course of his contribution to the debate.

The first point made by the Premier was that all Government departments in Western Australia have been instructed to follow through with an austerity spending programme. If that is the case—and I want to make it perfectly clear—the Premier simply forgot to say, "All departments except the Premier's department". I intend, during the course of the few moments available to me, to demonstrate the unforgiveable duplicity of the Premier and Treasurer of this State who turns to all of his Cabinet Ministers and says, "Every conceivable Government department and authority must cut back"; and yet the Treasurer himself indulges his style of government on a most incredible spending spree. I shall return to this point in a moment.

The other aspect of his argument, or the other principal element of his argument, was the absurd

claim that the Minister for Health, and the Government generally, had employed an unusual and unique degree of sensitivity in the way they have handled this matter. Might I say that is the sensitivity and subtlety of using a meat axe, because that is how it has been done. This Government has launched an unbelievable attack on the Industrial Commission. It has launched a broadside at the trade union leaders who represented these people before the commission. It has launched an attack of innuendo on all the nurses and hospital employees who are prepared to accept these pay rises. More particularly—and this is what the Premier has defined as "unique sensitivity"—the Government has held the blade above the future of all 20 000-odd employees whose jobs will be on the line for the next five months.

The Premier said that the Government was being sensitive by not announcing forthwith that 248 named individuals would be sacked. All he has done is to put the fear of God into every single employee of the Health and Medical Services Department until next March. He claims that is sensitivity! Is it any wonder that his phone should run hot and that all of us have been receiving a spate of telephone inquiries? People have rung expressing their concern because the Premier has held the blade above the heads of every single employee in the Health and Medical Services Department. That applies to the nurses and hospital employees.

The way this Government is embarking upon this form of sacking, and the way in which the Fraser Government has handled its public health policy, indicate that the Liberal Party of Australia is presiding over the collapse of the public health system. It is of no use the Minister for Health in the Parliament of Western Australia turning and blaming the "Feds"—the Commonwealth Government. Every time he is in a corner he does that; yet he supports the policies of the Federal Government. The Minister for Health, the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Education, and the Premier all subscribe to the popular view of their party: "You've got to knock public funding. You've got to cut back on Government expenditure."

I know there are many, many members on this side of the House who do not subscribe to that view. I do not, for one. Therefore, let the Minister for Health shrink from the deliberate attempt he made earlier in the debate to suggest that there was a consensus view in the Parliament that the level of public spending had to be cut back. We on this side of the House have steadfastly opposed the introduction of Milton Freidman's economic

theories into the Parliaments of Australia. We have said on numerous occasions that this sort of economic lunacy has led us into the catastrophe we are now experiencing.

Mr Young: What taxes would you increase to be able to continue to meet all the increasing costs?

Mr BRYCE: The Leader of the Opposition dealt adequately with that interjection by the Minister for Health when he said—

Mr Young: I am asking you.

Mr BRYCE: —that there was not one part of the 1980-81 Budget which is any different from the four, five, or six Budgets preceding it.

Sir Charles Court: There is.

Mr BRYCE: There have been difficult economic times, and it has been necessary to juggle the spending priorities. Everyone is aware of that. However, there is nothing in this year's Budget that is different from last year's.

Sir Charles Court: But this Budget is different; and it is unfortunate that you have not perceived it. You would do yourself a lot of credit if you would understand it is a matter of financial management.

Mr BRYCE: Let me come back to the real core of the issue. The increase being given to the nursing profession and the hospital employees in this State is what is at stake. The dogs have been barking for months that the nursing profession and the hospital employees would receive the flow-on that so many sectors of the economy have received. The fact that this increase came so late in the day is possibly a reflection on the lack of speed with which the people representing the nurses made the application before the commission.

Let me make a specific reference to this by drawing the attention of the House to the fact that Commissioner Johnson referred to this ubiquitous \$8, as it is now remembered, nearly two years ago. That ubiquitous \$8 catch-up outside the CPI increases that were granted nearly two years ago was given to the Public Service. When it went to the Public Service, the nurses did not receive it. It was handed on to the metal trades industry and to all sectors of the economy which receive flow-ons from the metal trades industry; so it has filtered into the economy.

Everybody who knows anything about the wage fixation processes in this State has known for many months that this application, which was made as long ago as last May, would inevitably produce a flow-on to the nurses. The Government

cannot have one single iota of integrity left as it knew, as the member for Balcatta and the Leader of the Opposition suggested, that the application went before the commission last May. For some strange reason, the Government was not represented before the commission to argue the question of public interest.

The Government did not exercise its right at that time; but when the umpire gave his decision and the increase was awarded to the nurses and the hospital employees, the Government then used bully-boy tactics and "came the heavy" by using the good old blackmailing approach: "We didn't go before the commission. Now we don't like the decision, we'll pay the increase to 98 per cent of you, but we are going to sack 2 per cent of you. We are going to sack 248 of you." That is complete blackmail.

I feel obliged to deal with the naive gesture on the part of the Minister for Health. Mr Deputy Speaker, can you imagine the Minister for Health going to the employees' representative and saying, "How about postponing or deferring your pay increases until midway through next year?"

Mr Young: "—so that some of your members don't lose their jobs, and so that other people don't lose their jobs, and so that we have the time to work out between us what might represent a better solution for everybody."

