

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, the 25th March, 1976

MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY

The Legislative Assembly met at 8.03 p.m.

The **SPEAKER** (Mr Hutchinson) took the Chair.

PROCLAMATION

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr B. L. Okely) read the Proclamation of His Excellency the Governor (Air Chief Marshal Sir Wallace Kyle, G.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., D.F.C.) summoning the third session of the Twenty-eighth Parliament.

SUMMONS FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker and members, in response to summons, proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber; and, having heard His Excellency the Governor (Air Chief Marshal Sir Wallace Kyle, G.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., D.F.C.) deliver the opening Speech (*vide* Council report *ante*), returned to the Legislative Assembly Chamber.

STATE HOUSING COMMISSION

Management Fee: Petition

MR McIVER (Avon) [8.39 p.m.]: I present the following petition from 138 residents of Northam—

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled.

We, the undersigned residents in the State of Western Australia do herewith pray that Her Majesty's Government of Western Australia will not support the continuance of Regulation 24A of the Housing Act Regulations published in the *Government Gazette* No. 82 on the 12th December, 1975, and as further amended by publication in the *Government Gazette* No. 6 on the 30th January, 1976, and which contains the words—

"24A. An owner, mortgagor or lessee of any land, house or building that is subject to a mortgage, contract of sale or lease pursuant to the Act shall pay to the Commission a management fee of \$60 per annum by instalments of \$5.00 per month which are respectively due and payable on the first day of each month commencing on and as from the 1st February, 1976".

Your petitioners view the imposition of this "so called" management fee as an immoral charge of which kind there is no parallel, known to us, imposed by any Housing Act law of any other State in Australia.

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

The petition conforms to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly and I have certified accordingly.

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

The petition was tabled (see paper No. 100).

QUESTIONS (5): WITHOUT NOTICE

1. UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

Fees

Mr BRYCE, to the Premier:

I ask the Premier whether he agrees with the education policy of the Country Party as expressed at the last State election, to give special attention to the maintenance of free tertiary education? If so, will he give the House the assurance that he will oppose fiercely any move by the Fraser Government to reintroduce fees for colleges of advanced education and universities in Western Australia?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

In answer to the honourable member I can say with complete conviction that this Government believes in an entire education programme, a very progressive education programme, and I feel it is quite wrong to take one particular aspect of education out of context. If, however, the honourable member wants me to deal more specifically with the question that he has asked, then I suggest he puts it on the notice paper and I will give him a considered answer, including an answer to the part of his question dealing with the policy of the Country Party.

2. COCKBURN SOUND *Industrial Effluent*

Mr A. R. TONKIN, to the Premier:

- (1) Will the Premier end the pre-variation and delay which has protected certain industries which are despoiling Cockburn Sound and inform the public of the details of wastes being discharged daily into its waters by—

Cuming Smith British
Petroleum
Australian Iron and Steel
Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd.
British Petroleum
State Electricity Commission

Cockburn Cement
Alcoa
Western Mining Corporation
Kwinana Nitrogen Company
Chemical Industries (Kwinana) Pty. Ltd.
Commonwealth Industrial Gases?

- (2) If he asserts that no such discharge is taking place as a result of the activities of any of the foregoing, will he name those which are not causing degradation of the sound?
- (3) If the Premier will not disclose such information, does he assert that Cockburn Sound does not belong to the people who therefore have no right to know such facts?
- (4) If in order to prevent the continuing despoliation of the sound, it could be necessary to renegotiate agreements with various corporations, will he give an undertaking to commence such negotiations forthwith with the intention of re-enacting the appropriate legislative sanctions?
- (5) Can he expect the public to take seriously his assurances as to the environmental safeguards which he claims will operate with relation to the jumbo steel project, when he has such a sorry record of environmental mismanagement as Cockburn Sound, which eloquently and daily testifies as to his true attitude towards the environment?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) to (5) In answer to the honourable member's question, I want to say firstly, it is based on wrong premises and a complete lack of appreciation of the true facts that exist, and in view of this I have no intention of giving him an answer. However, if he wishes to frame the question in a more appropriate form and put it on the notice paper, I will give a considered answer.

Mr A. R. Tonkin: You will give the facts, will you?

3. STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE

Franchise: Report

Mr HARMAN, to the Premier:

- (1) Does the Premier recall that on numerous occasions over the past two years I have requested him to table the report of a Royal Commission which inquired into the franchise of the State Government Insurance Office?

