

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 17 March 1992

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Clive Griffiths) took the Chair at 3.30 pm, and read prayers.

CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES

Election

THE PRESIDENT: Honourable members, the office of Chairman of Committees is vacant and it is therefore necessary for the Council to proceed to the election of one of its members to fill the vacancy. Are there any nominations?

HON J.M. BERINSON (North Metropolitan - Leader of the House) [3.34 pm]: I nominate Hon Garry Kelly. In support of this nomination, it can fairly be said that he is well respected in this House both personally and as a parliamentarian. One aspect of his role has been as Deputy Chairman of Committees since 1986. That has clearly been a valuable experience for the position now being considered. It is also a measure of the respect which the honourable member enjoys that he occupies the position of Chairman of the Standing Committee on Legislation. It has often been said that that is among the most successful, if not the most successful, of our committees. Although he occupies the position of chairman it is well known that all our committees have a majority of non-Government members. The effectiveness of that committee is a reflection of the way in which its members have been able to work together and of the chairmanship which Hon Garry Kelly has been able to provide. I am confident that, if appointed by the Council, the honourable member will uphold the best traditions of the office now being considered.

HON GEORGE CASH (North Metropolitan - Leader of the Opposition) [3.36 pm]: I nominate Hon Norman Moore. Members will be aware that he was elected to this Parliament in 1977 and, therefore, is a member of long standing having served more than 15 years in this Parliament. With respect to his parliamentary experience, members will be aware that he was formerly the Secretary to the Cabinet in the Court Government and carried out his duties in a very proper and responsible manner. He was also a shadow Minister in both the Hassell Opposition ministry and for a period during the MacKinnon Opposition ministry. He has held a number of shadow ministerial portfolios and I am sure those members who have heard Hon Norman Moore debating issues in this House will credit him with the work and research he does on projects he handles.

He is currently the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Members of that committee will appreciate the fairness with which he conducts its proceedings but, more than that, the significant progress that has been made by the committee during his chairmanship. There is no question that Hon Norman Moore is well respected on both sides of this Parliament. He has been a tenacious fighter for the correctness of parliamentary procedures in this House and his knowledge of parliamentary procedure is widely acknowledged. He would make a very fine Chairman of Committees in this Parliament and would carry the position in a manner which we would all expect of him. I trust members will support the nomination.

HON MURRAY MONTGOMERY (South West) [3.38 pm]: I nominate Hon John Caldwell. He has been a Deputy Chairman of Committees for five years or so since 1986 - when he first took his place in this House. He has also served on various committees of the House. The National Party believes he would therefore make a very good Chairman of Committees.

[Hon Garry Kelly, Hon N.F. Moore and Hon J.N. Caldwell having submitted themselves to the will of the House, a ballot was taken with Hon D.J. Wordsworth acting as scrutineer.]

THE PRESIDENT: Honourable members, as none of the three candidates received a majority and Hon J.N. Caldwell received the fewer number of votes, his name will be eliminated and a further ballot held between Hon Garry Kelly and Hon N.F. Moore.

[A further ballot was taken, with Hon D.J. Wordsworth acting as scrutineer.]

THE PRESIDENT: The ballot must be conducted again because one member has voted

informally and it is a requirement that every member vote. There are two candidates in the election, one is Hon Norman Moore and the other is Hon Garry Kelly. One member voted for a third person.

Hon Tom Stephens: You can't do that, Phil. I have told you that you can't vote for yourself.

Point of Order

Hon J.M. BERINSON: It appears to me that Standing Order No 23 does not require other than that one candidate should have more votes than the other candidate. Notwithstanding the fact that Standing Order No 22 refers to each member delivering a ballot paper containing the name of the candidate for whom he votes, it seems to me that that does not preclude a member, for example, from not putting any name on the ballot paper, thus indicating his disagreement with all available candidates. By the same token, I cannot see in the Standing Orders any provision which precludes the lodging of an informal vote. We are all used to the concept of an informal vote and we are obviously presented with that here. In the circumstances I submit that this is not a case for a further ballot being taken.

Hon GEORGE CASH: On the same point of order, it is clear that the wording of Standing Order No 22 requires members to be handed a ballot paper, which has been done, and also requires each member to make a note in writing of the name of the candidate for whom he or she intends to vote.

Hon Kay Hallahan: It does not refer to "he or she" but just "he".

Hon GEORGE CASH: Each member is then required to present that vote via a ballot box for counting. It is quite clear that members are required to vote for the candidate of their choice. There are two candidates in the election - Hon Norman Moore and Hon Garry Kelly - and in accordance with Standing Order No 22 it appears that if a member voted for any other person that would invalidate the election.

Ruling - By the President

The PRESIDENT: We must go back a bit further. We are conducting this ballot as though a division were taking place in the House. The doors are locked and every member in this Chamber, as in a division, must vote. During a division a person cannot refrain from voting. In this election one member has refrained from voting. It is a requirement of the Standing Orders that every person in the Chamber vote. On that basis I make my ruling. Once the bells have been rung and the doors have been locked - and that is precisely why I took that action in the first place - it is a requirement that every member vote. If honourable members want to disagree with that ruling they are aware of the procedures to follow. I suggest that the ballot be taken again.

Point of Order

Hon DOUG WENN: Is it possible or proper for the bells to be rung again to allow those members who wish to refrain from voting to leave the Chamber?

The PRESIDENT: Any member who wanted to refrain from voting had the opportunity to leave the Chamber when the bells were first rung.

Hon DOUG WENN: One ballot was taken and we then went to another ballot, and we should have rung the bells again to give that individual the right to abstain from the second ballot.

The PRESIDENT: I am saying we should not. We are participating in the same vote. This is as distressing for me as it is for you, but the fact of the matter is that there are 30 members in this Chamber, and there is a requirement under the rules for divisions that there be 30 votes. Unless the House determines that it does not want that to occur, that is the ruling. You will not hurt my feelings if you disagree with me. I happen to believe that I am right, and that is what will occur; so I declare that the ballot will be taken again and ask that the ballot papers be distributed.

Election Resumed

[A further ballot was taken, with Hon D.J. Wordsworth acting as scrutineer. Hon Garry Kelly received a majority of votes.]

The PRESIDENT: I am pleased to announce that the Chairman of Committees selected by the House is Hon Garry Kelly.

Government members: Hear, hear!

[Applause.]

HON GARRY KELLY (South Metropolitan) [4.05 pm]: I guess it is a case of third time lucky. I thank the House for its support, and I will endeavour to do the fairest and best job possible.

HON N.F. MOORE (Mining and Pastoral) [4.06 pm]: I congratulate Hon Garry Kelly. I am sure he will do an excellent job. He has been a very impartial Deputy Chairman of Committees, and I am sure he will be an excellent Chairman of Committees.

HON J.M. BERINSON (North Metropolitan - Leader of the House) [4.07 pm]: I congratulate Hon Garry Kelly and join with Hon N.F. Moore and, I am sure, all other members in expressing confidence that he will perform the duties of this important office at the standard that the position requires.

Mr President, I wonder whether you might allow me the latitude to add a further comment, since we have not previously had the opportunity; that is, to extend my respect and, I would feel confident, that of other members of the House to the retired Chairman of Committees, Hon Jim Brown. He performed his duties very well, and I believe to the satisfaction of the House. I am sure that Hon Garry Kelly will measure up to the standard set by Hon Jim Brown, and that is a very desirable standard indeed.

HON GEORGE CASH (North Metropolitan - Leader of the Opposition) [4.08 pm]: On behalf of the Opposition, I extend to Hon Garry Kelly the Opposition's congratulations on his appointment to the high office of Chairman of Committees in this House. There is no doubt that Hon Garry Kelly has demonstrated, as one of the Deputy Chairmen of Committees in this House, that he is a capable person when it comes to chairing debates. We look forward to his continued impartial decisions from the Chair, and as an Opposition we look forward to working closely with him to ensure that the procedures of the House are carried out in the way that we would all expect.

I join the Leader of the House in making a comment about the resignation of Hon Jim Brown. Hon Jim Brown was a tenacious fighter for the independence of the Chair while occupying the position of Chairman of Committees. The Opposition had a very close and good working relationship with him. While we wish him well in his endeavours as a former member of the House, we will certainly miss the very competent way in which he acted as Chairman of Committees.

HON J.N. CALDWELL (Agricultural) [4.10 pm]: I congratulate Hon Garry Kelly on his election as Chairman of Committees and offer my commiserations to Hon Norman Moore. I honestly believe that Hon Norman Moore would have ably carried out the duties of that position. As a candidate for the position of Chairman of Committees, in my case it was a case of last in first out. When one makes up one's mind quickly that is what one can expect.

I join with the Leader of the Opposition in thanking Hon Jim Brown for all his assistance with the many aspects of parliamentary procedure. Hon Jim Brown proved to be a person to whom one could go, no matter when, and receive assistance. It was great that an opposing member would give other members such assistance with procedures in this place. I wish Hon Jim Brown all the best in his endeavours in the future.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Clive Griffiths): I also congratulate Hon Garry Kelly on his election as Chairman of Committees. I have known Hon Garry Kelly ever since he entered the Parliament. He is a dedicated stickler for the rules, and if he does not like the rules he endeavours to change them through the proper channels. I look forward to the opportunity of working closely with Hon Garry Kelly, as I did with his predecessor, Hon Jim Brown.

I also wish to speak about Hon Jim Brown. As honourable members know, particularly in the last year or so I have been away from the Chamber on occasions. I can assure members that I left this Parliament with the absolute confidence that while I was absent Hon Jim Brown would carry out the duties and functions of the Deputy President in a way in which the Chamber would expect. Of course, Hon Jim Brown did that. I am equally sure that Hon Garry Kelly will do the same. I will give him the opportunity later tonight of listening to debate on the Address-in-Reply for a couple of hours to make sure he gets his hand in early. I congratulate him on his appointment as Chairman of Committees.

NORTON, THE LATE DANIEL*Family's Letter of Thanks*

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Clive Griffiths): I have received the following letter dated 19 February 1992 -

Dear Mr Griffiths

On behalf of my mother, Mrs Sheila Norton, my brother Dan, sister Janet, and myself, thank you for your letter of condolence and extracts from Hansard, relating to my father, Daniel Norton.

We all appreciate the expressions of sympathy to ourselves and to know Dad's dedication to his work, whatever that was, has been regarded as worthy of praise, is heart warming.

Our special thanks to yourself, the Hon Joe Berinson, the Hon George Cash, Hon Tom Stephens and Hon J.M. Brown for words of commendation and esteem as recorded in Hansard.

Our family was very touched by Mr Kevin Leahy's eulogy at the funeral service and for the letter of appreciation from Doctor Carmen Lawrence read out by Kevin.

Our deep thanks to one and all.

Yours sincerely
Lyn Price.

**HEALTH DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA - ANNUAL REPORT
1990-91 WITHDRAWAL**

Revised Report Tabling

HON KAY HALLAHAN (East Metropolitan - Minister for Education) [4.16 pm]: I seek leave to withdraw the annual report of the Health Department of Western Australia for 1990-91, tabled in this House on 26 November 1991, and replace it with a revised report. I am advised that this is necessary owing to an oversight during collation of the original report which did not include the final audited accounts. This has since been corrected in this final, amended report which I seek leave to table as a replacement.

[Leave granted.]

Point of Order

Hon GEORGE CASH: Leave of the House was granted to Hon Kay Hallahan to "untable" a paper. I query the procedures of the House when, a paper having been tabled, a Minister seeks leave to withdraw the original paper and submit another. Perhaps the Minister was endeavouring to substitute a paper; I do not know, but it seems to revolve around a matter of procedure. The matter should be clarified.

The PRESIDENT: The Minister for Education sought leave of the House to do as she has done, and the House gave her leave. If any member had any misgivings about it, one voice would have prevented her doing so. I put the question that the paper was to be tabled in lieu of the previous tabled paper.

DEPUTY CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES*Appointment*

HON J.M. BERINSON (North Metropolitan - Leader of the House) [4.21 pm]: I move, without notice -

That Hons J.N. Caldwell, Muriel Patterson, Doug Wenn and D.J. Wordsworth be appointed as Deputy Chairmen of Committees.

The appointment of Hon Garry Kelly as Chairman of Committees has left one position of Deputy Chairman vacant. It would be generally accepted that the replacement should come from Government members and I propose to make an additional nomination at some future time.

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION - STANDING COMMITTEES

Reappointment

On motion, without notice, by Hon J.M. Berinson (Leader of the House), resolved -

That the members, as they were in the previous session, be reappointed to the following Standing Committees -

- (1) Standing Orders, House, Library and Printing Committees.
- (2) Standing Committee on Constitutional Affairs and Statutes Revision.

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION

Appointment

On motion, without notice, by Hon J.M. Berinson (Leader of the House), resolved -

That -

- (1) The Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations shall consist of the Hons Max Evans, Murray Montgomery, Sam Piantadosi, Muriel Patterson and Bob Thomas.
- (2) The Standing Committee on Government Agencies shall consist of the Hons George Cash, John Halden, Barry House, N.F. Moore, Tom Stephens and Doug Wenn.

SELECT COMMITTEES

Reappointment

On motion, without notice, by Hon J.M. Berinson (Leader of the House), resolved -

That the following Select Committees be reappointed with the same terms of reference and membership as they had in the previous session -

- (1) Select Committee into Achievements of Indigenous Peoples of Australia.
- (2) Select Committee on Dieback in National Parks and Conservation Reserves.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROFESSIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL LIABILITY

Reappointment

On motion, without notice, by Hon J.M. Berinson (Leader of the House), resolved -

That the Joint Select Committee on Professional and Occupational Liability be reappointed with the same terms of reference and membership as it had in the previous session subject to the replacement of Hon J.M. Brown by Hon Mark Nevill.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY - SECOND DAY

Motion

Debate resumed from 12 March.

HON GEORGE CASH (North Metropolitan - Leader of the Opposition) [4.28 pm]: I support the Address-in-Reply as moved by Hon Bob Thomas at the sitting of the Legislative Council on Thursday, 12 March. Like Hon Bob Thomas I thank His Excellency the Governor, Sir Francis Theodore Page Burt, AC KCMG, QC, for having attended the Parliament on that day and for having presented his Speech that was later distributed to members of the Parliament. In reading the comments of Hon Bob Thomas, and recognising that he is a representative for South West Region -

Hon Doug Wenn: A very good representative, too.

Hon GEORGE CASH: I understand that he is number one on the ticket - if that proves he is a pretty good member - and that he now occupies the seat formerly occupied by Hon Jim Brown; so he is leaping ahead of some of his colleagues in the Legislative Council. I was

somewhat surprised at some of the comments made by Hon Bob Thomas inasmuch as he said, or implied, on a number of occasions that things had never been so tough in Albany and the Albany region as they had been in recent years. I recognise that.

Hon Bob Thomas: I did not say that. I said it was a bad year.

Hon GEORGE CASH: If Hon Bob Thomas reads his speech he will find that he said more than that it was a bad year. He commented extensively on the problem of unemployment in the Albany region, a problem we all recognise exists. He also commented generally on the lack of business being conducted in that region.

Hon Bob Thomas: To what did I attribute the major reason for that?

Hon GEORGE CASH: Hon Bob Thomas should tell me.

Hon Bob Thomas: I said it was the wool industry.

Hon GEORGE CASH: That is where I disagree with Hon Bob Thomas. The point I was trying to make was that he went to great lengths when moving the Address-in-Reply to sledge the Government. He said more than that things were bad; he said that business was not as good as it could be in the Albany region. That is a fact; but he went on to imply that the Government was not doing its job in that area.

Hon Bob Thomas: I did not say that the Government was not doing its job.

Hon GEORGE CASH: He also said that one of the prime reasons for that was that times were tough in the region. I do not disagree with him at all. I was pleased he used the very public occasion of the official opening of the Parliament to sledge the Government.

Hon P.G. Pandal: He was a bit preoccupied with *Alice in Wonderland*.

Hon GEORGE CASH: In my comments in the Address-in-Reply I refer to two important documents which were made public in the last month. The first is the Government document entitled the WA Advantage which was released about 12 February this year. The other document is the Fightback WA document that was released by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Barry MacKinnon, at a very successful launch in Perth on 15 February 1992. It has been a long time since the Opposition Liberal Party has produced such a comprehensive document which sets out clearly to the community of Western Australia the economic strategy that it intends to adopt to ensure more jobs, development and economic opportunities are provided in this State so that we can restore both prosperity and pride to Western Australia.