Mr BRYCE: Is there just one iota of evidence in respect of this Government's handling of the affairs of this State to demonstrate that it could ever conceive the same philosophy in respect of the other side of the political struggle? Mr Deputy Speaker, could you imagine the reaction of the red necks—the truck drivers—who were recruited secretly and at great expense to the public purse to convey the rig to Noonkanbah, besides the armed guard, if the Treasurer had said, "Look, we are in financial difficulty finding the money for this Noonkanbah business; how about waiting until halfway through next year for half your money or for the whole amount?" Could members imagine the derision with which that sort of proposition would have been received? It is all right for the Minister for Health to say to the employees of the hospital system, "The Government does not have the money to meet this increase. We cannot afford to pay you. How about deferring the increase?" Can members imagine what would happen if the boot was on the other foot?

Mr Young: I am waiting for you to give me your opinion about what taxes should be increased to meet the additional wages.

Mr BRYCE: I might do that in some detail during the course of the Budget debate, when I have a full 45 minutes to do so. Let me give a few concrete suggestions to the Minister and the Treasurer—

Sir Charles Court: Don't do a Bill Hegney on us.

Mr BRYCE: —and suggest where they might find the money if we leave the question of taxation to one side until the Budget debate when we discuss revenue. I suggest that if what the Minister for Education has said was what the Government was genuinely attempting to do—to live inside its means—and that all of these problems are flowing from the fact that certain people are not trying to live inside the Government's means, let me draw this sort of picture for the benefit of the Minister for Health and the Treasurer.

Let me demonstrate to the House where money has been squandered and where money could have been saved; where money for these well and truly overdue salary and wage increases for the people who man the hospital system could and should come from.

Mr Young: I hope you are not suggesting what the member for Balcatta suggested. He suggested we sack nurses from the Alcohol and Drug Authority.

Mr BRYCE: A little has already been said about Noonkanbah. The word "Noonkanbah" will haunt Ministers of this Cabinet to their political graves, because they know they squandered, in a fit of obstinate anger, between \$2 million and \$3 million.

Mr E. T. Evans: For nothing.

Mr BRYCE: There was a dry well. There was a need for a transport system—an armada—to carry the rig to the north.

Sir Charles Court: I would not go in too deep on that, because you will have a very red face shortly.

Mr BRYCE: We have been waiting for the items of expenditure to be explained, but perhaps I will go to the bottom of my list and refer now to the 1979 sesquicentennial celebrations. We were in the middle of a genuine period of economic hardship and yet this man, with his Cabinet, decided to spend perhaps \$2 million, \$3 million, or \$4 million, probably closer to \$4 million spread over a full year.

Sir Charles Court: Do you oppose that?

Mr BRYCE: If Government members have such a concern with money, what reasonable person could not have said, if we were genuinely

encountering economic hard times, "Let us celebrate our sesquicentennial year, but let us do it in a reasonable fashion."

Sir Charles Court: Didn't we?

Mr BRYCE: What reasonable person could not have said that we should celebrate over a period of one, two, or three months? But not this Premier; he was determined to use the public purse and get every public appearance that he could on the cheap over a period of a full year. He planned for years to spend between \$3 million and \$4 million on a PR extravaganza. There is no doubt in most people's minds that the 1979 sesquicentennial celebrations were a grossly exaggerated experience as far as this Government's expenditure was concerned.

Sir Charles Court: Didn't you welcome the employment it produced? What about people in the hotel industry and the transport industry?

Mr BRYCE: The Premier tries to use superficial arguments to justify his actions. Let me give another example of the Government's actions. This is the same Treasurer who said to his departments that they must cut back, yet he has a newly appointed propaganda supremo receiving \$34 000 a year, which is considerably more than his members of Parliament are worth. Now he has given this man a car at Government expense.

We have had a Royal visit this year. If we were to have a Royal visit which would mean we had to sack people and prune back on public expenditure, would it have been too embarrassing for us to say, "Let us choose between keeping our nurses employed and having members of the Royal Family visit Western Australia?"

This is the Treasurer who, as the head of the Government, made the decision to increase the size of his Cabinet. I do not altogether agree with the mathematics of the member for Subiaco who said the extra Ministers will involve the expenditure of an extra \$25 million; but even if it were only a portion of that amount, it is money wasted and it is an action which cannot be justified if the essential preoccupation of the Government is economic austerity.

Let us consider the Premier's new car. Do not we all remember the PR stunt involved with this? The Premier now has a second car at Government expense.

Sir Charles Court: No, he doesn't.

Mr BRYCE: Yes, he does; he has a new blue Holden Commodore which he likes to drive from Nedlands to Parliament. There was a great deal of PR material put out indicating that the

Premier was cutting down the size of his car. But he still keeps the big black LTD for official functions. Why is it not good enough just to have one car at Government expense?

Sir Charles Court: It is a pool car and has a pool driver.

Mr BRYCE: Precisely; the Premier now has two pool cars. The Premier has a black LTD and the nice new blue Commodore. He initiated a PR stunt which suggested he was cutting costs, but this was not true.

Mr Rushton: Remember the Tonkin Government saying its Ministers would all have small cars?

Mr BRYCE: I have received a very reliable report that the only Government department in which overtime expenditure for staff has gone through the roof in recent months is the Premier's own department. There is no effort, no penny spared, to send an officer to some place to undertake some task no matter what the political point is. Let us take Noonkanbah as an example. The Premier sent a number of his own Press officers there at a cost to the State. I wonder whether their wages will be included in the sums he has done.

Sir Charles Court: Weren't they supposed to be there?

Mr BRYCE: I am talking about overtime and lavish expenditure. I am talking about the spending spree the Treasurer has been on while at the same time advocating austerity.