- (2) Does he recall also that on the 3rd September, 1975, he informed me, "That the Government will in due course make this report available to the public"?
- (3) Further, does the Premier recall that on the 9th January, 1976, I wrote to him requesting the release of the report for public scrutiny and that this letter has remained unacknowledged and unanswered?
- (4) In view of the Premier's previous undertakings, I ask him will he now release this report to the public?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

- (1) to (4) I indicated to the Parliament that in due course the report would be released for public study and I repeat that. I think the honourable member will be pleased to know he will receive the report fairly soon.

4. WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Inquiry by Royal Commission

Mr HARTREY, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

The first of the questions that I proposed to ask the Minister for Labour and Industry has already been asked eloquently by the member for Maylands, so I will not inquire further about the report of the Royal Commission into the State Government Insurance Office. However, I would like to ask the Minister for Labour and Industry this question: Is it the intention to hold a Royal Commission into the whole question of workers' compensation, and if so, when does he anticipate the inquiry will commence?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

In reply to the honourable member may I say that it certainly was the intention of the Government to hold an inquiry into workers' compensation but the whole question has been put in the melting pot because we have had a Commonwealth election.

Mr Harman: How did that stop you?

Mr GRAYDEN: Because Commonwealth policies changed overnight.

Mr O'Connor: Advantageously.

Mr GRAYDEN: Advantageously, of course.

Mr A. R. Tonkin: Ask the pensioners!

Mr GRAYDEN: It is now a question of obtaining agreement between the State and Commonwealth Governments in order to determine this question once and for

all. In the circumstances, it would be foolish in the extreme to think in terms of an inquiry in Western Australia which, after all, would not mean anything.

Mr Hartrey: Why?

Mr GRAYDEN: The whole question must be considered on a national basis.

Several members interjected.

5.

PENSIONERS

Upgrading of Benefits

Mr B. T. BURKE, to the Premier:

Bearing in mind that it is now two years since the Premier's policy speech in which he agreed and encouraged the Premiers to upgrade pensioners' benefits, is he concerned about the delay in providing any real benefits to pensioners, and can he report to the House when the result of the pensioners' committee of inquiry will be implemented?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

As I have said on a number of occasions, the report that we commissioned and which was received and made public, was sent to the Prime Minister of the day. It was sent also to the Premiers of the other States and their co-operation sought because the honourable member will know, if he has read the report, that it involves a nation-wide look at quite a few of the proposed fringe benefits.

To date, there has not been a very great response—certainly not at the Federal level. However, I have renewed the representations to the new Prime Minister and I hope to press them further with him to see whether he can bring the matter before the Premiers as a whole so that we can achieve some concerted action. This is particularly important in view of the greater mobility of the people of Australia today as opposed to a few years ago.

In the meantime, of course, the Western Australian Government has moved on one of the recommendations, which was an election promise, and has ensured that pensioners in the north will get a free return air trip to Perth each year.

In addition, we will be pressing for better interstate and Commonwealth communication in these areas of fringe benefits in the hope that we can achieve a combined effort to have some additional ones given to pensioners.

There needs to be co-operation between all the States. At the moment, we have a situation where these benefits differ greatly between the various States. To the best of my knowledge, Western Australia provides better travel benefits than the other States, but still we have pensioners coming here from the Eastern States and complaining that the Eastern States provide better benefits in other areas and that Western Australia should be providing the same benefits. By better interstate co-operation, I hope we can arrive at a much more acceptable and uniform series of fringe benefits.

PUBLIC AND BANK HOLIDAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Leave to Introduce

SIR CHARLES COURT (Nedlands—Premier) [8.52 p.m.]: In order to preserve the privilege of the House to initiate legislation, I move, without notice—

That leave be given to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Public and Bank Holidays Act, 1972.

Question put and passed; leave granted.

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by Sir Charles Court (Premier), and read a first time.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Distribution of Copies

THE SPEAKER (Mr Hutchinson): Accompanied by members of this Chamber, I attended His Excellency the Governor in the Legislative Council Chamber to hear the Speech which His Excellency was pleased to deliver to members of both Houses of Parliament. For the sake of greater accuracy, I have caused printed copies of the Speech to be distributed amongst members of this Chamber.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: FIRST DAY

Motion

MR TUBBY (Greenough) [8.53 p.m.]: I move—

That the following Address-in-Reply to His Excellency's Speech be agreed to—

May it please Your Excellency:

We, the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of the State of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to address to Parliament.

As a representative of a country electorate, I must say how pleased we are at Sir Wallace Kyle's appointment as Governor of Western Australia. His understanding and knowledge of country life in our State

and his very distinguished service career very ably fit him to be our Queen's representative.