I was also interested to note that on Monday, 17 February, only a few days after the Leader of the Opposition had conducted his successful launch, a cartoon appeared in *The West Australian*. It showed on one side a witch doctor, who bore a remarkable resemblance to the Premier, attempting to revive a patient expiring on the floor of a grass hut. The patient is entitled WA Economy. On the other side of the cartoon there was a person, not unlike the Leader of the Opposition, dressed as a surgeon, along with some of his colleagues, making up a team of surgeons. The cartoon very aptly illustrated the differences between the two policies of the major parties in Western Australia.

Hon J.M. Berinson: Did the doctor in the white coat have a lot of mirrors?

Hon GEORGE CASH: No, there were no mirrors in the cartoon.

Hon J.M. Berinson: The cartoon would not appear to be too accurate then.

Hon GEORGE CASH: The Attorney General is entitled to surmise that, but perhaps if he read both documents and judged the merits of both documents he would not say that.

Hon J.M. Berinson: Don't tell me you are going to support the Liberal document. How do you intend to explain paying off \$600 million a year?

Hon GEORGE CASH: I intend to explain why the Liberal document far outweighs the Government document in as responsible a way as I can.

Hon T.G. Butler: That should not take long.

Hon GEORGE CASH: I am glad Hon Tom Butler said that because he is right. It should not take long for me to explain how superior is the Liberal document. One of the acute symptoms of the illness of the Western Australian economy is unemployment. Currently, 93 400 Western Australians, or 11 per cent of the working population, are unemployed. Statistics released recently confirm those figures.

Hon Bob Thomas: What was our participation rate?

Hon GEORGE CASH: I will get to that in a moment. I intend to reveal some statistics which will make the member cringe. The other day Hon Bob Thomas sledged the Government and now after hearing about the unemployment figures I understand why he would want to sledge his own party. Of the 93 400 Western Australians unemployed, 16 700 are young people aged under 19 years. That brings youth unemployment in Western Australia to a phenomenal 35.2 per cent. That is a figure which was unheard of in the history of Western Australia until now. Never before has youth unemployment been as high as it is today. In the two years of the Lawrence premiership unemployment in this State has risen by more than 60 per cent. That is nothing to be proud of. The Liberal Party has presented a package which will restore some prosperity and job opportunities to this State. The Liberal Party is proud of its document *Fightback WA*. The document is pro-development and is based on jobs. The Liberal Party believes that by implementing the general strategy contained in the document jobs will be created for those in Western Australia who do not have any hope presently. I also note that the Government document does not state how many jobs will be created. When it discusses job opportunities it is vague about what it intends to do to create them.

Hon Bob Thomas: Be specific.

Hon GEORGE CASH: I will be specific.

Hon Bob Thomas interjected.

Hon GEORGE CASH: I do not know whether Hon Bob Thomas has read his party's document, but he should know that implementation of the measures contained in the Government's document will cost about \$472 million, or \$157 million a year over three years. Where will the funding come from? There is little reference in the Government's document to where the Government intends to derive those funds. I suggest that the Government intends to borrow the money. If it borrows that money the State's debt will increase.

Hon Bob Thomas: It will not borrow money. Some of it will be derived from taxes which will be foregone.

Hon GEORGE CASH: We must raise funds.

Hon Bob Thomas: You know that the taxes raised by the State Government go up every year because the economy expands. We are saying that some of the extra income we will derive over the next few years will be allocated to specific areas of spending.

Hon GEORGE CASH: I will explain to members opposite how the Liberal Party, when in Government, will raise the funds to implement the projects outlined in its package. Hon Bob Thomas is wrong when he says the Government will rely on incremental increases in general taxation. That is not what is proposed in the Government's document, yet he stated he had read it! The Premier made it clear that if there were a need to borrow funds, the Government would do it. If the Government continued to borrow money to fund its economic strategy all it would do is increase the State's debt, which, even though it is the highest it has ever been in the history of this State, is not being properly addressed by this Government. It is an area which is addressed by the Liberal Party in its document. The Government has not set out in clear terms how it intends to fund the various proposals contained in its document. In comparison the Liberal Party's document includes a target of 140 000 additional jobs by the year 2000.

Hon Bob Thomas: How will you fund it?

Hon GEORGE CASH: I am glad the member asked that question. It appears that I will have to give Hon Bob Thomas a copy of the Liberal Party's document, which members on this side of the House are proud of. He will find in it how the Liberal Party intends to fund this and other proposals. One method is a net reduction in Government spending which will raise \$100 million per annum.

Hon Bob Thomas: What areas of Government spending will be reduced?

Hon GEORGE CASH: Our document identifies the areas in which there can be significant savings which can be ploughed into capital projects which are job creation projects.

Hon Bob Thomas has never claimed in this House to know anything about economics and it is clear by his remarks why he will never make that claim. He does not understand what an economic strategy is all about. I do not want Hon Bob Thomas to attach all the weight of this package to what I am saying and I invite him to consider the comments of an independent analyst; that is, Dr Mike Nahan from the Institute of Public Affairs. He has analysed both the Labor and Liberal documents and in a media statement dated 21 February this year he declared that our Fightback WA package was the clear winner in the battle for fiscal strategies. Government members may snigger, but I am referring to the States' Policy Unit's IPA news release and I will read some of the comments so that members will understand the way in which this institute analysed both documents. It states in part -

The Fightback WA package correctly identified the magnitude of, as well as the need to reduce, debt and deficit spending.

Further on it states -

By contrast, the Government's package, Advantage WA makes no reference to either debt or deficits - an omission which seriously undermines its credibility. Moreover, the WA Government, unlike its counterparts in other States, has failed to do so in any other documents.

It is an independent comment by the IPA. The following comments were made on the analyses of the budgetary impact of both packages -

The Fightback WA package is estimated to yield a nett reduction in government spending of approximately \$100 million per year. The Liberal package includes commitments requiring additional spending of around \$100 million per annum and includes expenditure cuts of approximately \$200 million per annum.

The Government's package includes new spending commitments of around \$150 million per year. However, the document fails to indicate in detail or in general how these initiatives are to be funded.

That is an independent comment from the IPA.

Hon Bob Thomas: It is like me getting a statement from the Trades and Labor Council of WA and saying that -

Hon GEORGE CASH: That statement does a disservice to the TLC. From time to time it sends me documents which I read, and I believe the veracity of them. The specifics of the documents may not suit me, but I do not denigrate the TLC and claim that it is biased because it does not say the things I want to hear.

Hon Bob Thomas: I was denigrating your comment.

Hon GEORGE CASH: The least Hon Bob Thomas can do is recognise that the IPA has analysed the Government's and the Opposition's documents and has made these comments. There is no need to denigrate it for what it said.

Hon Bob Thomas: I am denigrating your comment that they were independent.

Hon GEORGE CASH: I maintain again that it is an independent organisation and I am disappointed in Hon Bob Thomas' suggestion that that is not the case. It has analysed the documents and has provided these responses.

Hon Bob Thomas: I question its competency if it says that your package is better than ours.

Hon GEORGE CASH: All that interjection does is confirm that Hon Bob Thomas has not analysed either document in any great depth.

Hon W.N. Stretch: If he is suggesting that it is a rubber stamp for the Liberal Party I suggest he tells it himself.

Hon GEORGE CASH: The following is a general summary of the WA Advantage package in budgetary areas: New Government spending will be about \$150 million a year over three years. Total Government spending will increase by about \$100 million per annum and it will probably be funded by way of an increase to State debt. In contrast, the Liberal Party's Fightback WA package proposes new Government spending to be about \$100 million over eight years, but that it be offset by a reduction in total Government spending of about \$100 million a year, and that will be arrived at through total savings of \$200 million a year.

The Liberal Party's package proposes the elimination of State debt by the year 2010. I am sure that most members would consider the elimination of State debt to be a very important step forward in State finances. The question of the very significant increase in State debt over recent times has been raised in this House on numerous occasions. The Labor Government has a policy of borrowing rather than generating revenue and that has pushed State debt to nearly \$10 million on current estimates.

In February 1990, when the current Premier became the leader of the Government in this State, the number of unemployed persons in this State was 57 700 or about seven per cent of our community. By February 1991 - 12 months later - there were 81 900 people unemployed, or 9.8 per cent. The unemployment figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that in January 1992 there were 95 500 people unemployed in this State. That figure represents 11.3 per cent of our community. Is Hon Bob Thomas saying that the ABS figure is wrong?

Hon Bob Thomas: The member's figure is a month out of date.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Is Hon Bob Thomas saying that in January 1992 the figure supplied by the ABS in catalogue 6202, table No 10, was incorrect?

Hon Bob Thomas: The February figures were announced last Thursday.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Did they show an increase or a decrease in unemployment?

Hon Bob Thomas: A decrease down to 11 per cent. The number of unemployed is about 92 000.

Hon GEORGE CASH: That is incorrect. The last time the unemployment figure was anywhere near 92 000 was in September 1991 when it was 92 600. The January 1992 figure was 95 600.

Hon Bob Thomas: The February figure was announced last Thursday.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Hon Bob Thomas told me that the figure was 92 000. I say that that is incorrect and that the figure is significantly higher than that.

Hon Doug Wenn: Has Hon George Cash seen the document?

Hon GEORGE CASH: No.

Hon Doug Wenn: Hon George Cash is accusing others of not reading documents before making statements and is now doing the same thing.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Hon Bob Thomas has claimed that the February unemployment figure was 92 000. I am saying that is incorrect.

Hon Mark Nevill: Hon Bob Thomas said the figure had fallen to 11 per cent.

Hon GEORGE CASH: He also claimed the number of unemployed in February was 92 000.

Hon Bob Thomas: Three thousand new jobs were created.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Let us not argue about a couple of thousand jobs. Hon Bob Thomas was wrong when he said that the unemployment figure for February 1992 was 92 000.

Hon Bob Thomas: I took 3 000 off for new jobs created during the month.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Hon Bob Thomas took a punt and he was wrong. The figure is significantly higher. The last time the figure for the number of unemployed was near 92 000 was in February 1991. Under the Lawrence Government, youth unemployment in February 1990 was 11 500; that is, 18.3 per cent of people in the 15 to 19 year age group were unemployed. By February 1992, 12 months later, 14 100 people; that is, 26.7 per cent of that age group were unemployed. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures showed that in February 1992, 16 700 people in the 15 to 19 year age group were unemployed, a whopping 35.5 per cent of that age group.

We should have suspected there would be a significant increase in youth unemployment. I recall that just before Christmas the Minister for Employment and Training, Hon Kay Hallahan - or the Minister for Unemployment as some people have been referring to her in recent times - said in this House that things would get worse before they got better. I give her credit for making that statement. How many members of this House would have thought

when she made that statement about things getting worse that they would see 35.5 per cent of our young people unemployed? The Australian seasonally adjusted unemployment rates from February 1990 to February 1992 reveal that in 1990 Western Australia held equal third position in the unemployment stakes with about seven per cent unemployment compared with the Australian average of 6.5 per cent. Twelve months later Western Australia had 9.8 per cent unemployment compared with an Australian average of 8.7 per cent. Western Australia had the highest unemployment rate of all the States.

By January 1992 Western Australia had 11.3 per cent unemployment compared with the Australian average figure of 10.3 per cent. We were again the State with the highest level of unemployment in the Commonwealth. Members of the Government have been trying to tell us that the WA Advantage package issued by the Government will save the State. I wish the Government every success in creating jobs in the State. However, when one contrasts the Labor Government's WA Advantage document with the Liberal Party's Fightback WA document, without question - and on an unbiased basis confirmed by independent analysis - one sees that the Opposition's document is more realistic and its goals are more achievable.

Hon John Halden: With a GST? You do not have a hope, George; you know it and I know it!

Hon GEORGE CASH: Hon John Halden raises the question of a goods and services tax and it is fair he should do so. Our Federal leader, Dr John Hewson, proposes a GST across Australia.

Hon Mark Nevill: It will ruin the domestic tourism industry.

Hon GEORGE CASH: One has only to go back a few years to find that the present Prime Minister, Paul Keating, while Treasurer of Australia advocated a GST. If Hon Mark Nevill is saying that a GST will have an adverse effect on the tourism industry under Dr John Hewson's plan, I suggest it would have created just as adverse a situation under Mr Paul Keating's plan.

Hon John Halden: We saw the light and changed.

Hon Mark Nevill: It means that you are five years behind the times.

Hon GEORGE CASH: That remains to be seen. No question arises that the acceptance level of both the Federal Fightback document and our Fightback WA document has been beyond our expectations. We are extremely pleased about the way in which the Fightback document has been accepted across Australia. It is clear that we were gaining such acceptance with that document that the Federal Labor Party decided to dump its Prime Minister and appoint a new one because it could see that the Leader of the Opposition, Dr Hewson, was doing particularly well.

I return to the contrast I was drawing between Labor's WA Advantage and Liberal's Fightback WA. If one looks at the base industry policy in both documents it becomes clear that Labor's package lacks any mention of specific long term economic targets. In Fightback WA we set out those targets. We say that a need exists for a 50 per cent increase in the real value of exports by the year 2000. We are providing ourselves with a target to work towards. We also say that a need exists to double the real value of mineral production by the year 2000 and that a need exists to concentrate on agricultural production to ensure between a 50 per cent and a 100 per cent increase in crop production by the year 2025. The Liberal Party is setting real targets to work towards. Those real targets, those goals we wish to work towards, mean that we will have to put positive plans into effect that can be monitored as we proceed down that path.

Both packages contain the same main thrust in relation to the mining industry; that is, the cutting of Government red tape. Both parties acknowledge that red tape has delayed mining approvals for projects in the past.

It was interesting to see that, in respect of Marandoo, when the former member for Pilbara, Mrs Pam Buchanan, decided she would retire from this Parliament due to ill health, all of a sudden the urgency of getting the Marandoo project approved became a real objective of the Government. Until then the Government had been stalling on the approval of Marandoo. It was making all sorts of excuses as to why it should not be approved. It was claiming that local Aboriginal groups had particular interests in that area and that there was a need for report after report, just to ascertain exactly what was going on.

Hon J.M. Berinson: You will remember that we passed a special Act to expedite the Marandoo project in December 1990. It was not for want of any enthusiasm for that that the delay occurred.

[Questions without notice taken.]

Hon GEORGE CASH: In comparing both documents, I have noticed that both have the same general concerns for the mining industry. The Government and the Opposition intend, as stated in their political statements, to cut red tape and ensure that the problems that have delayed approvals for projects in the past are rectified. The Leader of the House said by way of interjection that the House had passed a Bill in 1990 relating to the Marandoo iron ore body in 1990. By that interjection I suggest he was trying to absolve the Government from any blame for the delays to that mining project. The only reason that Marandoo has not become a producing mine is that this Government insisted on numerous reports relating to Aboriginal sites in the area where mining is proposed. It is interesting also that, as soon as the Government realised that the former member for Pilbara, Mrs Pam Buchanan, was about to resign, it immediately responded by wiping the need for further reports. It then gave approval for the project to proceed so that it could not be criticised in the electorate of Ashburton. I suppose that is pragmatic politics. However, if one follows those pragmatic politics to their logical conclusion, it seems that the only time the Government will get on with the job is when one of its members resigns and there is a need for the Government to be seen to be doing things in a particular electorate.

As I said earlier, both the Liberal Party document and the Government's document state a keenness to cut red tape and to lessen the delays for big mining projects. That is important if we are to provide jobs in this State. A recent publication by the Chamber of Mines and Energy in WA identifies \$2.5 billion worth of projects that have been delayed by red tape.

Some other key proposals outlined in WA Advantage include the creation of a strategic State projects unit to fast track the approvals of important projects. The Government also intends to amend the Aboriginal Heritage Act to prevent unnecessary delays to projects. That, no doubt, results from the delays to the Marandoo project. The Government also indicates a need to amend the Environmental Protection Act to streamline existing procedures. An amendment to the Mining Act will remove the power of veto of private landholders in respect of exploration and mining.