Let us consider how the Premier refurbished his office. How many of his predecessors, such as Bert Hawke, John Tonkin, and Sir David Brand, would have spent that sort of money on the refurbishing of their offices if they were genuinely in the midst of a great economic crisis, which the Premier suggests we are?

Sir Charles Court: Don't you know there is a long programme of rehabilitation through the whole building?

Mr BRYCE: The matter of ministerial visits overseas is another subject which I have raised in this House and the Premier has refused time and time again to provide the details. He says, "You will have to come forward with an allegation of misappropriation before I will provide the figures." He will not even tell the Parliament how much money is being spent in that area.

I shall finish on this point: So frequently this Government refers to Canberra and says that Canberra is not giving it the money it needs. I draw the Government's attention to the way in which the Liberals in Canberra are squandering

money. They have spent \$47 million on two VIP aircraft and they are about to spend between \$200 million and \$300 million on a new Parliament building.

Sir Charles Court: Are you opposed to a new Parliament?

Mr BRYCE: I am opposed to that new Parliament building. If people have to be sacked, because there is not enough money in the bin to subsidise and financially support the public health system, I oppose the new Parliament building.

Members should consider the opulence of the Prime Ministerial Lodge, and the way in which Malcolm Fraser squanders the taxpayers' money. Members should look at the money spent on the cutlery, crockery, and everything else in the Prime Ministerial Lodge.

Mr Young: What about Gough's Mercedes Benz?

Mr BRYCE: Those are the reasons we find ourselves in this parlous financial position.

Mr COWAN: Mr Speaker—

Mr O'CONNOR: Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! I recognise the member for Merredin. I ask the Deputy Premier to resume his seat. I predicted there could be a situation where a member of the National Party might wish to become involved in the debate and, in the circumstances, I believe it is right that I should allow the National Party the opportunity to speak; but I believe it is right also that I should allow a fourth member of the Government to speak.

Mr Davies: Fair go!

The SPEAKER: I believe that is as fair a go as I can give, bearing in mind it was my inclination to adhere to the practice that has been followed up till now which is to allow three speakers from each side of the House.

However, the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Melville said a number of other members wanted to speak and I agreed to extend the situation to allow four members from each side of the House to speak. By that I mean, four members of the Opposition and four members of the Government parties which are made up of a coalition of the members of the Liberal Party and the National Country Party.

The thought passed through my mind that the National Party may wish to speak and I think I am being completely fair in allowing a member of that party to speak as well as four Government members and four Opposition members.

MR COWAN (Merredin) [4.12 p.m.]: I thank you, Sir, for recognising me and, at the outset, I should like to refer to the comments you have made. I believe your decision is reasonable and, in that regard, perhaps Standing Orders should be examined with a view to allowing a party which sits on the cross-benches to be able to put its point of view without jeopardising the evenness of the debate from both sides of the House.

However, I shall return to the question before the Chair. It is quite clear to the National Party that it is a matter of policy choice and the Government had a choice of policy between deciding whether it would work to a budgeted figure of expenditure or keep a certain number of Government employees and run into a Budget deficit if wages and salaries increased beyond indexation guidelines.

Quite clearly the decision has been made. In his Financial Statement, the Premier gave a very clear outline of the policy he and his Government would undertake. It is regrettable that nurses and hospital staff are the first people who are involved in this situation in that their salaries and wages have been increased as a result of a work-value case and they find themselves now in a position where the Government has opted to maintain expenditure at its budgeted figure.

We have some sympathy for the nurses and hospital staff; but I should like to remind members opposite that in private industry this has been a business practice that has been forced upon employers for many years. They do not have the flexibility of budget income that Governments have. In competition they find it very difficult to increase the price of the commodity they sell and, therefore, find it difficult to accommodate wage and salary increases not only from work-value cases, but also through normal CPI rises.

I maintain also that the expenditure of this Government on hospitals and health is more than reasonable. If one examines the figures in the Budget it can be seen the Government has more than kept pace with its expenditure in that particular department as compared with other Government departments and I do not think there could be any criticism of the Government in relation to its total expenditure on hospitals or medical care.

However, I believe one matter could be referred to in this debate and it relates to the whole problem faced by public hospitals at the moment which, to some degree, involves the policies of previous and present Federal Governments inasmuch as they have interfered with health insurance and, to some degree, have encouraged

the public to use outpatient facilities of hospitals. That policy has increased the work load of public hospitals and I do not believe there is any doubt about that.

Perhaps the Federal Government could make a rather large financial contribution towards easing the problem faced by the State Government. If it encouraged the public to return to their general practitioners instead of immediately running to the nearest public hospital in search of outpatient treatment when they are ill, that would be a great deal more preferable to the system which operates today.

Finally, I should like to make the point that, whilst the Government has our support in the Budget policy it is pursuing, we would give it far more credence if it was demonstrated that Government expenditure was shaved of all luxury items which seem to be evident today.

Some examples of such luxuries have been given already, but I should like to mention a few. The first relates to the creation of new portfolios and new Ministers. I believe if we are experiencing rather difficult financial times, it is not appropriate to increase the size of the Ministry or the number of Government departments and, therefore, the public servants within those departments.

Secondly, we could perhaps look very closely at regional administration. We do not oppose the idea of regional administrators, but we believe some of the services provided by the administrators could be carried out by members of Parliament, thus obviating duplication of the services. An examination of the work of regional administrators could be undertaken and perhaps costs in that area could be shaved.

I would like to think also that the principle of working to a budgeted figure would apply to members of this House. I would be very interested to see the way in which members on this side of the House would react to a determination by the Salaries and Allowance Tribunal to increase their wages. I would be interested to know whether members would accept such an increase or call upon the Premier to reduce the numbers of members of Parliament in this place in order to keep the level of costs of the Parliament down to exactly the same as it has been in the past.