I am sure Sir Wallace and Lady Kyle will be most welcome when visiting our country centres, and I believe they will feel very much at home with our people. We hope their stay in Western Australia will be a very happy one.

His Excellency made mention of the retirement of the Hon. Sir David Brand after 30 years as member for Greenough, and a record term as Premier of this State. I feel greatly honoured to have been elected member for Greenough to follow Sir David. Indeed, I feel very humble in the knowledge that I have been chosen by the people of my electorate to follow such a great man—one who I am sure has the highest respect of every member of this House and the people of Western Australia.

I deeply regret the circumstances that made it necessary for Sir David to retire after such an outstanding parliamentary career and I know I would be echoing the wish of all Western Australians, and in particular the people of the Greenough electorate, that he may have a long and happy retirement.

At this stage, I would like to thank members for the welcome to the Parliament they have given me. Being elected in the closing stages of a long session, the assistance and advice given me, especially from Parliament House staff, have been greatly appreciated.

I hope, with many years of farming experience and involvement in local government, to be able to make a worth-while contribution to the development of this wonderful State.

The additional costs borne by country people is of major concern, especially in districts not too far from Perth and, although I refer mainly to my electorate, I have no doubt that this would apply generally throughout most agricultural and pastoral areas of the State.

In the area centred on Geraldton, which is fast growing into a major regional centre, the higher costs of goods and services remains a factor inhibiting development. This applies not only to foodstuffs but also to all other items.

The reasons given for the higher prices in Geraldton, as opposed to Perth, are not only freight charges but also that sales tax is levied on the freight charges. This is a Commonwealth matter which I propose to take up with the appropriate Minister. The range of goods in country areas also is limited. This, of course, is more pronounced in the smaller mid-west towns.

I turn now to the matter of transport. Transport costs usually constitute one of the main disadvantages to country living,

and this certainly is true in our region. The current study on a rationalisation of transport policies in an endeavour to remove the many anomalies and arguments on road versus rail will, I hope, have regard for the changing scene and produce a more acceptable system from the point of view of both efficiency and cost.

The nonavailability of shipping from Geraldton to northern ports also has been of concern to a number of businesses. This places manufacturers in the area at a disadvantage in comparison with metropolitan manufacturers. For instance, to ship building material to Koolan Island, the Geraldton manufacturers must rail freight finished products to Perth for shipment to the island.

Might I suggest that on completion of the port upgrading at Geraldton, consideration be given to the greater use of this port as an outlet for manufactured goods?

I refer now to telephone and telegraph charges which, next to transport costs, in most cases are regarded as the highest cost liability of country locations. This problem has increased with the high charges of the past 12 months, and hits hardest people who need communication most because of isolation.

I turn now to State service charges. Whilst it is conceded that recent action by the Government has gone a long way in bringing water and electricity costs to a level comparable with city costs, the need to use greater quantities of water in arid areas to provide an equivalent environment is still a matter of major concern. A concerted effort is needed to provide this vital necessity at the lowest possible cost.

The cost of retaining doctors in country areas also is a problem. One shire has provided me with some of the costs involved in keeping a doctor in the town. The council provides a residence and surgery for the doctor, built from loan funds. Loan repayments are \$5 172 per annum, whilst rent returns only \$1 300 per annum, representing a net annual loss of \$3 872. Other costs total over \$4 000 a year. In addition, the council accepts the cost of maintaining gardens, etc. Whilst the house becomes a shire asset, additional costs remain an annual charge on all rate-payers.

I thought I would mention this to give some idea of what country ratepayers have to pay to retain a stable medical service and hospital facilities in country towns. This is brought about by the shortage of doctors willing to practise in country areas and the competition existing between country shires.

I now turn to the question of housing. The demand for housing in Geraldton and the surrounding area continues to be high. Price increases appear to be in excess of those experienced in the metropolitan area

over the past 12 months. A double-brick house in the \$30 000 range in Perth costs at least \$5 000 more to duplicate in Geraldton. A brick veneer home of the same plan would cost \$2 000 to \$3 000 more than a double-brick house in Perth.

A number of firms have stated that the cost of housing and the relatively high cost of land in comparison with other major centres have discouraged them from establishing in the Geraldton region. The availability of housing in smaller towns is also a problem. Some businessmen who are keen to employ additional staff maintain that this has not been possible because suitable housing is not available. The industrial and commercial housing authority could be the answer to this problem.