Propositions advanced in the Liberal Party's Fightback WA document include the appointment of a senior Minister to be responsible for seeing projects through to their approval. The Opposition believes there is a need for a register of Aboriginal sites to identify "clear sites". In addressing clear sites, the Fightback WA document states that the Liberal Party will restore confidence by ensuring that once an area has been found to be clear of Aboriginal sites of significance it will remain a clear site and will not be subject to further studies and challenges to development. That is an important matter which I know is applauded by the mining industry. The Liberal Party also wants to clarify the role of the Environmental Protection Authority and improve its operational role. The Liberal Party believes there is a need for a full review of legislative and administrative frameworks for mining approvals.

Hon Tom Stephens: I thought a key feature was the goods and services tax.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Again, Hon Tom Stephens misunderstands the situation. The goods and services tax is not in general referred to in the Fightback WA package. That proposal was first made by the Federal Labor Government and the current Prime Minister, Paul Keating. The Labor Party was prepared to support that concept which it held dear to its heart. Unfortunately for the Labor Party, because of the factions and divisions in that party, Mr Keating as Treasurer was not able to pursue the proposition of a goods and services tax even though he believed it was the most equitable way of raising and redistributing revenue in Australia. Dr John Hewson, whom most would agree is a learned economist with a tremendous knowledge of financial systems generally, also adopts the concept of a goods and services tax. It is important that people such as Hon Tom Stephens understand that the GST forms only one small element of a number of elements that make up the Liberal Party package known as Fightback. Far from being the key element it is but one element, and it is important to note that the Fightback program, which has the Labor Party on the run in the Eastern States and in Western Australia, contains the general concept of taxation reform in

this country. Until the Labor Party is prepared to address the overall question of tax reform in this country, we shall continue to go backwards. As much as Hon Tom Stephens might bleat, the Federal Labor Party is responsible for one million Australians being unemployed. At a State level this Government, of which Hon Tom Stephens is a member, has created a situation in the last two years alone in which unemployment has risen by 62 per cent, and more than 93 000 Western Australians are out of work. If Hon Tom Stephens is proud of that record, he should tell the people of Ashburton. Those people have now seen the light, and they know that members of Parliament such as Hon Tom Stephens have delivered nothing but unemployment and misery. The people in Ashburton will shortly be given an opportunity to make a decision based on a comparison of the strategies offered by the Government in its WA Advantage package or the Liberal Party in its Fightback WA package.

Hon Tom Stephens interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Garry Kelly): Order! Hon Tom Stephens will have an opportunity very soon to contribute to this debate and I suggest that we should now listen to Hon George Cash.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Without wishing to question your comment, Mr Deputy President, let me say that Hon Tom Stephens will never get to his feet in this place and make a realistic statement. He will slide down in his seat and continue to interject because that is all he is capable of. He is not capable of rising to his feet and critically analysing the two documents to which I have referred. He has proved that to the people of Ashburton, who are currently weighing up the merits of the two documents. Hon Tom Stephens is not held in very high esteem in Ashburton and, having heard his interjections today, I can understand why.

I return to a comparison of the two documents. A fair analysis of them indicates that they are ostensibly business friendly, and that is important to the business community. Whether or not the Government wants to admit it, the business community will create employment opportunities in Western Australia. A fair analysis of both documents indicates that on balance Fightback WA sets out a more efficient procedure inasmuch as it is intended that a senior Minister will be responsible for important job generating projects in Western Australia, whereas the Government opts for the creation of a strategic State projects unit which returns it to the bureaucracy and the red tape of which we have seen so much in the past.

Hon John Halden by way of interjection implied that the Deputy Premier, Ian Taylor, is responsible for job creation or State development in Western Australia. I acknowledge that that is his formal role and responsibility; however, Hon John Halden might care to discuss this matter with some of the mining companies in St George's Terrace.

Hon John Halden: Which I have.

Hon GEORGE CASH: He will find - and I hope he will be honest enough to admit it - that a number of large mining houses in Western Australia now refuse to deal with the Deputy Premier because they have not been able to make any progress with him. Therefore, they will deal only with the Premier. That in itself is disappointing.

Hon John Halden: I do not think that is the case.

Hon GEORGE CASH: It is not necessary for Hon John Halden to think about it; I am telling him that it is the case. It is a regrettable situation when a Minister as senior as the Deputy Premier is written off by the mining industry. Representatives of the mining industry do not believe that Mr Taylor can carry through the promises he makes and, therefore, they now rely on appointments with the Premier.

I return to a comparison of the two documents with regard to agriculture. The Fightback WA document clearly offers more direct and longer term benefits to farmers than does the Labor Party package. The main agricultural program outlined by the Liberal Party is the provision of \$600 million to be spent over 20 years to tackle the problem of land degradation in Western Australia.

Hon John Halden: That is old news.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Hon John Halden shows very clearly his ignorance on the subject of land degradation in Western Australia. Had he spent some time carrying out research, he

would know that one of the Select Committees instituted by this Legislative Council and chaired by Hon David Wordsworth considered soil salinity in Western Australia. That Select Committee made recommendations about land degradation. If Hon John Halden can find a reference in the Labor Party's document to a program on salinity or land degradation, I invite him to comment. He will not find a commitment to spend a minimum of \$600 million over a 20 year period to address that area, and most farmers in Western Australia understand how important that matter is.

In respect of infrastructure, Labor's WA Advantage lacks the detailed long term targets for capital works expenditure that are set out in the Liberal's Fightback WA document. We have set out \$19.5 billion for capital works from 1993-94 to the year 2001. We have shown a 25 per cent private sector participation by the year 2001 and real increases in spending of 10 per cent in our first term and seven per cent in our second term. Labor's commitment to capital works is not quantified in its document, but its policy can be summarised as follows: Firstly, to encourage the private sector to invest in capital works projects - and that is an admirable policy - and, secondly, to publish three year forward programs of capital works to enable the private sector to identify investment opportunities. We have no criticism of that. All we say is that the manner in which we have set out our plans in respect of infrastructure is far more acceptable to the business community than is the Government's plan.

Hon Bob Thomas: How will you fund it?

Hon GEORGE CASH: Has Hon Bob Thomas read WA Fightback?

Hon Bob Thomas: I do not have a copy.

Hon GEORGE CASH: That probably excuses the ignorance that the member shows when he refers to it. I have said that we are able to demonstrate savings of \$200 million a year by way of general cuts, from which we intend to spend \$100 million a year for job creation projects. Our policy is founded on jobs, jobs, jobs. We are very proud of that and do not make any excuse about it. Members opposite asked about payroll tax.

Hon Mark Nevill: How will you fund the loss of revenue from payroll tax and pay off the debt at the same time?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Garry Kelly): Order! Hon George Cash already has five questions to answer.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Yes, and it should not take me more than five hours, which means we should still finish by 11.00 pm, so that is not unreasonable. I am glad Hon Mark Nevill asked about payroll tax because I might have run out of time or glossed right over it. It is important that we deal with that matter now.

Hon Mark Nevill: How much income will you forgo by abolishing payroll tax - about \$500 million per year?

Hon GEORGE CASH: Recently the Government announced that it intended to increase to \$375 000 the threshold of payroll tax in Western Australia. That will alleviate the need for 230 businesses in Western Australia to pay payroll tax, and will cost the Government in the order of \$604 000. My figures are based on a 1989-90 payroll base. They are not current figures but they are as close as I can get from Treasury sources at this stage. However, when the Government talked about increasing the threshold - and it made a big deal of it - it failed to say that 3 455 of the 8 286 businesses in Western Australia that pay payroll tax are in the \$5 million and above category. Those businesses contributed \$411 742 582 in 1989-90 terms, and they will still have to pay payroll tax. In fact, all businesses above the \$375 000 threshold will have to pay. The Federal Fightback policy that we have released indicates clearly that we intend to abolish payroll tax. That will be worth about \$500 million a year to business in Western Australia.

Hon P.G. Pendal: They are committed to it.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Business is absolutely delighted that our Federal leader, Dr Hewson, has said that he will abolish payroll tax in Western Australia to the tune of \$500 million a year, which will be channelled back through business into job creation schemes. How can members of a Government which has increased unemployment by 62 per cent in the last two years sit here and say that they do not support the abolition of payroll tax? What is wrong with members opposite? The point is that, regrettably, Labor members are not in touch with

the community. They are not talking to the unemployed. They are not talking to the people in the seat of Ashburton and trying to understand what is the real pain in the community at the moment. When we talk about payroll tax we win hands down because we will abolish it and members opposite will see it increase. The abolition of payroll tax will be a major plank in our platform as we run up to the next State election because business in Western Australia has given us great applause for the abolition of that tax.

Hon John Halden: You will never be able to deliver on it.

Hon GEORGE CASH: If the Labor Government wants to say that it is prepared to abolish payroll tax, we on this side of the House will stand up and congratulate it. Do not ever talk about our not delivering.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! I remind Hon John Halden that he will have the opportunity to speak in this debate and I dare say he will be able to demolish Hon George Cash's arguments quite effectively, but in the meantime we should hear Hon George Cash in relative silence.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Mr Deputy President, I take exception to one thing. Hon John Halden will never be able to demolish these arguments because they are founded on fact. The second reason that he will not be able to do that is that he has never read the Liberal Fightback document because he does not have the time or the inclination. He believes everything he is told about what the Labor Party will do and will not do, but he never gives any credit to another party that has put forward a concrete economic strategy to try to create some jobs in Western Australia. Perhaps one day this Government will see its way clear to give some recognition to a document that will be very positive in creating development and jobs in this State. To knock, knock, knock will not help members opposite at all. People want job creation, yet what this Labor Government has done is increase unemployment by 62 per cent in the last two years alone.

Hon John Halden: You plan to tax the food they eat and the clothes they wear!

Hon GEORGE CASH: The good thing is that I am able to have unlimited time, and if it takes me until next week to explain to Hon John Halden that the Labor Party is the party that introduced the concept of a goods and services tax in Australia, and that that is now endorsed by the Liberal Party, I will say it until next week. We are saying as a party with our Federal Fightback program and with our Fightback WA program that tax reform and job creation are the essential issues and that is what people in Australia are looking for.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I advise Hon George Cash that his unlimited speech might be shorter if he directed his remarks to me because I undertake not to interject.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Mr Deputy President, I am more than happy to direct my remarks to you, and I am more than happy to pick up the inane interjections of people who clearly do not understand what the Fightback policy is all about.

Sitting suspended from 6.02 to 7.30 pm

Hon GEORGE CASH: Earlier this evening I began to compare the recently released Labor document, WA Advantage, with the Liberal Party document, Fightback WA, released by the Leader of the Opposition on 15 February 1992. In comparing the documents WA Advantage and Fightback WA, I have endeavoured to identify a number of areas of significant difference between the documents. On balance it can be said that Fightback WA is leading at this stage in the comparison stakes. It should be noted that both documents propose a feasibility study for a standard gauge railway to Bunbury. That is an important matter and an area in which both the Government and the Opposition have made a commitment. That proposal has been well received by people living in the Bunbury region. In addition, the Labor package includes a commitment to build a commuter railway between Fremantle and Mandurah at an estimated cost of \$300 million, although it is fair to say that no time frame has been proposed. The idea of a commuter railway between Fremantle and Mandurah has been raised by the Government on a number of occasions, so I guess the people of Mandurah will be scratching their heads and asking when they can expect the railway that has been promised so many times by the Government.

A general consensus on airports exists in the two documents. The Labor document proposes an upgrading of regional airports in the north west to international status; whereas the Liberal

proposals are for an international style airport at Broome and a modern airport in the Bunbury region. As to port facilities, the Labor WA Advantage document lapses into pure rhetoric. It proposes to develop the Port of Fremantle as the gateway to Australia. Many members would be aware of the land bridge concept talked about so many times by the Government. One of the regrettable features of that system is that now that the Government has electrified the metropolitan line it is impossible to move double decker-containers out of the Fremantle Port area and onto the railway line towards the Eastern States. That is a matter that can be overcome, no doubt, with additional capital expenditure.

The Labor document does not set out how the Government intends to achieve its goals to make the Fremantle Port more efficient. The document includes very little about the Fremantle Port Authority and is noncommittal on the future of Stateships, which most members would recognise is a very heavy loss maker in this area of public ownership. The Fightback WA document contains concrete proposals about the future of the Port of Fremantle. Our document recognises that in the longer term we will have the opportunity for private investors to consider the building of a container port south of the existing Port of Fremantle. It is important at this stage to recognise that a perception within the Fremantle area generally is that the Liberal Party intends to close down the existing port; therefore it is critical that the community understand that the Liberal Party is absolutely committed to the retention of the existing port. However, any such retention, or offer of support for the port, must include local business and recognise that in future private operators may see it as part of their plan to invest money in a container port south of the existing Fremantle Port area. At no stage should it be understood that the Liberal Party intends to close the existing port facilities at Fremantle. Those facilities are an integral part of the City of Fremantle and will remain as such for many years to come.

Turning to road transport, in general terms both packages agree on the need for deregulation; both packages propose the abolition of the existing commercial goods licensing system. In that regard, I congratulate the Labor Party for taking a big step towards deregulation. However, when is that to happen? That is not spelt out in the document released by the Premier.

The WA Advantage and the Fightback WA documents contain almost identical measures designed to encourage growth in small business. Through the key areas referred to, both documents encourage free enterprise bargaining between employers and employees and both propose to create a one stop shop system to help operators to comply with State rules and regulations. The WA Advantage document refers to a business licensing and information centre, while the Fightback WA package talks about a business approvals centre. It is fair to say that they are essentially the same thing.

Earlier this afternoon I took the opportunity to comment on payroll tax. I remind members that the Liberal Party's proposal is to increase the payroll tax threshold by about 10 per cent by the end of May, which would cause about 90 per cent of businesses in Western Australia to be exempt from payroll tax. Also this afternoon I indicated that the bulk of the revenue derived from payroll tax comes from companies with a payroll in excess of \$5 million. In 1989 figures the amount of revenue generated was in excess of \$411 million. It is clear that the Labor Government does not intend to make any changes in that area. I reiterate that our Fightback WA package will allow us, together with our Federal colleagues, to abolish payroll tax completely. That will mean a direct saving of more than \$500 million a year to business in Western Australia. That is \$500 million that can be channelled into job creation projects. Again, Fightback WA is all about job creation and the concept of restoring prosperity and pride to Western Australia.

I must give the Labor Government credit for taking steps towards privatisation. Members will be aware that in the past the Labor Party, at both State and Federal levels, has furiously opposed the concept of privatisation. However, it is clear from the Labor document Advantage WA that the Government is now in the business of privatisation because the document outlines the need to sell the State Government Insurance Commission. The Liberal Party concurs with that and congratulates the Government on making that decision. I am sure it was warmly endorsed in the Government's party room. The Labor Party also intends to sell up to 49 per cent of the R & I Bank Ltd. The Liberal Party's opinion differs in this area. While the Liberal Party congratulates the Government on making that decision, it considers that the whole of the R & I Bank should be sold, preferably to the community of

Western Australia. One fundamental condition would be attached to that; that is, the head office of the bank should continue to be located in Western Australia. The Liberal Party document clearly outlines that can be achieved by what is termed a golden share.

So members have no illusions about what the Fightback WA privatisation program is about, I will list institutions the Liberal Party would like to privatise. They include the R & I Bank, the State Government Insurance Office and Homeswest. The Liberal Party proposes a right to buy policy for Homeswest; that was part of its policy in the run-up to the 1989 State election and is a policy which has been endorsed in part by the Minister for Housing. I expect that in the run-up to the 1993 election this issue will generate competition between the Liberal and Labor Parties about which party will offer current Homeswest tenants the best opportunities to buy their Homeswest premises. The Liberal Party predicts a total saving of \$60 million per year from the Homeswest right to buy policy.

The Liberal Party has been concerned for some time about Stateships. Currently Stateships loses in the order of \$13 million per annum. There has been a reduction in the level of those losses in recent years, although if one examines the financial accounts of Stateships it could be argued that some creative accounting has occurred and that the losses may be significantly more than those published in the accounts. The Liberal Party will ensure that there will be no loss of service to north west ports. Shipping companies have approached the Liberal Party and are prepared to provide an equivalent but better service than Stateships. Therefore, the north west will suffer no disadvantage if Stateships were to be disposed of. The Liberal Party has strict provisions for the sale of Stateships, including the requirement to subsidise a shipping company to ensure that an equivalent or better service is provided to the north west. It appears from the discussions that the Liberal Party has held with private shipping companies to date that such a subsidy would not be needed. Efficiency at the Port of Fremantle will generate savings of \$6 million a year.