Mr Clarko: You know we did that twice and I think you did it yourself once.

Mr COWAN: I did. I just wondered whether members would do it again.

Mr Clarko: The Government has done it twice in the past and so did you.

Mr COWAN: I would like to know whether members would do it a third time.

Mr Clarko: The record is pretty good.

Mr COWAN: The Government's position is understandable. Private industry has had to adopt a similar stance for as long as I can remember.

Mr Parker: Do you think public hospitals should be run on the same basis?

Mr COWAN: It is time the number of employees in the Public Service was curtailed. Let us face it, in the last five years there has been an increase in employment in the public sector only. The private sector has not increased its number of employees and it is about time the public sector was subjected to the same sort of pressure as that applied to the private sector.

Mr Davies: How many are they going to lose at Merredin Hospital?

MR O'CONNOR (Mt. Lawley—Deputy Premier) [4.19 p.m.]: I was pleased the member for Merredin spoke to the motion, because some members opposite vindictively denigrated Government members, particularly the member for South Perth who put forward a first-class case and placed the blame for the position exactly where it should lie.

The Government has been and is most concerned about the position of all State Government employees and, in fact, all other employees in this State. Bearing in mind the difficult times through which we have gone, the Government probably has done more for workers than any other Government in Australia.

I will refer to the Health and Medical Services Department. I know the situation has been canvassed. The department employs about 20 000 people and this year has a budget of \$440 million which represents about 25 per cent of the total Budget. For anyone to say that allocation is not fair and that taxpayers are not paying a sufficient amount for health care, is not being at all realistic.

If we are to do something about the present cost increases in terms of providing more funds, from where would we obtain those additional funds? That is a point which members opposite seem to disregard. Extra funds for such things would have to come from the taxpayers, the people who are employed in this State. Quite frankly, we on this side believe the taxpayers already pay a sufficient amount. The responsibility of this Government is to ensure that the people of this State are catered for in a proper manner. We must try to ensure that Government

funds are not wasted, and we must try to maintain the number of jobs available in this State.

I ask members to consider the applications for wage increases presently before the State Industrial Commission. I will refer to some of the applications which come to mind. Fire brigade officers who number 720 are presently applying for an 8.75 per cent wage increase. That is just one example of many.

Mr Hassell: The cost would be \$1 million.

Mr O'CONNOR: At present the Australian Workers' Union has an application on behalf of 140 of its members for an extra \$20 a week in their wages. Everybody would like to have an extra \$20 a week, but that money would have to come from somewhere. The AWU on behalf of another 400 employees wants an increase of \$25 a week. In addition, nurses' aides are asking for a flow-on of the increase granted to nurses. Teachers are asking for a 15.7 per cent wage increase. I think approximately 13 000 teachers are involved in this application. The Civil Service Association has applied for a 7.7 per cent salary increase for its members. All these increases would run into millions of dollars which will have to be provided by taxpayers. The taxpayer is the person who will pay in the long term. Surely it is the responsibility of this Government to ensure that taxpayers obtain the best benefit they can from their tax payments.

In regard to the motion presently before us, I must say the Government does not intend to recoup the total cost of increased wages by allowing the number of nurses to decrease. We have considered the matter from every possible angle. The reduction in the number of jobs suggested will save approximately \$2.1 million but it is necessary to save another \$2 million. The hospitals have been asked to consider whether a reduction in costs or a reduction in capital expenditure can be attained in any area. We have sincerely considered all angles, and I can genuinely assure members that the Government has looked at this matter on several occasions. We have asked the various sections involved to consider the best possible way to effect a favourable result in an endeavour to affect the least number of nursing positions.

We hope that not one person will be sacked. A number of retrenchments may occur, but by employees resigning, retiring, etc., we hope that this year the shortfall can be met and that in future years those people will be replaced, and the department has been asked to consider whether replacements are necessary in the short term.

I noticed the member for Balcatta mentioned he has been in this House for eight years. To put the record right, he has been here for seven years and three months. He entered this House in July 1973 and has not as yet reached the stage of being here for eight years. The member for South Perth put forward a relevant point when he called for the unions to be responsible to help people keep their jobs. That is what the unions must do. If unions are to act irresponsibly and the Government is to carry out its housekeeping—

Mr Hodge: Do you think the nurses are irresponsible?

Mr O'CONNOR: I did not say they were irresponsible.

Mr Hodge: I listened to what you said.

Mr O'CONNOR: When the member for Melville spoke to this motion I listened to him. I ask him to listen to what I have to say. Unions which make irresponsible claims should consider the position of their members and the taxpayers of this State, because they are the people who will benefit or not benefit from these claims in the long term.

Mr Parker: Are you saying the Royal Australian Nursing Federation is irresponsible?

Mr O'CONNOR: Members of the Opposition cannot refute the Government's claim—figures are available to prove the situation—that it has done more to improve employment prospects than any other State in Australia during the 12 months to 30 June last. Employment in this State increased by 28 000 during that year, and that is a substantial increase. Quite frankly, I believe the efforts this Government has made in regard to bringing industries into this State cannot be denied. However, problems will occur and retrenchments will have to be made because of union action. I ask members to think of the North-West Shelf and the Worsley project. Because of this Government's endeavours I believe jobs will be provided in other areas for retrenched workers.

I believe because of the efforts we have made we will overcome these problems and jobs for the young people of our State will be provided. These jobs will be provided because of the actions of this Government over a long period. As members well know, we have taken action to ensure that the young people and not so young people of this State are provided for properly. We have gone ahead with the special trade training programme with which we were assisted by the Commonwealth. The cost will be approximately

\$13 million to train tradesmen for the North-West Shelf project and other such projects where jobs will be available. We have acted responsibly in order to provide positions for people who may lose their jobs because of situations such as the present one concerning nurses.

The member for Ascot stated his belief that the money spent on the 150th Anniversary celebrations was a waste. Quite frankly, I think it was well spent. The anniversary celebrations focussed attention on this State.

Mr Hodge: Is that the same as the Noonkanbah issue?

Mr O'CONNOR: The allegations made in regard to the Noonkanbah issue will be shown in the next few years to have been farcical. I hope the member for Ascot will rise to apologise for the stupid statements he made.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

BILLS (8): ASSENT

Message from the Lieutenant-Governor and Administrator received and read notifying assent to the following Bills—

1. Industrial Lands Development Authority Amendment Bill.
2. Skeleton Weed (Eradication Fund) Amendment Bill.
3. Rural Industries Assistance Amendment Bill.
4. Housing Bill.
5. Banana Industry Compensation Trust Fund Amendment Bill.
6. National Companies and Securities Commission (State Provisions) Bill.
7. Foreign Judgments (Reciprocal Enforcement) Amendment Bill.
8. Coal Mine Workers (Pensions) Amendment Bill.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE: SPECIAL

SIR CHARLES COURT (Nedlands—Premier)
[4.43 p.m.]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until 11.00 a.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.44 p.m.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

FUEL AND ENERGY: PETROL

Price: Wholesale

1493. Mr DAVIES, to the Premier:

- (1) Has he received correspondence from the WA Automobile Chamber of Commerce relating to action by the South Australian Government to reduce the wholesale price of petrol by 3c a litre under the authority of their price control legislation?
- (2) Is he aware that the South Australian Government's action follows that taken by the New South Wales Government which several months ago reduced the wholesale price of petrol by 2c per litre?
- (3) What is the Government's attitude to the chamber's request for emergency legislation to achieve the same result as has been taken in the two States mentioned?
- (4) What is the Government's attitude to the chamber's claim that the way oil companies have marketed petrol has caused imbalance and discrimination in pricing for retailers and consumers?
- (5) Has this discrimination seriously affected the price structure between country and metropolitan people and created problems for small petrol retailers in this State?
- (6) What is the Government's attitude to the chamber's claims that if all States do not take the same action as has been taken in New South Wales and South Australia, consumers in States without price control and without lower fixed prices will be subsidising cheaper petrol for those States which have acted to control the situation?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Yes, and I am also aware that the effect in the South Australian marketplace was completely the reverse of what was expected. It has been reported in the national Press that, following the State Government's intervention, the average retail price in South Australia leapt by 5c per litre in one week. In other words, the consumer is paying an additional 5c per litre.

- (3) In view of our concern for the consumer and the answer to (2) above, this would do more harm than good to the motorists in Western Australia and we would not want to move to their disadvantage.
- (4) and (5) The Government recognises that rationalisation is occurring in the petrol retailing industry and that oil companies, like independent retailers, are responding to market pressures.
- (6) Answered by (3).

1494. *This question was postponed.*

TRAFFIC: RTA

Goldfields Patrols

1495. Mr E. T. EVANS, to the Minister for Police and Traffic:

- (1) Were extra Road Traffic Authority vehicles and staff sent to Kalgoorlie to patrol the goldfields region on the weekend of 14-16 November 1980?
- (2) If "Yes", for what reason?
- (3) Will he give details of the additional staff and vehicles?
- (4) Will he advise the additional cost incurred by this exercise?
- (5) How many charges were laid and what was the nature of the charges laid by these additional patrolmen?

Mr HASSELL replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) to (5) Not applicable.

1496. *This question was postponed.*

WATER RESOURCES

Hunt Steering Committee

1497. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Has the 1980 Hunt steering committee report been completed?
- (2) When will it be made public?
- (3) If it has not been completed, what reasons can be given for this?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) The activities of the Hunt steering committee in co-ordinating research by various working groups into the effects of bauxite mining on water resources now comes under the auspices of the Government's research co-ordinating committee. There will be no consolidated report available in 1980. Future reports will be released through the research co-ordinating committee as appropriate.
- (2) and (3) Not applicable.

FUNGICIDES, HERBICIDES, AND PESTICIDES

Sprays: Precautions

1498. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Health:

Would he please detail the known precautions that should be taken with the following sprays—

- (a) Rogor;
- (b) Lorsban;
- (c) Thiodan;
- (d) Dipeper;
- (e) Dibrom;
- (f) Vapam;
- (g) Launate;
- (h) Nematicur;
- (i) Difolatan;
- (j) Cuprox;
- (k) Dithane;
- (l) Benlate;
- (m) Dacthol;
- (n) Linuvron;
- (o) Allisan;
- (p) Folosan;
- (q) Nitofol;
- (r) Supracide;
- (s) Orthene;
- (t) Brassicol;
- (u) Rovral;
- (v) Bravo;
- (w) Maneb;
- (x) Sumidicin;
- (y) Ridomil;
- (z) Ambush;
- (aa) Dieldrin;
- (bb) Kocide?

Mr YOUNG replied:

- (a) to (bb) The known precautions for the sprays listed are that these should be used only in accordance with the statements on their labels.