The Liberal Party also predicts that the disposal of the State Printing Division will generate a saving of \$5 million a year. The hardy annual of the Hospital Linen and Laundry Service of WA will generate savings of \$2.5 million a year. The Liberal Party's plan is to offer employees the opportunity to buy shares in the organisation in which they work. It believes that if anything is to be privatised in Western Australia there is an obligation to the employees. The Liberal Party intends to see that existing employees are given the opportunity to buy into their organisation. If a capital gain is to be made it is rightfully due to those employees who operate the business.

Hon P.G. Pental: I note that Hon Bob Thomas took great umbrage to that.

Hon GEORGE CASH: I also read Hon Bob Thomas' speech and, like Hon Phil Pental, I was disappointed in his comments. He did not seem to have much concern or thought for those employees of the Hospital Linen and Laundry Service. I know that the service operates in Hon Phillip Pental's electorate and that he would be advising those employees that the Labor Party is not keen to assist them.

Hon P.G. Pental: It is a callous attitude.

Hon Bob Thomas: You make a good dancer. You are a really good twister.

Hon GEORGE CASH: I know Hon Bob Thomas has every right to be upset when we criticise some of the things he said in his Address-in-Reply speech. However, he made the statements and he was the one who sledged the Government and complained that things had never been worse in the Albany region. Hon Reg Davies is holding up a copy of Hon Bob Thomas' speech. It is no good four or five days after his making a speech to come into this place and try to say that he did not mean the things he said. The fact is that Hon Bob Thomas sledged his own Government. He said that it had failed. It is up to Hon Bob Thomas to start convincing the Government that job creation in Western Australia is what the game is all about.

The Liberal Party also estimates that contracting out Government services will save in the order of \$50 million a year. One of the significant points raised in Fightback WA - it is certainly not mentioned in the Government document, so there is no comparison - is the elimination of State debt by the year 2010. State debt at the moment is in the order of \$10 billion a year and is increasing at a rate of \$1 billion a year. The reason for that massive increase is in the way this Government has managed its finances over recent years. Rather

than generating taxes through job creation schemes or through the production of business in Western Australia, the Government has relied on borrowing funds. As a result there has been a massive increase in State debt. The Liberal Party intends to address the problem of State debt. It does not want to pass to future generations debts which have been accumulated by previous Governments. The Liberal Fightback WA plan sets out clearly how that debt will be reduced. Indeed, it will be eliminated by 2010. Some people in the community would say that is a long time, it does not interest them and they are interested only in what is happening today. The need exists for some significant changes to Western Australia's economic policy. It is too late to go to the television set and simply fine tune it; we must change the channel and make a significant change - that is what the Liberal Party's commitment to the elimination of State debt is all about. I hope the Government will recognise the significance of the problem of State debt. I hope that in its final 12 months in office the Government will do what it has done with a number of Liberal Party policies in the past; that is, make a decision to look at its proposal regarding the elimination of State debt. After all, it is something that is fundamental to the economic survival of Western Australia in the years ahead.

I would be very happy to provide Government members with a copy of the Fightback WA statement.

Hon Bob Thomas: I would like a copy

Hon GEORGE CASH: I will obtain a copy with pictures for Hon Bob Thomas so that he can understand it. I will go through it with him in case he has any misconceptions about it.

Several members interjected.

Hon GEORGE CASH: I think Hon Bob Thomas is genuine in his interest.

If Government members analyse the Government's WA Advantage document and the Liberal Party's Fightback WA document they will reach the conclusion that the propositions advanced in the Liberal document are, without question, more significant than those offered by the Government.

Hon Sam Piantadosi: Like your Federal counterparts' document?

Hon GEORGE CASH: I am glad Hon Sam Piantadosi raised that point because members will be aware -

Hon Sam Piantadosi: Dr Hewson is running scared.

Hon GEORGE CASH: - that when Dr Hewson launched the Federal Opposition's Fightback package it was well and truly accepted throughout the nation. That is the reason the Liberal Party in Western Australia is proud to be associated with it. More than that, Fightback WA ties in closely with the Liberal's national package. On the other hand, as Hon Sam Piantadosi knows when Mr Keating released his economic package a few weeks ago -

Hon Sam Piantadosi: He certainly made an impact

Hon GEORGE CASH: He made such an impact that the next day he started criticising and condemning the Royal family to get his economic package off the front page of the Press; he tried to divert attention from it. That shows how much faith he had in his package! He was the person who did not want it reported around Australia. I am more than happy to accept further interjections from Hon Sam Piantadosi even though members on his side are telling him not to inject.

Hon Sam Piantadosi: Far from it. Again, you have not got your facts right. My colleague was pointing out to me another issue to take up with you.

Hon GEORGE CASH: What is the issue?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Sam Piantadosi: When I get to my feet I will tell you all about it.

Hon GEORGE CASH: When Hon Piantadosi gets to his feet it will be Christmas time and he will be wishing everyone a happy Christmas! Like Hon Tom Stephens and some of his other colleagues he has a specialty of sliding down under his seat and doing nothing but interjecting.

Hon P.G. Pental: He made a speech in 1982.

Hon Sam Piantadosi: I will tell Hon Phil Pental a little bit about the environment.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon GEORGE CASH: I will welcome Hon Sam Piantadosi's making a contribution to the Address-in-Reply debate, because I, as a member who shares with him the representation of the same region, know he is held in high esteem by his electorate. I work very closely with him in the electorate -

Hon Sam Piantadosi: I am prepared to teach you.

Hon GEORGE CASH: - and he has a high level of competence and ability. However, for him to come into this place and make snide comments about the Federal Opposition's Fightback package, which he knows has been well accepted in Australia, is stretching his credibility a little too far.

A fair comparison between the two policies clearly indicates that the Liberal policy is superior. I hope Government members take the opportunity to read our package and, more than that, I hope the Government is prepared to put into effect some of the significant proposals contained in it. I believe that Fightback WA is the key to restoring prosperity to and pride in Western Australia.

HON CHERYL DAVENPORT (South Metropolitan) [7.56 pm]: I did not think Hon George Cash would ever finish. The fact that he was waiting for members on this side of the House to interject on him makes me wonder why he did not have more material prepared.

I support the motion moved last Thursday by my colleague Hon Bob Thomas, and I congratulate him on his contribution to the opening of Parliament. I also extend my thanks to the Governor for his comprehensive Address on the Government's program for 1992.

I express my best wishes to Hon Jim Brown on his retirement. I hope his retirement is long, happy, healthy and enjoyable. He was a member of Parliament for many years and has been a member of the Labor Party for 40 years. During his many years of membership of the party he made many friends, one of whom was my late father. Jim always had time for new members and he was only too willing to share his knowledge and expertise with them to make their task as a member of Parliament easier. As Hon John Caldwell mentioned earlier, Jim helped members not only on this side of the House, but also on the other side of the House. I thank him for his advice and the help he has given me over the 18 years I have known him and I hope his life in retirement is all he wants it to be.

Earlier last year I spoke in this House about a project Hon Judyth Watson and I were involved in. We organised a shipment of used school books to Zimbabwe for the use of primary and secondary school students. There were actually 40 tonnes of books collected throughout Western Australia. They came from schoolchildren in both the country and metropolitan areas and were transported to a central point in Perth. The books were stored and collected through the efforts of Rotary International and were transported, free of charge, by Qantas Airways Ltd to Zimbabwe last May. The Australian Embassy in Harare, through the great service of the third secretary, Ms Julie Chater, sorted the books and organised in conjunction with the Minister for Education, Fay Chong, and the Deputy Minister for Transport, Amina Hughes, to make sure they were delivered to rural areas in Zimbabwe. I am pleased to inform members that when the former Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, was in Zimbabwe last October for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting he presented the first 2 000 books to a school in Harare which is attended by 1 950 students. Prior to last October the school had only 13 library books. Although that event was covered by the Australian media it received coverage only in the country edition of *The West Australian*. Nevertheless, it shows the need for those sorts of resources and it is a public service which we as a developed country can provide to a developing nation. I also had the pleasure last week of meeting the executive officer, Ms Tendao Bare, of the Ministry of International and Regional Cooperation which works out of the office of the President and Cabinet in Zimbabwe. The officer indicated to Dr Watson and me the great service done for the school children of Zimbabwe through this project and asked that we keep sending books as they would be most grateful to receive them.

Had the Parliament not adjourned in early December last year I would have spoken about an important event organised by the board of management of the Harold Hawthorne Senior Citizen's Centre in Carlisle of which I am a member. During the previous 12 months we had been involved in upgrading the centre to the tune of over \$1 million. This was done in conjunction with the Perth City Council, the largest contributor of funds to that development. I am pleased and proud to say that the centre has expanded its membership greatly as a result of the tremendous new service and facilities it is providing. Perth City Council provided nearly \$1 million in the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92. I pay tribute to the dedication of three councillors for that ward - Andrew Murfin, Chairman of the Board of Management of the Centre, and Councillors Mick Lee and Ida Smithwick who, along with other members of the management committee and members of the centre, worked hard on this project. They are a dedicated group of people who showed much patience and perseverance during the disruptions to the centre which occurred while construction was under way. It was a tremendous team effort from everyone and an example of how the three tiers of government can work harmoniously to deliver an upgraded quality of life to the senior population in that area. This is a significant growth area for senior citizens aged 55 years and over. I acknowledge the support and assistance of my colleagues the Federal member for Swan, Kim Beazley, and the member for Victoria Park, Geoff Gallop, in making this worthwhile project come to fruition. In addition to the new centre a worthwhile community care service and frail aged day care centre are run from the centre. I convene a subcommittee that manages both of those services and am pleased to tell members that we have just undergone a rigorous evaluation process which I am confident will see our funding upgraded in the forthcoming Budget. I thank the coordinators of both those projects, Iris Riches and Pam Pope, and their loyal staff for the excellent service they deliver to the local community. I know that service is appreciated by both the management committee and the communities of Victoria Park and Carlisle.

A body which is topical at the moment and which has come under fire once again in recent weeks is the Women's Information and Referral Exchange. WIRE has been attacked savagely by the media and others for what has been perceived as unethical links with the Western Women organisation. I do not attempt in any way to minimise my concern for the people who lost their savings in the collapse of the Western Women group. However, I will talk of the positive services that WIRE has delivered and continues to deliver to women in Western Australia who are in need of support in general terms and when they are in crisis. WIRE has played a very real role in Western Australia since it was opened by my Government in 1984. I will deal with its historical formation first and then talk about what it was like for women needing information and advice in Perth before WIRE existed.

I turn, first, to the history of the Women's Information and Referral Exchange. To do this I draw on my own knowledge and on knowledge gleaned from discussions with former coordinators of that organisation. WIRE is a specialised information service for women and forms a part of the Office of Women's Interests, which reports to the Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet. WIRE is based on the Women's Information Switchboard in Adelaide.

Hon J.N. Caldwell interjected.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: That may be Hon John Caldwell's impression, but not mine, and I have worked in the field for a long time. I am happy to sing WIRE's praises. The Women's Information Switchboard in Adelaide is a service with nine years' successful operation. WIRE was set up in 1984 following advice from the Women's Advisory Council to the Premier of the day, Brian Burke, in response to a stated community need. WIRE works alongside existing information services to provide information to women on a wide range of Government and non-Government services, resources and agencies. It provides information on education courses, practitioner groups and activities within the community that are of benefit to women. WIRE's policy and information sharing are based on the needs of women at home and in the work force, of any age, from any location, and its information is reliable, up to date, accurate, and detailed.

In recognition of the different roles of men and women in society and of the way women are disadvantaged, WIRE works to encourage self-determination in women through information sharing. It also acts as an advocate to women both by its feedback to Government on women's needs and in individual instances by providing a supportive person to accompany women through unfamiliar or intimidating processes such as court appearances and attending

Government departments or the police. The services are available by way of telephone or in person, with a special 008 telephone number provided for country callers. Although the service is designed for women users many men have been satisfied consumers of its services.

The staff at WIRE consists of a program manager, a librarian, five information officers, and a growing number of volunteer workers. Last year I had the honour of presenting graduate certificates on behalf of the Premier to another 12 volunteers from the most recent WIRE course. More than 160 women have graduated from such courses as volunteers since its inception. During WIRE's first year of operation a librarian was seconded from Infolink, the Library Board's information service, to establish a simple but remarkably efficient resource and information system. Staff have been selected carefully and have undergone extensive training programs which cover functions and a range of both Government and community services as well as development of listening and communication exchange skills. A migrant women's liaison officer, an Aboriginal women's liaison officer and a disabled women's liaison officer are on its staff. As I said previously, women volunteers have been used extensively at WIRE. Their involvement is on a mutual benefit basis. Volunteers undergo a training program of four hours each week for 14 weeks before becoming involved in the day to day work of WIRE. They are expected to make a commitment to WIRE of a minimum of four hours per week for at least one year. In return WIRE undertakes to involve volunteers in projects and activities in order to maximise learning of skills and increase confidence, and to provide evaluation of individual work and, if requested, references to prospective employers. There is a conscious effort to give volunteer workers responsibility and involvement.

During its first two years WIRE concentrated on gathering the best possible database to publicise the service. Staff visited dozens of agencies, spoke to hundreds of women in training courses and community groups, and made several fruitful trips to country towns to form contacts. Staff have also attended significant conferences such as the Women's Health in a Changing Society conference, the Family Court Forum on Access, the national Australian Council for Rehabilitation of Disabled conference and international child sexual abuse conferences. Displays were set up in many shopping centres and at the Women's World Expo, International Women's Day celebrations, and country shows and forums.

From October 1984 a monthly calendar of events called "What's On for Women" has been produced by WIRE from information submitted from throughout the community. Originally it was sent to 200 women's groups; now it has a circulation of over 2 000 and is provided to individuals free of charge on request. Other publications produced include a directory of services for Western Australian women, pamphlets, information for mothers, wall planners and many other types of information documents. Funded groups which have used the office facilities on the mezzanine floor in the same building as WIRE include the Womens Refuge Group, the Breast Cancer Support Service, the Learning Centre Link, Women's Refuge Multicultural Services, the Womens Electoral Lobby, the Mentor Scheme For Women, and the Overuse Injury (RSI) Association of Western Australia, which is the repetitive strain injury support group. Through the Director of the Office of Women's Interests, WIRE has monthly contact with the Premier of Western Australia, who is also the Minister for Women's Interests.

I will tell members what it used to be like before WIRE became the service that it is now. During the last years of the previous conservative Government Western Australian women were agitating vocally for services such as the Women's Advisory Council and WIRE. The Liberal Party did not want to know such things, and I recall anecdotal evidence at the time about the former Liberal Premier, Sir Charles Court, who is purported to have said things like this: "We do not need a Minister for Women's Interests. I just consult my wife and she keeps me informed about women's issues." I suggest that is a pretty patronising attitude towards 52 per cent of Western Australians.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: No, it showed respect for his wife.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: During that time I was an active member of the Labor Women's Organisation and was engaged in helping to develop policies aimed at raising the status of women in Western Australia. I was also working then with Western Australian Senator Pat Giles, as was my friend and colleague Janet Pine, who went on to become an inaugural member of the Women's Advisory Council and was subsequently president of that

body as well. Members might not be aware that before Pat Giles went to the Senate she was one of the inaugural conveners of the Women's Electoral Lobby in Western Australia in 1973. Because of her long history and respected reputation in the women's movement in this State as well as nationally it was quite natural that, following her election to the Senate in 1980, women constituents would seek her assistance with many of their own problems as well as the general inadequacy of services available to women in this State. Pat Giles, Janet Pine and I spent 60 to 70 per cent of our working day in the years prior to the election of Labor Governments at both State and Federal levels assisting women to equitably access services that they and their children in many cases needed desperately.

Hon Reg Davies: I do not mean to be rude, but do you have any men in your electorate?

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: Yes, I do, but I am speaking on an issue about which the member will have an opportunity to speak later in the Address-in-Reply debate if he so chooses.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: He would not have a go at women, would he?

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: Yes he would, he is one of the culprits.

I will give one example of the many cases we saw in those days. This one has stuck in my mind over the years. It related to an Aboriginal woman who had had both of her children taken from her by the Department for Community Services because she had significant personal problems. By the time she came to see us, in about 1981, she had managed to rehabilitate herself and in our view was in a fit state to have her children returned to her. Her big problem was that Homeswest would not see its way clear to giving her accommodation because she did not have her children living with her. It became a catch 22 situation: She had managed to rehabilitate herself but because her children were not living with her she could not get access to Homeswest accommodation. That is just one of the problems about which women used to consult our office.