Precautions for all of the sprays include—

- keeping out of the reach of children;
- diluting only in accordance with label recommendations—and using only at label recommended rates;
- applying only to the indicated crops or situations as stated on the label;
- avoidance of contact with the skin and eyes and prepared food, and of inhaling mist, vapour, spray, or dust;
- washing contaminated clothing before reuse;
- observing the withholding periods stated on the label;
- reading of first-aid instructions before use;
- reading and understanding the full label.

Particular precautions for specified sprays include—

- wearing of protective gloves—Allisan, Benlate, Thiodan, Dieldrin, Rovral, Dipterex, Lorsban, Rogor, Sumicidin, Ambush, Nitofol, Supracide, Nematicur, Lannate, Vapam, Orthene;
- using an SAA approved respirator—Lannate, Supracide, Nitofol;
- using a face shield—Nematicur, Vapam, Dipterex, Lorsban, Rogor, Dibrom, Orthene, Ambush;
- wearing goggles when mixing and spraying Bravo.

POLICE

Alumina Refinery Mud Lakes Document

1499. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Police and Traffic:

- (1) Was there a CIB investigation into the leaked mud lakes document, sent under section 57 subsection (1) of the Environmental Protection Act, to the Environmental Protection Authority?

- (2) What was the result of that investigation?

Mr HASSELL replied:

- (1) Yes.
(2) Insufficient evidence for any action.

EDUCATION: SCHOOL

Safety Bay

1500. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Education:

- (1) Further to his answers to my question 1312 of 1980 relative to Safety Bay Primary School—
(a) is he aware that a total of 32 females made up of teachers, canteen staff and dental therapy staff use two toilets;
(b) is this in accord with current standards?
- (2) In what year will the library resource centre be upgraded to that standard which most primary schools already enjoy?
- (3) Is he aware that this school, with approximately 730 pupils, serves the largest number of pupils in Rockingham?
- (4) When will the review of the needs of the school be done?
- (5) (a) What decision has been made on the plans for a covered assembly area forwarded to the department by the parents and citizens' association;
(b) if no decision, when can one be expected?
- (6) (a) Is he aware of the size of the verandahs referred to in his answer to part (1)(c) of question 1312;
(b) if so, how would fitting 730 students on to the verandah in suitable formation for an assembly be achieved?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) (a) Departmental records show that there are 24 females full time at the Safety Bay Primary School. Canteen helpers are in attendance for short periods during the day. Other staff and parent helpers are at the pre-primary centre on another site where there are separate facilities.

- (b) Toilet facilities are in accord with current standards.

- (2) Extension of the Safety Bay Primary School library resource centre is listed for attention and will be attended to as soon as possible, probably in 1981-82 if funds are available.
- (3) Yes. In the 1 July school census this year there were 634 students at the primary school and another 68 pre-primary pupils were accommodated at another site.
At that time there were 69 students in year 1 and 93 students in year 7. If this trend continues there will be a reducing number of students at the Safety Bay Primary School over the coming years.
- (4) In 1981.
- (5) (a) and (b) The school has been requested to provide additional information before final approval can be given.
- (6) (a) Yes.
(b) The nature of a school assembly and the number of children gathered at one time is a matter for the school principal to decide.

ROADS

Parking Restrictions: Kerb Markings

1501. Mr HERZFELD, to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Do existing standards permit the use of a system of line markings to indicate kerbside parking restrictions?
- (2) (a) Was such a system in use in central city streets; and
(b) if so, why was it abandoned?
- (3) (a) Is consideration still being given to such a system to replace kerbside signs;
(b) if so, can he indicate when such considerations might be completed?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) There is no provision in the existing Australian Standard AS 1742 for control of kerbside parking by a system of line marking alone.

- (2) and (3) Such a system was used by the Perth City Council in the central city streets in conjunction with standard signing. I understand that the concept has not been abandoned by the council which is responsible for parking in the city centre. I am not aware whether other parking authorities are planning to use this system elsewhere in the State.

FUEL AND ENERGY: PETROL

Price Disparity

1502. Mr GRILL, to the Treasurer:

- (1) Is there in many cases in Western Australia a large discrepancy between metropolitan and country petrol prices?
- (2) In some country areas, are fuel prices 15c and 16c a litre above metropolitan petrol prices?
- (3) Is it a fact that the Federal Government's fuel price equalisation scheme is not working effectively?
- (4) Has his State Government some responsibility to see that country people are not seriously disadvantaged by high country fuel prices?
- (5) Can the State Government control fuel prices throughout the State, in the same manner as the New South Wales and South Australian State Governments have done?
- (6) (a) Would his Government be prepared to take some action to control fuel prices; and
(b) if so, what action?
- (7) (a) Would his Government be prepared to police fuel prices throughout the State; and
(b) if not, why not?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) Wholesale prices in the country are no more than 0.44c per litre above metropolitan wholesale prices. Larger variations occur between metropolitan and country retail prices.
- (2) The Government does not monitor all country petrol prices. Maximum known variations at the present time are about 10c per litre.
- (3) No.

- (4) The Government is co-operating with the Federal Government in implementing the petroleum products subsidy scheme to ensure that country wholesale prices do not exceed metropolitan wholesale prices by more than 0.44c per litre.
- (5) Yes, if the Government considered it desirable and it introduced the necessary legislation.
- (6) (a) No. The Government does not believe it necessary or desirable at this stage.
(b) Not applicable.
- (7) (a) No—but the Government does watch the position in case there are factors which call for investigation.
(b) See (7)(a).

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Statistics

1503. Mr BERTRAM, to the Minister representing the Attorney General:

- (1) Since 1964, and in Western Australia, how many—
(a) capital offences have been committed;
(b) charges have been laid for those offences,
and of those charged, how many—
(i) persons sentenced to be hanged were, in fact, hanged;
(ii) wilful murderers have been released, and how many of those have subsequently committed crimes?
- (2) How many murders currently remain unsolved?
- (3) (a) Since 1964, and in Western Australia, on how many occasions has Her Majesty's prerogative of pardon been exercised;
(b) what was the nature of the offences committed by those pardoned?
- (4) (a) How many wilful murderers are currently under sentence of death; and
(b) when were they sentenced?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

- (1) (a) 227 capital offences, which include both wilful murder and murder.

- (b) 203
 (i) None.
 (ii) 20 released on parole, 2 reoffended whilst on parole.
- (2) 10.
- (3) (a) and (b) Under clause X of the Letters Patent the Royal prerogative can be invoked by way of pardon, remission, or respite of the execution of the sentence.
 It is noted that the member's question is directed to all types of offences, not only capital offences, and relates only to the use of the Royal pardon.
 No exact records are available in relation to all types of offences of the occasions on which the pardon, as distinct from other forms of exercise of the prerogative, has been used.
- (4) (a) Three.
 (b) 27 March 1980; 14 April 1980; and 17 June 1980, respectively.

TOWN PLANNING

Albany

1504. Mr WATT, to the Minister for Urban Development and Town Planning:

- (1) Who are the members of the Albany regional planning committee and what interests do they represent?
- (2) Are they consulted on applications for subdivision or rezoning within the region before consideration by the Town Planning Department makes its recommendations?
- (3) If not, what is its role?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) The committee consists of representatives of—

Town of Albany

Shire of Albany

Town Planning Commissioner

Commissioner of Main Roads

Public Works Department

Department of Lands and Surveys

Westrail

and a licensed surveyor.

The records of individual members have not been updated as the committee has not met for some time. It is my intention to reactivate the committee.

- (2) No.
- (3) The functions of the committee are—

- (i) to prepare and review from time to time a region structure plan for ministerial and Government endorsement;
- (ii) to ensure that constituent local authorities are aware of the region planning proposals in the preparation and amendment of their town planning schemes;
- (iii) to promote and co-ordinate all matters designed to achieve the objectives of the region structure plan with particular emphasis on essential services such as water and sewerage installations, road and rail routes, and harbour facilities;
- (iv) to liaise with the great southern regional development committee to ensure co-ordination of activities;
- (v) to undertake such investigations as required to achieve the regional objectives of the committee.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

FUEL AND ENERGY: ELECTRICITY

Light Globes

464. Mr DAVIES, to the Premier:

- (1) Has the Premier received representations regarding tariff levies likely to be placed on 260 volt globes coming into this State?
- (2) If so, does the Government propose to make any representations to the tariff inquiry in view of the fact that there is a strong demand for 260 volt globes because of the fluctuating electricity supply in this State and the acknowledged fact that more globes of 250 voltage are used in Western Australia than in other States?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) and (2) I have seen some reference in the Press to this age-old argument about 240 volt, 250 volt, and 260 volt globes. I cannot recall having received any representations about tariff.

APPRENTICES

Government Tenders

465. Mr SODEMAN, to the Minister for Works:

- (1) What is the nature of the current changes to the apprentices preference scheme as it applies to the letting of PWD contracts?
- (2) What specific benefit will the revised policy be to areas such as the Pilbara?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) and (2) For various reasons, not the least of which is the constant representations of the member for Pilbara to the Government, it has been decided to change the apprenticeship policy which prevailed for more than a year.

The previous policy required every main contractor tendering to the Public Works Department for public works to have—depending on the size of the job—a given number of apprentices registered at the time of tendering.

The present policy recognises that some of the contractors who do not have continuity of work will not be able constantly to employ these apprentices. Consequently in future every contractor—even without registered apprentices—can submit tenders. If he is successful with a tender he is then obliged to take on the required number of apprentices within 28 days of the tender being announced.

With regard to the country areas, this will apply also, but no preference has been given to those who have registered apprentices. These areas are outside the 100-kilometre radius of Perth or outside a 15-kilometre radius of Albany, Geraldton, Bunbury, and Kalgoorlie. Therefore, we think that this will benefit the contractors established in the Pilbara.

NOONKANBAH STATION

Transport of Drilling Rig: Payment

466. Mr GRILL, to the Treasurer:

Is it true that the Government coerced the various companies sharing an interest in the petroleum licence on which the Noonkanbah oil exploration

hole was drilled into paying the cost of drilling and into paying for the cost of the convoy and the escort to take the unit to the site; or alternatively most of the cost thereof?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

The member used the word "coerced" in an offensive way and I have no intention of answering him. I suggest he waits until he sees the documents which are to be tabled.

Mr Grill: You have been given away.

Sir CHARLES COURT: The member will be very embarrassed if he is following the same line as that followed by the member for Ascot earlier today.

TOWN PLANNING

Wooroloo

467. Mr HERZFELD, to the Minister for Urban Development and Town Planning:

- (1) Has Town Planning Board approval been given for subdivision of lot 1 loc. 1317 Bailup Road, Wooroloo?
- (2) What size lots have been approved, and how many?
- (3) Was the proposal referred to the EPA or Department of Conservation and Environment prior to approval and did it support subdivision?
- (4) Is she satisfied the subdivision approval will not exacerbate ground salinity problems in the area?
- (5) Was the approval of subdivision subject to conditions related to overclearing?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) Yes, approval was granted to Agnew Clough Ltd.
- (2) Eight lots ranging from 40 hectares—minimum—to 106 hectares, together with a strip of public open space, about 100 m wide, across the creek running through the land.
- (3) No. I am informed, however, that in making its decision the Town Planning Board had the benefit of previous advice from the Department of Conservation and Environment on an earlier subdivision proposal for the land.