Hon P.G. Pental: So how was it resolved?

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: I do not know how it was resolved; I just hope that the change of policies by the Department for Community Services and Homeswest when we came to Government meant that she could have her children returned to her and bring them up in a way I think she was capable of doing. It was a very sad situation. It occurred a long time ago but it sticks in my mind as something that was inadequate because we did not have the services to help that woman take her children back.

Our office also worked closely with women's groups and organisations in trying to make conservative Governments recognise that 52 per cent of the population of this State had a contribution to make, a right to be heard, and a right to access information in a supportive environment. This is what social justice means to me. It means a fair go, and in this context it is about empowering women to self-determine their lives. Ultimately, if an agency like WIRE run by the Government as a community service works well, as WIRE has over many years, the burden on the State ceases because women have been made aware of what is possible and how they may gain access to those services. I believe WIRE is one of the most important services established by the Labor Government since we came to office.

One look at WIRE's operational statistics in 1990, prior to the Western Women group incident, demonstrates its effectiveness. For the record I will quote some facts and figures. This is an overview of WIRE's statistics in 1990. The total number of calls to WIRE in 1990, by women either telephoning or calling in person, was 29 431. A sample of the nature of the inquiries is as follows, and I will quote the subject first and then the number of inquiries.

Hon Reg Davies interjected.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: The member will have his turn. I do not appreciate this being trivialised. I feel very strongly about it and I intend to have my say. On the subject of accommodation there were 2 300 inquiries; on health, 2 070; on legal issues, 8 500; on education, 800; on employment, 670; on immigration and ethnic affairs, 200; on violence, 900; and on community organisation and development, 1 000. I note that domestic violence is related to many of the above categories. Inquiries are made in the first instance regarding accommodation, health and legal issues, for example, as a result of domestic violence.

Hon Peter Foss interjected.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: I have not, and I knew the member would ask that question. They are not there, and I am sorry they are not; but I am trying to be positive.

All of that was achieved on a budget allocation of \$339 000. I was quite dismayed during last year's Estimates Committee B deliberations when Hon Peter Foss expressed concern that it might not have been ethical for the Women's Advisory Council to write to members of Parliament in support of WIRE. I said then, and I say again, that as the Women's Advisory Council had been the original tenderer of advice to then Premier Burke on the need for WIRE to be established it seemed perfectly normal and ethical for the Women's Advisory Council to express to members of Parliament its concerns at media reports suggesting a possible threat to WIRE's existence.

Hon Peter Foss: I referred to the use of Government money to solicit a particular political view with members of Parliament. I have no objection to these people having personal views; however, I do not like Government money being used to promote a single view.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: I am sorry if I misunderstood the member, but these people had a legitimate role to play.

Hon Peter Foss: The individuals may, but I object to Government funds being used to push a political view.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: It is not necessarily a political view when it is a service delivered to women.

Hon Peter Foss: In the context at the time it was.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: I do not know about that, but we will agree to disagree.

The women comprising the advisory council are drawn from all parts of the State and have considerable life and career experience from which to advise the Government. Their message was a warning to members of Parliament because these people know the bitter blow that would be delivered to women if WIRE no longer provided its valuable services.

Hon P.G. Pendal: Do you know that the Opposition has stated that it supports WIRE? We have no difficulty with it.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: Yes. I am conscious of the pressure WIRE and its employees, both past and present, have experienced over the past 15 months because WIRE has been linked to an unscrupulous woman, Robin Greenburg, who it appears defrauded her own company. This association now appears to pose a threat to WIRE's remaining a Government-funded community service.

Hon Peter Foss: That is not our suggestion.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: I know that. I note, and take very seriously, the article in last Saturday's *The West Australian* which refers to a special review committee which reported to the Premier via Dr Watson. I have not read the report so I cannot comment on its content. However, I would be very concerned if WIRE were to become a non-Government organisation. Unfortunately the service delivery agencies in the non-Government sector, which do a wonderful job, are seldom adequately resourced. This creates many problems for service delivery within the community. Before and since becoming a member of Parliament, I worked on management committees of a number of service provision agencies, and from bitter experience I know that Governments, Federal, State and local, expect a Rolls Royce service to be provided on a shoestring budget.

Funding is not the only factor; we must also consider the accountability of the Budget allocation. It is very rare for non-Government agencies to receive funding for bookkeeping services, and it is generally accepted that the community will provide such expertise. The agencies with which I have been involved have done reasonably well in this regard, but it is a concern that bodies administering budgets of a quarter or half a million dollars have to provide voluntary bookkeeping services very often without remuneration or community recognition. If a group cannot find a retired or voluntary person with accounting experience, it is under pressure to deliver the service.

The Department for Community Services manual for voluntary treasurers was released last

year, and I am sure this was done with the best of intentions; however, this booklet is on A4 paper and is half an inch thick. As members would be aware, many of the non-Government service providers operate in financially disadvantaged communities. From my experience, when prospective treasurers look at the department manual they refuse the job point blank. I would respectfully suggest a demystification of the guidelines for community service delivery would make community members more enthusiastic about working to solve community problems.

Another concern I have regarding a service like WIRE becoming a non-Government service is the potential conflict between justification and evaluation of the service provided so that ongoing funding is provided from Budget to Budget. I am sure members are aware that many good community workers are lost to this area because of the pressures placed on them to justify their funding each year. A submission must be written prior to the budget process, and this takes people away from the provision of services - a catch 22 situation.

The struggles in which many women participated in the late 1970s and early 1980s led to the formation of WIRE. This was based on a South Australian model - as I indicated earlier - known as the Women's Information Switchboard, which has not become a non-Government organisation. Therefore, I see no reason for WIRE to leave the Government sector. A Labor Government initiated the establishment of WIRE, and I know that members of Parliament, from both the Government and the Opposition, as well as non-Government and Government service providers have sought expert advice from WIRE over the years. I shall do all I can to persuade the Premier, and the Minister assisting to maintain WIRE as a Government agency. It has a proud record and it has my full support.

In raising another issue I suppose I will be hooted at again! I raise the issue of Australia as a republic.

Hon Reg Davies: Boo!

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: I have done a lot of research on this matter.

Hon P.G. Pental: What are you trying to divert attention from?

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: I have had the fire directed at me once this evening, but members can do it again.

I recall that in April of last year there was a meeting of a constitutional conference in Sydney, which I believe Hon Peter Foss attended, where a foundation was formed to be chaired by Sir Ninian Stephen, a former Governor General. This foundation was to pursue a public process of education, review and development of the Constitution. The foundation was to work in association with the Centre for Comparative Constitutional Studies and complement the series of Premiers' Conferences. Sir Ninian indicated that the conference had released a statement outlining 12 key areas of discussion for the next decade. These included the future role of the head of State - the Governor General - the guaranteeing of basic rights for all Australians, which could stand up to the midnight knock test if a public official came banging at the door; the possibility of a four year maximum term for the House of Representatives; accountability for Government taxing and spending; alternative ways to initiate referendums; and judicial independence and the guarantee of trial by jury for serious criminal charges. Strong support was indicated for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders under the Constitution. However, this conference came to no conclusion on any process required to complete Australia's transition to a republic.

In June of last year I had the honour of representing the State ALP at the ALP's national conference in Hobart. At the conference Senator Chris Schacht from South Australia moved a motion which was passed unanimously and which stated -

This conference calls upon the government to embark on a public education campaign, culminating in a referendum which would effect reform of the Australian Constitution and other political institutions to enable Australia to become an independent Republic by January 1, 2001.

Hon Reg Davies: Who were the Western Australian representatives at that conference?

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: There were about 12 representatives.

Hon Peter Foss interjected.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: I will get to that; we are moving that way. Anyway, on 5 July the Australian Republican Movement was launched. This organisation contains many prominent Australians, including Thomas Keneally, Malcolm Turnbull, Neville Wran, Geraldine Doogue, Ian Chappell and Jenny Kee, to name just a few.

Hon Peter Foss: It makes you want to stay out of it!

Hon Reg Davies interjected.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: They are prominent Australians; Mr Davies should read more.

My first real consciousness of wanting an Australian republic occurred on 11 November 1975 on the sacking of the Whitlam Government. I have reason to remember that day because I was an employee of the Australian Labor Party. On that day as a member of staff of the party's head office in Curtin House, Beaufort Street, I remember the fear of members of the public who contacted our office. The telephone did not stop ringing, and bearing in mind that Western Australia was two hours behind Canberra time, that event occurred roughly at the time we arrived at work. The fear of the public at large at hearing that the Prime Minister had been sacked by the Governor General demonstrated to me that it was time we severed our links with Britain and became a nation in our own right. That day is imprinted on my mind. I will read some excerpts from a book entitled *Republican Australia* written by Geoffrey Dutton. The first quote is taken from a chapter entitled "Legal and Constitutional Implications" and it states -

That situation changed abruptly on 11 November 1975. The dismissal of the government, the accompanying dissolution of both Houses of Parliament and the manner in which these actions were performed meant that the titular Head of State had suddenly acted in a fashion in which no Governor-General of Australia had ever been intended or expected to act. He had asserted very considerable powers which, whatever the theory of the thing, no one had in practice believed him to possess. The event transformed the position of Head of State in this country. From being a cultural adornment it became an arm of government. In a matter of hours a centre of power appeared where none had been before. It was a revolution in our institutional structure. It leaves in its wake the questions whether we wish to accept the changed situation for the future or not, and, if not, what we should like to see in its place.

In that same chapter the author states that for Australia to change to a republican Constitution would not in itself be a break with the past but a recognition of realities. Whether we like it or not it seems that inevitably we have been moving towards becoming a republic for some considerable time. Constitutional changes determined that legal appeals to the Privy Council be abolished, firstly by a non-Labor Government in 1968 in all matters of federal jurisdiction and secondly in 1975 by a Labor Government in doing away with High Court appeals.

Australians now accept that they have the right to serve the country as Governors General. When Sir Isaac Isaacs was the first Australian to be appointed to the office of Governor General 55 years ago, angry debates occurred in opposition to his appointment. It was not until 1965 when Sir Robert Menzies' Government appointed Lord Casey to the position did controversy about Australian appointees cease. It is now an accepted convention. The conferring of Imperial British honours in Australia is a thing of the past. Although it was Labor Governments at national and State levels which ceased this practice in favour of an Australian honours system it is significant that the Greiner Liberal Government in New South Wales has accepted the Australian honours system as appropriate recognition for those people serving with distinction in the Australian community. However, despite this inevitable movement away from Britain, according to a former Governor General, Sir Zelman Cowan, there is no specific legislative authority under which any Australian authority could enact a law converting Australia to a republic. That means the mechanism in the Constitution to be invoked to make that change would be the referendum clause in section 128. All members would know that it is very difficult for referenda in this country to be won. However, should that process be invoked and should a referendum pass, it is ironic that for Australia to become a republic it would require the Queen's representative, the Governor General, to play the final role in completing the process to remove the Crown, Royal and Vice Regal authority from the Constitution. In 1977 Sir Zelman Cowan stated -

My own view is that section 128 should be given a broad interpretation and should provide the appropriate instrument for achieving a republican status for Australia.

The Australian electorate has shown little enthusiasm for constitutional alteration of any sort and measures which touch the emotions, as would any proposal to establish a republic, would encounter formidable difficulties.

None of us would deny that would be the case.

Hon Garry Kelly: It is inevitable.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: Indeed, it is. I believe that severing ties with the founding fathers is much more palatable in 1992 than it was in 1977. There are very real advantages in Australia's becoming a republic in the twenty-first century, the very least being the ability of Australia to project an independent identity in the region of the world where our future lies; that is, the Asia Pacific basin. The balance of informed opinion is coming gradually to accept the historical, geographic, demographic and legal realities now confronting Australia. Demographically Australia is no longer predominantly made up of citizens who even residually identify with Britain. Australian citizens from countries all over the world find it incongruous that they are required to swear allegiance to a foreign monarch and a flag bearing the Union Jack. I am sure members of Parliament will have been confronted at citizenship ceremonies with questions about that. Younger Australians' allegiance is naturally to this country and not to a monarchy on the other side of the world. Moving towards a republic is part of the process of Australia identifying its own character, and having confidence in its place in the world. Part of that confidence should be exhibited in this country's having as its head of State an Australian with the sense of the uniqueness of the Australian culture but with a sense of our heritage and an acknowledgment of the important role Britain has played in our heritage.

Over the next nine years Australians will need to resolve many questions in their own minds if we are to become a republic by the year 2001. Questions such as: Should we have a president and, if so, should he or she be elected or appointed? Should a presidential election be by all eligible voters or by the Commonwealth Parliament in joint session or the Commonwealth and State Parliaments, by postal vote or by some other means? Would a republic of Australia require a new flag? I caught the tail end of Paul Keating's St Patrick's Day speech when he indicated that in time it was something that Australians would have to address.

Hon P.G. Pendar: He has reversed his views on the flag in three weeks. I do not blame him, because he got a fair bit of flak.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: I do not know about that. He is Irish, Mr Pendar.

Hon P.G. Pendar: Hon Cheryl Davenport cannot blame the Irish for Mr Keating; that is not fair. I will be sending a copy of your speech to the Irish Club. Its members will not like that at all.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: If Australia became a republic, should it remain part of the Commonwealth? Would the Governor General and State Governors become redundant? Whose portrait, if any, would be put on coins, banknotes and stamps? How would Australian citizens swear allegiance to Australia? What amendments would be necessary to Australia's existing Constitution to achieve republican status by the year 2001? Would we require a completely new Constitution? As I said earlier, my support for a republican Australia commenced seriously on 11 November 1975 on the dismissal of the Whitlam Government. For me, the position was made very clear in an editorial in *The Australian* newspaper on 26 June 1991 under the heading "Republic: most natural thing in the world" which states -

In committing to push the country towards declaring a republic on January 1, 2001, the Labor Party is pointing Australians down a path they have always been destined to take. Labor has simply set a timetable for the inevitable.

Hon Peter Foss: What is a republic?

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: I will not be sidetracked by Hon Peter Foss. He should look it up in the dictionary.

Hon Peter Foss: What is a republic? That is an important question.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: May I finish my speech and then Hon Peter Foss may say his bit. The editorial continues -

It is this apathetic attitude pro-republican forces will find most difficult to overcome if they wish to win the referendum needed to approve Australia's change of status. The best conservative argument against change - "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" - certainly applies to the constitutional monarchy that has operated so effectively here. Whatever we may think of having the Queen of Australia as our Head of State, few could deny our system of government works.

The case for change requires vision for the future and appreciation of the past. Britain is moving closer to Europe and seems likely one day to be part of a Federation of Europe. Australia is increasingly finding its place as a strong, independent Pacific rim nation. While we can never deny the historic debt we owe Britain, it would be odd indeed if we had as our Head of State someone whose sovereign rule is qualified by her nation's membership of a union of European States.

It was with delight that I heard media reports recently outlining Prime Minister Keating's move to focus attention on Australia as a republic. Despite the bleatings from Opposition members that the Prime Minister was seeking to focus attention away from the recession, I believe that his expression of his views to the Queen during her recent visit to Australia was a perfectly reasonable way to flag what an increasing number of Australians want to occur; that is, that Australia should become a republic, preferably in 2001. Obviously, Paul Keating knows that it will not happen tomorrow, but if we, the country's decision makers, cannot debate it rationally and responsibly, we abrogate our responsibilities to the Australian community as members of Parliament. I note that former Liberal Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, joined Prime Minister Keating in acknowledging that our policy priorities as a nation should no longer favour Britain but should now lie in Asia. It is interesting that Malcolm Fraser was also moved to acknowledge that Mr Keating's remarks to the Queen during her recent visit had been "totally legitimate" and that some of the British media and community reactions had been "hysterical and arrant nonsense". One could cynically wonder whether there was any news to report in Britain given the prominence of "a little Australian honesty" by the Prime Minister and how it managed to provoke the British Press.

Hon Sam Piantadosi: The tabloid Press.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: Yes.

Hon Reg Davies: You don't mind quoting Malcolm Fraser when it suits you.

Hon CHERYL DAVENPORT: No, it was a pleasure to do it.

I was also interested to read an article by Greg Sheridan, the foreign editor of *The Weekend Australian*, of 14-15 March under the heading "Our inevitable republic". He says that, although the reaction of the British tabloids was a normal mixture of "salivating self-righteousness and ignorant bombast", the reaction of the quality British Press was cool and detached. He said -

The Sunday Times of March 1 editorialised: "As for the Queen, if they want a republic, so be it. Britain has no vested interest in perpetuating a monarchy that is no longer wanted Down Under. There is no reason for any Australian leader to suppose the United Kingdom wishes to hobble Australia's progress or place in the world through latter-day imperialism. Just the reverse is the case."

Mostly there was an expression of indifference to Australia's constitutional arrangements. Basically, Britain couldn't care less.

This is confirmed in Britain's enthusiastic entry this year into the single European market. When Britain joined the European Community in 1973 she signalled that her foreign policy was about to become overtly regionalist. This trend is now accelerating. Britain awards financial, tariff, immigration and consultative benefits to her geographical neighbours which she no longer bothers to give to members of the old Commonwealth Club, such as Australia.

The article continues -

Year by year, as Britain integrates ever more fully into Europe, the monarchy

becomes less and less relevant. The challenge for the serious remaining monarchists is impossible; it is to put new life into the monarchy as an Australian institution.

Or to face the inevitable, the coming republic.

I for one would welcome it. I hope that the status quo conservatism in Australia can be conquered sufficiently in the next nine years so that, in celebrating 100 years of Federation in 2001, we can also celebrate a free, independent, republican Australia. I support the motion.

HON W.N. STRETCH (South West) [8.47 pm]: I also congratulate His Excellency the Governor, Sir Francis Burt, for graciously opening this session of Parliament and thank him for the great contribution that he and Lady Burt have made in their various visits to different centres in Western Australia and particularly to my electorate. I assure His Excellency and Lady Burt that they are very well received in all of the centres they visit and it is always a pleasure for me to be associated with them in the usual low key way that is appropriate for a member of Parliament during the visits they make to my electorate.

I too listened with great interest to His Excellency's Address when he outlined the Government's program. I was surprised at some of the priorities but those are the priorities set by the Government as is its right. However, they mean more of the same bad news for most of Western Australia. I was rather horrified also when I heard Hon Bob Thomas' comments at the end of his speech. I do not think he added anything to the opening ceremony and I believe he misled the people of Western Australia on the prospects that they have under a Labor Government. He also misrepresented the alternative policies of the State and Federal Oppositions.

It has been very distressing for me to move around my electorate in the last year and to listen to a litany of downgraded Government services, infrastructure and levels of assistance to people who need them very badly. The move to cut costs and to save money, which really means that we must make up for the enormous losses that the Government has incurred over the previous eight years, has led to cuts in very serious areas of service and, quite frankly, I understand why the Government has had to make them. However, I condemn the Government because it has been forced to take the steps it has. For example, regionalisation of traffic control in the country simply means fewer policemen in the bush but maybe more patrolmen in regional centres. However, in general terms, fewer services and less protection is being provided.

I received a note from a constituent in Boyup Brook who said that petty theft from properties was on the increase in areas close to country towns. He said that that was because there was less police presence in the towns. It is an unfortunate fact of life that the active presence of police is needed to reinforce the Rural Watch people; we all know that the best way to improve our driving on the road is when a police vehicle is either behind us or coming towards us. Ogden Nash put it much better than I have, but I have quoted from him before.

Hon Garry Kelly: Are you requesting?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: I do not have to; the words are famous. I congratulate Hon Garry Kelly on his appointment as Chairman of Committees and I hope that in future he will lead by example and not interject on my speeches as much as he has in the past.

Hon Garry Kelly: Is that a backhanded compliment?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: It is a wholehearted compliment and I am sure that Hon Garry Kelly will act with great impartiality from the Chair and that, as he takes on this mantle of high office, he will cease his disorderly interjections.

On the question of police station downgrading, I hope the Minister for Police can assure me that regionalisation of traffic patrols will not mean fewer police officers at country police stations. However, I fear it means exactly that. Many small country stations are staffed by only a traffic patrolman and a general duties officer. In small police stations there is generally an interchange of duties and each officer helps the other. Reducing the number of staff at small stations leads to inefficiency because it is not possible to make best use of the patrol cars. I understand the rationale of regionalisation but I believe it will lead to serious difficulties in one or two man stations. I urge the Minister and his department to consider that matter very seriously.

A case in point is the juvenile recidivist centre proposed for Nannup. It is quite true that

communities do not want recidivist centres in their localities, but the centre proposed for Nannup, the various machinations by which land was purchased and the operations in that area have led to great distress. The shire council was assured that it would be contacted and kept informed at all stages. I regret to say it was not so consulted. The Nannup police station is of the type to which I have just referred. One officer could not cope with his usual duties and also deal with the escapes which inevitably happen from recidivist centres. There have been six escapees, I believe, in the short time during which the centre has been mooted and getting under way. It places an additional burden on the police in those areas. It is not fair and the whole situation must be considered in the general context of police protection. The Shire of Nannup has written to the Government and has not received satisfactory replies. It was pointed out that one of the escapees took off with vehicles from areas close to the centre. Nannup is a small, fairly isolated community with a lot of absentee land owners. There is always scope for petty theft for anyone dedicated enough to try. Also, Nannup is not suitable geographically for a recidivist centre. Many recidivist juveniles are of Aboriginal extraction and that makes the Government's decision to establish the centre in Nannup even more curious. Members will be aware that the lower south west area is not particularly attractive to Aboriginal people in winter months. In the past they used it for their summer migration and left in the winter and hence the Bibbulmun track leading to the area which was used a great deal by the Aboriginal people. Much of the area is under water for six months of the year and, therefore, one can understand why they kept away from the area in winter months. Only this Government would establish an all weather camp in such an area in which there is no tribal background or connection to help these young people to rehabilitate themselves. People in the community and the shire council are unhappy about the situation. The police are too loyal to voice their concern about their ability to cope with the load placed on them. I urge the Government to look hard at what it is doing and, whatever it does, to take into account the local community, and to let the shire council know what it is doing and why. The Government should give assurances that it will supply sufficient funds to ensure that the centre operates efficiently, effectively and, above all, safely.

The south west has recently been rocked not only by the Beenup powerline dispute, and transport of mineral sands, but also by the activities of the Australian Heritage Commission. The sand mining industry on the south coast is here to stay for some considerable time. There are large deposits of good quality ores in the region and the challenge to the Government and the community was to work out a satisfactory way to blend in the necessary industrial wealth that can be won from these areas with the general environment and the needs and wishes of the community. This is never an easy thing to do, but it seemed that this Government was hell-bent on upsetting as many people as possible. Two clear proposals emerged on the powerline route for the Beenup mine after much discussion and much surveying of routes and needs.

The first proposition upset approximately 125 farmers and the other upset approximately 18 farmers; the Government chose the first route. It took the Opposition a while to work out why. Similarly, with the transport route, many options were considered but finally the Government settled for one which caused the maximum amount of dislocation for people and the maximum amount of public opposition. Unfortunately, it seems now that the decision on the powerline route is connected with the work on the powerline being concentrated in the electorate of Mitchell, held by the Minister David Smith, rather than in the electorate of Warren, held by the Liberal member, Paul Omodei. If it is a straight out vote buying exercise it is a condemnation of the way in which the Government is operating. It is an extraordinary decision and we look forward to an explanation from Minister Gallop on why this route has been chosen when a better route could be used. I believe it would be cheaper to run the line to Manjimup, even though it would be necessary to detour slightly north to avoid the expense of putting the powerline underground in one area which has potential for heritage listing. It was said it would be more acceptable to sink the line rather than have overhead lines. The undergrounding of a line over six kilometres would cause at least as much disruption to the ecology as would the construction of an overhead line. High voltage underground lines must be deeply buried and heavy machinery is necessary to carry out the work. The more machinery used, the heavier it is, and the more earthworks that take place, the higher the risk of spreading dieback disease throughout the State forests.

The Australian Heritage Commission also seemed to go out of its way to antagonise landholders in the south west area by its recent proposal to list 340 farms in the lower south west. That was a move by the Federal Government to control the operations of Federal authorities working on that proposed heritage listing land. That seemed to be a fairly innocuous proposal, but members will be aware that one has only to put a heritage tag on a piece of land anywhere and it immediately raises the environmental temperature all around that area and all sorts of side issues impinge on the original decision and distort the original concept. I do not think anyone was too worried in the first instance about the listing of the public estate, which is predominantly Department of Conservation and Land Management land, for national parks. However, it then seemed to impinge upon production forest areas, and it moved on to privately owned land, and 340 farms were listed as potential heritage sites. One farmer, a fairly elderly man, approached us with great puzzlement and said, "Why should they list one of my paddocks and not the other, and why should they list a section of land on one side of the river and not the land on the other?" There were all sorts of anomalies that seemed to be aimed at upsetting the maximum number of people.

Members may have seen a Press release by the Heritage Commission not that long afterwards which stated that it would not go ahead with that proposal but would pull back. Everyone accepted that as a positive indication that all this will go away, but it will not go away. All that the Heritage Commission is doing is the old Fabian trick of pulling back, regrouping, and attacking again. Members of the south west community are well aware of what is happening, and they will not be fooled by this tactic. They will continue to oppose this sort of action because it is underhanded and is not being honest with the people, and the Government will pay the price in the long term.

It is interesting that the Western Australian Farmers Federation, in *The Primary Producer* newsletter of February 1992, calls for the sacking of the Minister for the Environment, Hon Bob Pearce, because it believes that these heritage listings could not have occurred without his collaboration. The Farmers Federation is very angry about it, and believes that the Minister was either negligent in not knowing what was happening, or else he connived in the whole process. Heritage listing in Western Australia is a matter for the Government of Western Australia, and if Hon Bob Pearce has delegated to the Commonwealth his authority in this sphere, we can rightfully feel very much sold down the drain. I urge the Government to stick up for the rights of this State as a sovereign State and not be dictated to by Federal bodies that seek to move in. I question their authority to do so. I question also the efficacy of their involvement because, as I have stated often in this place, the further decision-making gets from the seat of the action, the less reliable it becomes. The track record of the environmental movement in the south west on a Statewide basis has been sufficient to indicate that we can look after our own area without interference from the Federal Government. I suggest to the State Government that it tell the Federal Government to go home and stay home and that the people of the south west can look after their own estate very satisfactorily.

I turn now to the Department of Agriculture, because its operations impinge closely not only upon my electorate but also upon the industry with which I am most familiar; that is, the agricultural and grain growing industry. The cutbacks to the Department of Agriculture have come at the worst possible time for the industry. There is some evidence to suggest that the rural downturn is about to turn around, but one of the major inputs that is required is the assistance of the Department of Agriculture staff not only in the agricultural economics side of farming but also in disease eradication. We have two major outbreaks of chronic disease in Western Australia at present: Sheep lice, which has been with us probably for ever, and is likely to be around for a long time yet, and the endemic, virulent footrot throughout the south west of the State. That disease is absorbing a huge number of man-hours of the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Agriculture officers deserve great credit for the work they are doing in footrot and lice eradication. In the case of lice eradication, they are greatly assisted by volunteer groups of farmers who are forming district sub groups that are working on eradication on a district-wide basis. I pay tribute also to those volunteers who put in huge volumes of hours to try to rid the industry of this disorder. This infestation causes considerable loss to growers and to Australia on a nationwide basis because badly affected wool loses its value and, therefore, loses its export value, which impinges in the long term on our serious national debt situation.

Hon Sam Piantadosi: I am glad to hear that argument because there is something that I wish to ask you later on. I am sure you would have a different opinion.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: I hope Hon Sam Piantadosi is never made Chairman of Committees because I enjoy his interjections and our little sub conversations that go on in this Chamber, but if they get too bad we will have to nominate him another time. I welcome his questions on this matter.

Hon Sam Piantadosi: I am waiting for the right moment.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Through sad experience I have come to know quite a lot about those two problems. I have to report that because of the shortage of staff in the Department of Agriculture, a friend of mine who recently went to a sheep sale in Katanning to buy sheep told me that 19 000 sheep were in the yard, and the first 11 lines of sheep that he looked at were infested with lice. There was no Department of Agriculture inspector in sight. He had not been there all day, not through negligence but because there were not enough stock staff to be at the saleyards to inspect those sheep because they had so many other problems to deal with at the same time. The footrot eradication program is absorbing a large proportion of their time and that means that they cannot attend to other issues. Therefore, there is the risk that lice will spread further, and without protection it is inevitable that that will happen.

A great controversy is raging about whether the \$60 a head levy that wool growers pay for lice eradication should continue. It is a vexed question, and I do not believe the levy should continue. When I look at the number of other Government services that are provided to people who are not making the same contribution to export industries and, therefore, to Australia's financial difficulties, I think it is most unfair to impose a tax on one section of the community.

Hon Sam Piantadosi: Do you support export or import?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: What of?

Hon Sam Piantadosi: Exports out of or imports into the State.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: I would like to declare a financial interest; I am very export oriented. Only as a result of exports will we improve the national debt. If we can decrease the level of debt we will be able to return services to the various departments. I am not a great believer in imports because I would like to see Australia become self-sufficient, but while we retain our current industrial practices we will remain a long way from achieving that goal.

Hon Sam Piantadosi: Like closed shops.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Closed something! Returning to the agricultural scene, I deplore the cutbacks in assistance to the export industries. I accept that some cuts must be made but the Government must look at its priorities and ensure that the cuts do not impinge on the export drive. I have said before many times, and at least twice tonight, that only an export recovery will eliminate this country's problems.

I was approached today by another group in my electorate, which I will not name at the moment because this issue concerns a matter which I intend to take up with the Minister for Education. However, it is an issue that must be addressed shortly. I refer to the provision of special education services to rural schools. I have been told that in one area teaching assistance to special education has been cut by 75 per cent. That might not seem much but the welfare of Down's syndrome children and other severely disabled children in country areas it is a matter of great concern. Schools have been ordered to cut back expenses. However, we must consider giving maximum assistance to children in those areas. The more assistance we can give disabled children at an early age the smaller the burden which will fall on society later on. Much can be done to raise the level of awareness and the ability of those children to adapt to life. It is false economy to deprive these children of funds at an early stage when so much of the diagnostic work in the schoolroom can be undertaken in order to ease the burden in later years. I urge the Government to look closely at that priority.

I received a telephone call recently from an angry manager of a country small business. Among other things he said that he had learnt to his horror that his State Energy Commission charges would be raised to an amount varying between \$50 and \$100 a day. That may not seem much to many people but this is a small, country retailer. When I say small, I suppose for a country business it is considerable. He employs approximately 17 permanent people

and eight casuals at peak times in a general hardware and food retail business. This person was particularly angry that the Premier had assured him and other people that there would be no charge above the inflation rate - as well as the usual guff that the Government hands out. He said that if inflation increased like that he would have to cut his staff, and in a small country town that would have a major effect on the economy of the town. This matter is all to do with the amount of power the business uses and the extra tariff involved over the 165 units a day. I will take up this matter with the Government. My constituent has already written to the Premier and to the SEC urging them to reconsider the charging rates for various tariff levels because they are having and will continue to have a serious effect on the operations of so many country businesses.

Hon J.M. Berinson: Are you aware that the changes to the tariff actually result in a reduction of \$20 million to the SEC's revenue; that is, to consumer charges? I will be interested to hear of the outcome of the member's inquiries because that is important to pursue.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: The constituent has taken up the matter with three of his local members. We are making a combined approach to SECWA to see what can be done. The response by the Leader of the House is very like saying that on average if a person has one foot on the stove and the other in the refrigerator that person is fairly comfortable. This constituent does not care what is the average, or how large the savings -

Hon J.M. Berinson: I agree with the member. The tariff changes were not a direct increase to revenue; they involved a substantial reduction in revenue. It would be unfortunate if the consumers such as the member describes cop that sort of burden as a result.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: The constituent would fully agree. We accept that but as usual these measures tend to fall on some undeserving cases.

Hon Sam Piantadosi: The member's time has elapsed.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Muriel Patterson): I understand the electric clock has gone down.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: I would have thought with the Prime Minister's interest in clocks that at least the clocks in this place would operate correctly. Perhaps we can sell these clocks as antiques to him because they seem to be playing tricks.

Hon Sam Piantadosi: Even the good Lord does not want to listen to you.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Nor to the member's interjections.