- (4) The decision to approve this subdivision was made by the Town Planning Board. I am informed that, in making its decision, the board was in possession of substantial evidence relating to ground water salinity in the area. After considering this evidence, as well as the findings of the Town Planning Appeal Tribunal in *Town Planning Board v. Agnew Clough Ltd.*—Appeal No. 1 of 1979—I am informed that the board was satisfied that subdivision approval, in itself, would not necessarily exacerbate ground salinity problems in the area.
- (5) No. I believe that such a condition would be difficult, if not impossible, to implement at the subdivision stage. In any event, the Town Planning Appeal Tribunal in the aforementioned appeal considered that subdivision of the land to provide for lots in excess of 40 hectares would not require special land use controls such as those applied to special rural zones.

WEST TRADE CENTRE LIMITED

Government Assistance

468. Mr BRYCE, to the Treasurer:

- (1) As the Treasurer of Western Australia, has he approved of funding assistance to the West Trade Centre in the form of an advance of \$100 000 and a loan guarantee of \$1.3 million under the auspices of the Industry (Advances) Act?
- (2) If so, will he indicate how he justifies giving the restricted advances to industries funds and guaranteeing a loan of that proportion to a firm which appears to be outside the scope of the Act?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) and (2) I would not presume to answer a matter which apparently involves an interpretation of the law. If the member wishes to place the question on the notice paper—

Mr Davies: Did you or did you not?

Sir CHARLES COURT: I will answer so far as I can. I have answered questions of that sort in this House on several occasions and in some considerable detail. I suggest the member should look at the answers to the other questions. If the member wishes to place the question on notice I will ascertain whether it applies only to the answers I have given on that centre or whether it involves expressing an opinion on the law.

FUEL AND ENERGY: ELECTRICITY

Country Churches

469. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

- (1) Are churches in country areas, where there is no resident clergy, being charged a monthly reading fee by the SEC?
- (2) If "Yes", will the Minister have this fee waived in cases where there is no power used?

The reason for my request is obvious because in some small country towns the church service is conducted only during the day and it means the running of a cake stall and matters of this kind to pay the rating fee to the SEC when no power is involved.

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

- (1) and (2) I am aware of the matter because some concern has been expressed to me, not by the churches, but on behalf of one or two local government authorities in relation to buildings within their area—halls, etc.—which have the same use as that of churches. This matter is currently under consideration as is the question of whether there ought to be no reading by the meter readers of the State Energy Commission at all. Some consideration has been given to a system whereby the meters are read in the same way as they are read by farmers and others. This is done on a card system; the card is sent to them and they return the card to the SEC. This matter is still under consideration, but I will be able to advise the member in due course.

FUEL AND ENERGY: ELECTRICITY

Charge: Establishment

470. Mr PARKER, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

I remind the Minister of questions and answers in respect of the occasions when the State Energy Commission is charging people whose accounts have been transferred from the State Housing Commission to the State Energy Commission.

I ask the Minister: Since he advised me that this matter was under consideration and ought to be resolved in favour of the tenants concerned, what is the current situation?

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

I remind the member of the answer I gave which was that meetings were taking place with a group formed between the State Energy Commission and the State Housing Commission—quite a while ago—to try to reach some agreement. As I indicated previously some 500 to 600 flats are involved in this matter and we are trying to find a way to resolve a very difficult situation; that is, the degree of bad debts which are to be transferred by the State Housing Commission to the State Energy Commission. I have not checked the position lately, but I will do so.

NOONKANBAH STATION

Transport of Drilling Rig: Payment

471. Mr BRIAN BURKE, to the Treasurer:

Without using the word “coerce”, and without any other implication, I ask the Treasurer whether it is true that arrangements have been made for the companies participating in the mining venture mentioned by the member for Yilgarn-Dundas to pay the costs of the Noonkanbah exercise?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

I want to repeat that the full details of this will be given, as promised. I do not intend to pre-empt what will be a very interesting document of great historical interest.

It will be a very enlightening document, and I hope members will get an autographed copy and read it at least once a year.

WATER RESOURCES

Marble Bar

472. Mr SODEMAN, to the Minister for Water Resources:

- (1) Following the representation to the Minister from the East Pilbara Shire Council, has an assessment been made of the quality of the Marble Bar domestic water supply?
- (2) If “Yes”, when was it made and what was the result?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) and (2) According to the report from the engineering section, I understand the last sample was taken on 18 November. It was quite satisfactory and, consequently, the shire council has been notified there is no necessity to continue to boil drinking water. The water appears to be of the required quality.

FUEL AND ENERGY: ELECTRICITY

Accounts: Interest on Deposit

473. Mr DAVIES, to the Minister for Fuel and Energy:

- (1) Is the Minister aware that electricity accounts recently issued to domestic consumers often showed a credit as interest on deposit?
- (2) Can the Minister explain how this is worked out, how long it has been operating, and exactly what it represents.

Mr P. V. JONES replied:

- (1) and (2) I am not fully aware of what the Leader of the Opposition is referring to. Early this year a system was introduced to apply to people living in flats, and to new customers of the commission. Interest could be paid on their deposits.

If the Leader of the Opposition provides me with more details, I will find out exactly what the situation is.