This is a matter that must be taken up by the Government. We cannot have these Government charges falling so heavily on country areas. The Leader of the House would have been aware of the Save Our Country Towns campaign. When these increased charges hit the bush they have a very severe effect. Two or three employees in a large city business may not be important on the average, but two or three jobs in a country town are vital. Therefore, we must do what we can. I do not have documentary evidence but the same constituent told me that the same thing is happening with water charges. We must consider all these issues. I understand the financial constraints and problems faced by the Government but we must also be very careful about where the burdens fall.

I was very concerned, as were other Opposition speakers, about Hon Bob Thomas' attack on our Fightback WA package. I am very pleased to see that the member has returned to the Chamber because I would not like to talk about him in his absence. The point is that if he had been listening to the electorate he would have picked up long ago that the people are calling for change. People have realised that the Western Australian and the Australian economies have gone backwards over the past eight years. People have no hope; many of them have no jobs. People feel that it is not worth working; it is not worth putting in the extra effort because the harder they work the less they receive.

Hon J.M. Berinson: It is not realistic to talk about going back over eight years. We have had a recession for two years. Before that we had very large scale expansion of the economy.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Was that expansion in concrete, bricks and mortar or was it the high-flying entrepreneurs?

Hon J.M. Berinson: It was in employment.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: The amount of \$1 billion plus has gone down the tube. Everybody was building things; nobody was paying for anything. Is that the sort of progress the Leader of the House is talking about? Does he call that progress?

Hon J.M. Berinson: That is not right. One does not create employment out of the distribution of paper. One creates employment out of new resource projects and new infrastructure provision, and that went on at a record rate.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: The Labor Government's flirtation with entrepreneurial interests has cost this State very dearly.

Hon N.F. Moore: Hundreds of millions of dollars.

Hon Peter Foss: Billions of dollars.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: We are all paying the cost now. That is why the State is suffering now. I assure members opposite that they are not fooling the public. The public have had enough.

Hon J.M. Berinson: That is not the point Hon Bill Stretch was making. He was making the point that there had been eight years of economic decline. That is simply not true.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: In real terms there has been an overall decline in our international standing. At the same time there has been a growth in our national debt. Our terms of trade and our reputation as a supplier have gone downhill over the last eight years.

Hon J.M. Berinson: Our reputation for supplying what? Are you suggesting that our reputation as a supplier of primary resources has declined?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: No, I am saying that Australia's credit ratings and its financial reputation have gone downhill.

Hon J.M. Berinson: You are shifting ground every time I put a proposition to you.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: I would not be the first one in this House to do that.

Hon J.M. Berinson: That much I will agree with.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Hon Sam Piantadosi has been perceptive enough to agree that we are a trading-exporting nation. We are a long way from being an industrial competitor except in some very narrow fields.

Hon Sam Piantadosi: Hon Bill Stretch favours imports.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: No, I do not favour imports; what rubbish! It is time we had another clap of thunder.

Hon John Halden: Does Hon Bill Stretch mean that Australia is an international price taker?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: To a great degree, yes, we are price takers; and if we are to be international price takers, we should also be international purchasers, so that we purchase on the international market in the same way as we sell on the international market. In that way we would get away from some of the restrictive purchasing programs brought about by Australia's industrial relations and its associated tariff costs. For argument's sake, if we purchased on the international market in the same way we sold on the international market, the terms of trade for farmers, exporters and others would be grossly improved. That is a subject for another day, not as a response to an interjection.

It is very simplistic to say as the Labor Party has been saying that the Fightback package is a tax on clothing and food. That is a gross untruth. All the inputs into food and clothing in this country are very heavily taxed now. The Labor Party is distorting the truth by trying to spread that sort of message. The answer is quite clear.

Hon J.M. Berinson: Dr Hewson said that the result of the GST would be an increase in the CPI of about five per cent.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Then why do the Leader of the House and his colleagues say that the increase will be 15 per cent?

Hon J.M. Berinson: I said five per cent.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: The Leader of the House did then, but why do he and his colleagues say there will be a 15 per cent increase?

Hon J.M. Berinson: Because the cost of individual items will increase by 15 per cent, particularly those items which are not taxed now, such as food.

Hon Tom Stephens: The price of a Ferrari will come down.

Hon J.M. Berinson: Is Hon Bill Stretch suggesting that bread will go up by only five per cent.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Bread should not go up by more than five per cent.

Hon J.M. Berinson: How do you work that out?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Because taxes on transport, farm inputs and packaging will be removed.

Hon N.F. Moore: They are all secretive taxes.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Under a Labor Government those items attract a tax of 20 per cent, 30 per cent, and sometimes more. All those inputs attract tax. The Leader of the House is not honest if he does not accept that a lot of those inputs will come off before the GST goes on. It suits the Leader of the House's argument and Mr Keating's attack in public, but it is not true.

Hon J.M. Berinson: Are you suggesting that legal fees will go up by less than 15 per cent?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: The Leader of the House would have a far better idea of what legal practitioners do with their fees than I.

Hon J.M. Berinson: I am talking about the principle of adding a GST to legal fees. What offset will there be to the GST on legal fees?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: I suggest that all inputs into a legal office, all the fairly expensive machinery such as duplicating equipment, will come in without a sales tax. The wholesale sales taxes will be removed. The Leader of the House, if he goes into the law in his retirement, may choose not to pass those savings on to his client, but that is up to him.

Hon P.G. Pendal: He probably would not.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Surveillance authorities will check that legitimate savings do flow through to consumers. If one is taking off all the sales tax on office inputs, farm inputs and business inputs -

Hon J.M. Berinson: Hon Peter Foss will be in a better position to indicate whether office equipment in his office is taxed at less or more than 15 per cent.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: He would.

Hon Peter Foss: One of the problems now is that one does not know the amount of the tax; that is the way it works.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Hon Peter Foss is right; we do not know fully what taxes there are on goods because those taxes are hidden. We work under an insidious tax system.

Hon John Halden: Will you give us a regressive system?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: No, we will not have a regressive tax. Federally we are looking at turning back the clock.

Hon John Halden: To the Dark Ages.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: That is Hon John Halden's opinion.

Hon John Halden: You can tell that to my constituents.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: We are looking at lifting the burden of wholesale sales tax which falls fairly on productive industry and we will turn the economy into one that is driven by effort, which is creating more jobs, more opportunities. That is what the Fightback package is aimed at. This is the sort of thing that Australians have been looking for.

Hon John Halden: That is what the conservatives in New Zealand said 12 months ago. They have driven the New Zealand economy through the floor.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: That is emotive poppycock.

Hon John Halden: You should go to New Zealand.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: I can take Hon John Halden to workplaces where people do not work to their potential because it is simply not worth their while. I can take the member to shearing sheds where shearers slow down at four o'clock because for the next hour and a half they will not get any benefit for the work they do, as they will move into a higher tax bracket and end up worse off than they are. I can take the member to workshops in the south west where employees will not work at the weekend. They do not want overtime because their hourly rate for the weekly earnings will drop. Does the member think that is putting the nation's shoulder to the wheel and increasing production? No, that is regressive. It is stifling incentive and depriving young Australians of the opportunity to get ahead by working a bit harder than their neighbours and achieving their place in this great country by carving out a niche for themselves by sheer hard work and the sweat of their brow.

Hon Fred McKenzie: If they are not working overtime, aren't they creating more employment? Production must still be available as a pool for the unemployed.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: There is a limited amount of skilled labour and time in which one can earn that opportunity to get ahead. We are a competitive race of animals, some not set apart very much from other animals, especially from other primates.

Hon Fred McKenzie: Overtime attracts a penalty and makes it more costly to produce goods.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Incentive must be brought back into the workplace because the one goal at which we are looking is to increase production for our unit input, make our exports more competitive than our overseas competitors' exports and make more sales because we can do many things well. We are doing many things badly now and spending too much time trying to cover up bad work practices and less efficient sectors of our economy at the expense of areas in which we perform well and can compete internationally.

Hon John Halden: You are pronouncing things which will affect unions. What does the Liberal Fightback package say about unions?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Unions are not terribly significant; they are an anachronism. Sooner or later this Government must be dragged kicking and screaming into the twenty-first century.

Hon N.F. Moore: It has not come into the twentieth century yet.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Perhaps not. Hon John Halden must accept the view that the Opposition will have workplace bargaining.

Hon John Halden: We have that.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: It occurs now provided one is in the union and keeps a closed shop. However, all that achieves is to keep the union bureaucrats in employment. That is not helpful to the national effort. I am simply calling for a better utilisation of the will of workers in Australia. I have worked side by side with unionists and as one of them. I have probably worked as hard as Hon John Halden. I have no quibble with unions; when chimney sweeps were being dragged up and down chimneys and children of 10 years old were used for labour in the coal mines there was a role for unions; they did a great job. I have no argument with their overseeing of working conditions. However, I take great exception to people like Senator Cook sticking his bib into the shearing industry and saying the Government will impose one condition or another on the wool industry. It is currently the hardest hit of all the Australian export industries and is struggling to survive. Senator Cook's making statements about an industry which he does not understand and has never really tried to understand is not helpful.

Hon John Halden: Your Fightback package does not mention unions once.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: There is probably a very good reason for that. I believe they are insignificant in the major press not only for Australia's recovery but also in its survival as a trading nation.

Hon P.G. Pandal: What is more, one of the big construction unions thinks the Labor Party is insignificant, because it has disaffiliated from it.

Hon Tom Stephens interjected.

Hon P.G. Pandal: That will hurt you to the grave.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: The Fightback package, both Federally and Statewide, offers the unemployed 35 per cent of young people and the overall 90 000-odd unemployed in Western Australia some hope of an economic recovery. It sets out a structured level of debt reduction in Western Australia when that debt is now considerable and getting worse. It puts into great relief the contrast with the Premier who said, when asked how the State would finance the railway extensions south, "It is only \$300 million; we will borrow it." The days of further borrowing should be gone.

Hon John Halden: I hope we are not going to hear another pre-Keynesian lecture about economics which are not relevant.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: John Maynard Keynes does not feature in my economics. They may be antediluvian, but there is an old fashioned theory that if one does not have the money, one should not buy the goods.

Hon J.M. Berinson: Can you nominate a railway which was not built on borrowed funds?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: I rest my case; no, I cannot. Therefore, why are we building railways?

Hon John Halden: Why are we building pipelines and bridges?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Those services ultimately pay their way. In due course, I would like the member to show me a railway run by a Government which pays its way and meets its sinking fund costs.

Hon J.M. Berinson: Are you suggesting railways which do not pay their way should be discontinued; that is to say, their social and economic importance should be ignored?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: The Government of this State has been very careful to separate the social cost of its enterprises and take them out of the cost of railways. It expected Westrail to run the Perth-Fremantle railway when Westrail said it would never pay and would be a white elephant. Every passenger on that railway cost the Government and the taxpayer twice as much as every bus passenger. The Government wants not only to continue operating that railway, but also to build another one. That would be fine if the passenger utilisation increased. There may be a time when it pays; I hope it does. Like Hon Fred McKenzie, I think rail is a very efficient way to shift certain goods, including Homo sapiens. However, there must be a concentration of goods; that is, people close to the rail centres. They must be picked up from point A and delivered to point B. I live within a quarter of a mile of a railway station which I would be very happy to use to come to this place every day. However, I do not have time to walk from the West Perth station to Parliament House because, as members will understand only too well, 15 or 20 minutes in this place is very valuable; time is like gold, so we choose to drive. I know that some social engineers say the answer is quite simple; that is, we should build high rise developments close to the railway lines. That is fine, but it will not happen in our lifetime and I do not think it will happen in our grandchildren's time.

Hon J.M. Berinson: I am out of a question.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: If Governments want to develop railways, they must look at rationalising and at concentrating on areas which have bulk loads, long hauls and proper utilisation of very expensive capital equipment. This has little to do with the Fightback package, Liberal Party policy or anything else. However, I personally believe road transport or very light rail units are far preferable systems for the transport of passengers. The capital expense is less and the system provides greater flexibility which medium or heavy railway systems do not provide.

Hon John Halden: It is considerably cleaner.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: That is questionable in the long term.

Hon John Halden: How long?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: The Government will still need feeder systems to feed into its rail system and more trains will run half full to provide the same level of service. I live on the Perth to Fremantle line and on many occasions have seen that train go past with three or four carriages carrying only two or three people, so do not talk to me about pollution.

Hon John Halden: The northern suburbs railway line will be totally different.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: It may be. I am chasing a lot of red herrings tonight, but when a railway line is constructed down the middle of a freeway the people who reside within a quarter of a mile on either side of the railway are immediately isolated and that is the very area from which we are trying to draw passengers. Countries all over the world look at the area within a quarter of a mile of the railway from which to draw their passengers. How in the name of God will we fill up these trains without major feed-in passenger services? The Government is virtually creating a bus transport service to fill up the train. I contend that people respond far better to bus services spread throughout their domiciliary suburbs and travelling in as direct a route as possible to their place of work.

Hon Fred McKenzie: Where else do you put it? It is an oversight by the Liberal Government.

Hon W.N. STRETCH: Yet another red herring floats across our path, even though it is a timely one. We could suggest that the railway should have been constructed closer to the coast to pick up people from existing suburbs, or that air-conditioned LP gas buses should run throughout the area on major feeder routes. I contend that more people would be shifted in a cleaner and more convenient way and to their satisfaction and, above all, at half the cost of transporting them by rail.

Hon Fred McKenzie: And clog up the arterial roads to Perth?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: That is yet to be proved. I do not believe that will occur.

Hon John Halden: Have you been on the freeway at 8.30 am?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: I have. The transport debate is not a subject on which I intended to conclude my remarks, but the whole question of transport is absolutely critical to this State's recovery. It is also critical to the cost of servicing the metropolitan area and it is critical to our export effort.

Hon John Halden: What about the new board? Don't you want to come to that?

Hon Bob Thomas: Do you support the State passenger train to Albany proposed by Mr MacKinnon?

Hon W.N. STRETCH: I will not be drawn into that debate because I understand there are certain incentives in my sitting down. I am a great believer in incentives in this economy.

The Fightback package offers some hope to the 35 per cent of unemployed young people; it offers them an incentive to work for what they want to do and it gives them a goal at the end of their education process, which they do not have at the moment. The people of this country are looking for change and they will not swallow more of the same. Western Australians are aware of Labor scandals which have been revealed by the Royal Commission and in which this Government has indulged. They have witnessed the danger of putting taxpayers' money into projects which have been of no real value to the nation and they have seen the national debt climb to such a large amount that it is virtually insupportable and unsupportable by the export producing people in this country. We cannot continue in this way. We are turning into a bankrupt nation and international financiers are questioning this country's credit rating. Internationally there is a lack of confidence in the ability of this nation to perform and meet its contracts. The people have had enough, they are calling for a change, and in the Fightback package they see some chance of recovery and I believe they will support it. I support the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon Murray Montgomery.

House adjourned at 9.45 pm

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

METAXAS, JOHN - ROYAL COMMISSION INTO COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES OF GOVERNMENT AND OTHER MATTERS

Teachers Credit Society Collapse Inquiry - Confidential Information Revelations

6. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Attorney General:

- (1) Is the Attorney General aware of startling revelations made by Mr John Metaxas, Registrar of Building Societies, to the Royal Commission inquiring into the collapse of the Teachers Credit Society that he, Mr Metaxas, admitted providing confidential information to a member of Parliament, such information subsequently being publicised in the course of parliamentary debate?
- (2) As the divulging of such information was contrary to the secrecy provisions of the Building Societies Act, which provides upon conviction for a breach of section 8 of the Act a penalty of \$2 000 or imprisonment for one year, or both, will the Attorney General suspend the Registrar of Building Societies pending an inquiry into the registrar's actions which he, the registrar, has confirmed under oath to the Royal Commission?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

(1)-(2)

Yes, I have seen Press reports, but no more than Press reports. In the course of those reports I have also seen reference to the Premier's response to somewhat similar questions and my response is the same; namely, the least that might be done is to await the completion of the evidence on this particular reference, which is expected to be dealt with within quite a short time. I am also aware of Press reports, I think today, in which Mr Metaxas' position has been put by his legal representatives in quite a different way from the reports which appeared over the weekend. I think that we would be much better served by allowing the Royal Commission at least to complete its consideration of this term of reference before jumping to conclusions.

METAXAS, JOHN - ROYAL COMMISSION INTO COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES OF GOVERNMENT AND OTHER MATTERS

Obvious Impropriety - Evidence Review and Removal Decision

7. Hon PETER FOSS to the Attorney General:

In view of the obvious impropriety of the admissions made by Mr Metaxas, will the Government instantly review the evidence and make a decision on its own basis as to whether he should be removed?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

I really do not know why Hon Peter Foss should join some of his colleagues in showing such a lack of confidence in the Royal Commission and the Royal Commissioners. What Mr Foss is trying to do is to pre-empt what the commissioners will find and, indeed, he is trying to pre-empt what the commissioners will hear in the further course of this particular reference. It is not open to Mr Foss to talk about the "obvious impropriety" of anything until everything is known. I say to Mr Foss, as I have said to the Leader of the Opposition, that the proper way of proceeding is at least to allow these matters to be fully ventilated and Mr Metaxas' point of view to be heard. We have heard some of it, as appeared in the Press this morning, and it certainly gives a quite different complexion to the matters reported over the weekend. If there is some matter to be pursued it will be pursued on the recommendations of others and not by unsubstantiated allegations of "obvious impropriety" by Mr Foss.

**METAXAS, JOHN - ROYAL COMMISSION INTO COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES OF
GOVERNMENT AND OTHER MATTERS**

Propriety and Impropriety - Attorney General's Judgment

8. Hon PETER FOSS to the Attorney General:

Is the Attorney General able to judge propriety and impropriety on his own or does he require the Royal Commission to tell him what is proper and improper?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

What I am suggesting is that any such matters at least require all relevant facts and knowledge to be made available. That is not available now. Hon Peter Foss knows it is not available, and the Leader of the Opposition knows it is not available. Unlike those members, I am not prepared to pre-empt the considerations of the Royal Commission in the way I am invited to do. Again I ask Mr Foss why he has such reservations about the Royal Commissioners that he should seek to pre-empt both their hearings and their findings.

**METAXAS, JOHN - ATTORNEY GENERAL'S FULL TRUST AND
CONFIDENCE IN**

9. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Attorney General:

Does the Attorney General have full trust and confidence in Mr Metaxas?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

I refer to my answers to the previous questions. The answer to this is the same as the others.

Hon P.G. Pendal: Yes or no? You do have confidence or you don't?

Hon J.M. BERINSON: What I am saying is that I have sufficient confidence in the processes of the Royal Commission not to pre-empt it -

Hon P.G. Pendal: But do you have confidence in him?

Hon J.M. BERINSON: As at this moment I have no basis for saying I do not have confidence in him. What I am saying to Hon Phillip Pendal, as I did to the previous speakers, is that it is not for members in this House to pre-empt both the hearings and the considerations of the Royal Commission. One Royal Commission at a time is enough, and the one to which we can pay attention is the one down the Terrace, not the one which the members of the Opposition are trying to launch here today.

WEST AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL COMMISSION - ESTABLISHMENT COST

Membership

10. Hon FRED McKENZIE to the Minister for Sport and Recreation:

Some notice of this question has been given.

- (1) What was the cost to the Government in setting up the West Australian Football Commission?
- (2) Have any additional payments been made to the commission since it commenced operations?
- (3) If so, would the Minister provide details of such payments?
- (4) Who are the appointed commissioners?
- (5) (a) Do they receive any remuneration; and
(b) if so, how much?
- (6) What was the commission's total income for the financial year 1990-91?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

I thank Hon Fred McKenzie for notice of the question, and I am a little

intrigued as to his reasons for seeking the information. The answer is as follows -

(1) A grant of \$100 000.

(2)-(3)

No; however, the Football Development Trust has received a \$250 000 per annum grant for the development of junior football across the State. That grant was put in place for three years and I think we are in the third year of that grant period.

(4) The current commissioners are Dr Peter Tannock, Chairman; Mr Kevin Edwards, Deputy Chairman; Messrs John Fuhrmann, Merv Cowan and Jeff Ovens.

(5) No commissioner is paid in his capacity as a commissioner.

(6) The West Australian Football Commission's audited accounts for the year 1990-91, which ended on 31 October 1991, showed an income of \$5.8 million.

PRISONS - CANNING VALE

Outreach Services Curtailment

11. Hon GEORGE CASH to the Minister for Corrective Services:

(1) Is it correct that the Outreach facility at the Canning Vale Prison complex is not open on Sundays and Mondays?

(2) If so, what public convenience facilities are available to visitors to the prison on the days when the Outreach facility is closed?

(3) What security facilities for storing visitors' wallets, handbags, and so on are available to visitors to the prison when Outreach is closed?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

(1) I am aware that Outreach services at the prison were somewhat curtailed earlier this year.

(2)-(3)

As to the detail the member is seeking in questions (2) and (3), I ask him to put them on notice as I do not have the material with me.

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION - WOMEN'S INFORMATION AND
REFERRAL EXCHANGE REPORT**

Minister for Education's Name Deletion - No Prior Knowledge Assertion

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

Does she stand by her assertion that she had no prior knowledge of the deletion of her name from the draft Public Service Commission report related to the Women's Information Referral Exchange?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

Yes.

STATE THEATRE COMPANY - GOVERNMENT \$1 MILLION GRANT

Reneging Reason

13. Hon P.G. PENDAL to the Minister for The Arts:

Why has she reneged on her undertaking that the grant to the WA State Theatre Company this year would be in the order of \$1 million?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

The proposal to form the Western Australian State Theatre Company preceded the move to amalgamate - which is probably not the best term - two theatre companies. The Western Australian Theatre Company ran into some difficulties, which were regarded as fairly serious. The Hole in the Wall Theatre was operating successfully on a fairly commercial basis, and a view

was held within theatre circles that Western Australia needed a flagship theatre company.

Hon P.G. Pental: We actually already had one.

Hon KAY HALLAHAN: That was not the case. A decision was made and a number of difficulties were faced. The two companies' boards met and a great deal of goodwill was involved in the formation of the State Theatre Company.

At the earliest stages of those negotiations I certainly flagged that support would be in the region of \$1 million. However, over time and a great deal of negotiation - and sadly a lot of dissatisfaction with the progress towards the formation, which attracted a considerable amount of publicity - the situation changed. At various stages of the formation of the State Theatre Company - such as when it was appointing staff and deciding the program for the year, and with a new theatre company being established which would focus on regional theatre - the situation changed over time.

The State Government had always considered that funding would be in partnership with the Federal Government through the Australia Council. That funding is still to be secured by the State Theatre Company. However, as members would be aware, it has been a difficult budgetary time, along with the changes in the progress towards the formation of the State Theatre Company, and things have not moved along an untroubled continuum.

Nevertheless, a grant of \$600 000 was made so that the company could have a substantial season. I am happy to advise members that I attended the opening night of its first production on Saturday. This was the large, well received production of *Anthony and Cleopatra*. The company will now be able to mount larger productions and operate with longer rehearsal periods than was the case for the two companies in the past. A difficulty had been that economic necessity meant short rehearsal periods. The community will be able to support the State Theatre Company well, and the company already has an impressive number of people subscribing to its season. The company is off to a good start.

QUARANUP CAMP - DISPOSAL CONSIDERATION

Disabled Facilities

14. Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY to the Minister for Sport and Recreation:

- (1) Will he confirm that the Quaranup Recreation Camp, which is under the Minister's control, is being considered for disposal or a new form of management?
- (2) Is he also aware that the Quaranup camp is one of the very few places which cater for the disabled?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

(1)-(2)

I thank the member for his question and for his interest in the matter. The Ministry of Sport and Recreation and the Recreation Camps and Reserves Board are seeking expressions of interest for leasing that camp for a period of not less than five years. Indeed, the *Albany Advertiser* contains an advertisement today seeking registrations of interest. The advertisement also carries the following description of the camp -

The Camp is situated on a peninsula across Princess Royal Harbour and overlooks Albany. It is 23 km by road from the town.

There are six dormitories comprising between 12 and 22 beds each and accommodating 98 people in total.

The Camp has a modern dining hall and kitchen with full catering facilities.

It is a delightful camp and one that I would not want to see used for purposes

other than recreation. The ministry is doing the right thing in seeking expressions of interest to ensure that the best possible use is made of that camp. I am not convinced that that is happening at the moment, but that does not mean to say that we are taking away what is an important recreational facility to the people not only of Albany and the south west but also the metropolitan area. It is important, as a matter of proper management, that we review these facilities to see whether a better use can be made of them.

Hon Bob Thomas: It is losing about \$40 000 -

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister is supposed to be coming to a quick conclusion.

Hon P.G. Pandal: The member has his eye on the Minister's job.

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS: Judging from the speech he made the other day, he would handle it very well. I know that the member's speech upset some Opposition fellows. I was about to conclude, Mr President, before that unruly interjection came from across the floor. When I look behind me I see a number of people who could step into my shoes; the same could not be said of Opposition members.

Hon Mark Nevill: Is that a compliment?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS: I was speaking metaphorically. I ask Hon Murray Montgomery and other members with an interest in this matter, which I accept is genuine, to hang fire and wait to see the expressions of interest which are forthcoming. Members should not be unduly pessimistic about the future of the Quaranup camp.

BICYCLE HELMETS - SCHOOL FACILITIES

15. Hon MURIEL PATTERSON to the Minister for Education:

Following the recent legislation requiring the compulsory wearing of bicycle helmets by school children, has any provision been made, or is any planned, in schools for the placement of bicycle helmets during the day while children are in their classrooms?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

That would be a matter of management by each school.

QUARANUP CAMP - DISABLED FACILITIES

16. Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY to the Minister for Sport and Recreation:

I have already asked this question, and I wonder whether the Minister is prepared to answer it: The Quaranup camp is used by the community - although it may lose some money, as indicated by Hon Bob Thomas - but is the Minister aware that the camp is one of the few facilities suitable for use by the disabled?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

I am very much aware of that, although that is not the only camp used by disabled people. Nevertheless, that is a very important use of the camp, and this is in line with the Government's endeavour to make recreation and sporting activities as widely available as possible. That has always been a major consideration of this Government, and these endeavours have met with remarkable success. That is due not only to greater access being provided to various sporting and recreational pursuits, but also to the spirit of the people with disabilities in our community who have grasped opportunities with both hands. At the end of the day I do not want to disadvantage any group of people, irrespective of whether they have a disability. That does not mean to say that, from time to time, we should not be prepared to consider what management options may be available to us once we ask for expressions of interest from the community.

**STATUTORY CORPORATIONS (DIRECTORS' LIABILITY) BILL -
SIMILAR LEGISLATION PROPOSAL**
Government Action

17. Hon PETER FOSS to the Attorney General:

What action has the Attorney General taken to carry out his undertaking to the members of the Opposition in this House that the Government would look at producing legislation similar to the Statutory Corporations (Directors' Liability) Bill?

Hon J.M. BERINSON replied:

I have regularly raised this matter with the Deputy Premier, who has the carriage of it. I think I am correct in saying that the most recent occasion was about 10 days ago. He gave me to understand that the various separate pieces of legislation covering Government statutory bodies seem to cut across the original proposal to have an Act of general effect. However, he undertook at that time to have the position comprehensively reviewed and to advise me in a way which would allow me to answer this question more substantively. I am saying to Hon Peter Foss that I acknowledge that this is a continuing question. I have raised it in a continuing way with the Deputy Premier and I hope to be able to provide an up to date and substantive answer as soon as possible.

**STATE SCHOOL TEACHERS UNION - STUDENT TESTING PROGRAM
OPPOSITION**
Minister for Education's Comments

18. Hon FRED McKENZIE to the Minister for Education:

Would the Minister please comment on reports that the State School Teachers Union will oppose Government plans for testing the attainment levels of students in Government schools?

Hon KAY HALLAHAN replied:

I thank the member for giving some notice of a question on what is a very contentious issue. I am very disappointed with the reaction of the State School Teachers Union. Members may remember that last year I brought to members' attention the volumes providing the results of the trialling of the monitoring of standards in education. They gave a very good review of the acquisition of knowledge by students in our education system and indicated that the vast majority of students perform at average or well above average levels. I thought the information gave quite a morale lift to the education system. The testing has had very strong support from parents, industry and, I understand, the Opposition. Apart from the Executive Council of the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations - the parent body - I have had very strong expressions of support from parents, including support in the editorial of *The West Australian*.

Testing of all students is proposed for years 3, 7 and 10. This would be a wonderful opportunity to give clear feedback to parents on their children's literacy and numeracy skills. We know that they are basic foundation abilities without which students' learning in other areas is inhibited. With respect to the problems we have been having with juvenile crime, very often it is demonstrated that the young people involved do not have basic numeracy and literacy skills and lack a sense of success. Out of frustration and other factors relating to that comes anti-social behaviour.

The union's concern appears to be that principals will grandstand on the results. There is no way the Ministry for Education will use this testing to label students or schools. It will be used to give to parents a detailed report to which they have a right. It will give feedback to teachers about students' areas of weakness and where further work should be done. Through the Statewide sampling it will also indicate to the Ministry how it should direct its resources.

Members may be interested to know that this afternoon a meeting took place between the State School Teachers Union and the Ministry of Education. It appears that at this stage the union is still opposed to the introduction of the testing on a Statewide basis. It appears that, in addition to the concern about principals' grandstanding, the union is concerned that the media will use the information incorrectly.

It seems to me the union is showing a lack of trust in its own members - principals are members of the union. The union also seems to have a fear that its members are in some way inferior in their teaching practices and, therefore, may be singled out or identified through such a process. That will not be a by-product of the implementation of the monitoring standards in education. It will result in parents and schools having more information and in parents having a comprehensive check list of their children's learning. It is a very important issue.

Hon George Cash: Will you be winding this up today. Other people want to ask questions.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I was about to say to the Minister that I am getting sick and tired of Ministers making ministerial statements during question time. If the Minister wants to make a statement about a subject, procedures are available for her to do that. She is not the only Minister who is guilty, but she happens to be the one speaking now. I think I am pretty fair in picking who should ask questions and I endeavour to give everyone an opportunity. As agreed to by the House, question time is curtailed to half an hour; there is nothing in the Standing Orders that says it should be half an hour. By the goodness of members' hearts they have agreed to question time being 30 minutes. Having Ministers making ministerial statements at this stage is stretching what question time is about.

Hon KAY HALLAHAN: I know that and I always accept your ruling, Mr President. However, on this occasion it is a very important issue. I was asked -

Hon George Cash: The Minister should make a statement.

Hon KAY HALLAHAN: I did not want to make a statement, and I accept your point of view, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT: This should be the subject of a ministerial statement. I have been listening to the debate on the radio and in other places and I have read about it in the newspaper. I am not saying that the Minister should not advise the House. However, I suggest that the 30 minutes set aside for question time should be used by members to ask questions and by Ministers to answer those questions quickly.

FIRE CONTROL - INDUSTRIAL LANDS

Responsibility, Outside WA Fire Brigades Board Control

19. Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY to the Minister for Emergency Services:

Who is responsible for fire control in industrial lands outside the designated control of the WA Fire Brigades Board?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

The member should expand upon his question so that I can ensure that I give him the exact information he seeks. I am not sure of the scenario to which he is referring. If he places his question on notice, I will give him a full, considered answer.

The PRESIDENT: I suggest that the Minister answer the part of the question that he understood as briefly as he can and the member can then ask a supplementary question if he is not happy with that answer.

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS: I have given my answer, Mr President. If the member puts his information on notice, I will give him an answer.

POLICE - CARNAMAH POLICE STATION
Funding Assurance

20. Hon MARGARET McALEER to the Minister for Police:

I remind the Minister of his visit to Carnamah on Friday, 13 December last year when he inspected the police station which is in an untenable state. I ask -

- (1) Has he had further correspondence about the police station with the shire?
- (2) In view of the unfulfilled assurances of funds in previous Budgets since 1989, will the Minister now give me a firm assurance that funds will be provided in the next Budget?

Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS replied:

(1)-(2)

When I visited the shire, I indicated that in all probability any funds available would be provided in the next Budget. I indicated that I was prepared to see whether there were any excess funds in the current Budget and have found that there are not. That police station will compete with other funding priorities throughout the State. I have no hesitation in saying that the police station is a disgrace and the problems associated with it need to be rectified. However, not only this Government but also successive previous Governments are responsible for placing the maintenance and replacement of police stations too low on the list of funding priorities. There are a number of substandard police buildings in which many public servants would not work and I do not think we should ask the police to work in those buildings either. I will address the problem as best I can.