His Excellency made mention of the proposed legislation to assist primary producers to obtain home loan finance in rural areas and to build houses on farms. This is good news and is assistance which will be welcomed by a lot of new land farmers and their families who are living under poor conditions. The Government deserves to be congratulated on finding a solution to this long-standing problem.

With regard to regional responsibility, I was pleased to hear that the Government is implementing its policy of appointing regional administrators. Many delays in decision making are caused through Government departments as well as other business institutions not having branches or decision-making powers in country areas. Under the new proposals local government would be more involved and it would certainly expedite the handling of a wide range of services.

Primary and secondary education facilities are not significantly inferior to those in the metropolitan area where the population is reasonably stable. But in fast-growing towns such as Eneabba where demountable accommodation is provided the facilities need to be improved especially during summer. These units are just hot boxes with flat roofs. Some form of air cooling and fly screening is a necessity.

There is an urgent need for tertiary education facilities in the Geraldton region, especially now with the rapid growth of Geraldton as a major centre serving a vast area producing tremendous wealth in mining, agriculture, pastoral activities, rock lobster fishing and tourism. Also with the growth of large towns to the north people from these areas are looking to Geraldton as their main educational and cultural centre. For these reasons I urge that consideration be given to the establishment of a college of tertiary education in the Geraldton area in the near future.

There is also an urgent need for the establishment of a residential agricultural school in the region. The nearest agricultural school is at Cunderdin—over 560

kilometres from Geraldton. This type of training is essential today because of the need for potential farmers to be trained in the operation of today's farm machinery, which needs highly-skilled operators, and also to learn other modern farming skills and general farm management.

I come to the question of the Agriculture Protection Board. Great concern has been expressed throughout the country at the spread of noxious weeds. My discussions with farmers indicate a degree of misunderstanding regarding the responsibilities of the Agriculture Protection Board inspectors and landholders. In the meantime noxious weeds continue to spread and are greatly reducing the productivity of some of our best agricultural and grazing land. I urge the Government to take the legislative action necessary to clarify the situation as soon as possible.

We are now plagued with the threat of skeleton weed which can reduce wheat yields by up to 50 per cent and make grain crops almost impossible to harvest. Isolated infestations have been found throughout most of the grain growing areas of the State. There is need to continue the current attack on this pest. I hope that new legislation will be passed early in this session to enable the setting up of the zone-controlling bodies which will return greater authority for control to the local level. If we do not make a solid stand now with everybody's co-operation it will be too late and finance will only be wasted in half-hearted controls. Landholders must face up to their responsibilities and co-operate with staff of the Agriculture Protection Board.

A tremendous amount of work is being done in the mid-west region, which takes in the Assembly electorates of Greenough and Geraldton, to develop tourism. We have a climate suitable to attract tourists the whole year round with excellent beaches and fishing areas suitably equipped with caravan parks and camping areas and with some of the best wildflowers in season which one would hope to see anywhere in Australia.

A lot of attention has been paid to the restoration of old buildings in the Greenough and Northampton Shires where some of the State's earliest settlements took place. The restoration and the display of old farming implements and so on create a great deal of interest.

Kalbarri is a town with tremendous potential for development as a wonderful holiday resort with beautiful beaches, excellent fishing and scenic drives to the magnificent gorges of the Murchison River where all types of flora and fauna abound. I feel that the Government should give some attention to the planning and the development of Kalbarri. At present it is endeavouring to grow within its own

means. With planning assistance and outside financial help Kalbarri could be developed into one of the most pleasant holiday resorts with an all-year-round climate attractive to tourists.

I have always believed in local government that the elected member should always be accessible to the people he represents. With this in mind I have established an electorate office in the centre of my electorate through which I hope to give good representation to the electors of Greenough.

Mr Speaker, I sincerely thank you and members for the courtesy extended during this, my maiden speech, and for the honour of moving the motion.

MR CRANE (Moore) [9.06 p.m.]: I formally second the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr J. T. Tonkin (Leader of the Opposition).

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE: SPECIAL

SIR CHARLES COURT (Nedlands—Premier) [9.07 p.m.]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until 4.30 p.m. on Tuesday, the 30th March.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.08 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, the 30th March, 1976

The PRESIDENT (the Hon. A. F. Griffith) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

Report

THE HON. J. HEITMAN (Upper West) [4.40 p.m.]: I desire to present a report from the Standing Orders Committee which after several meetings has recommended certain amendments. These are included in the report together with reasons for such amendments in a schedule appended to the report.

At this juncture it is proposed to submit two motions to the House, the first of which will be that the report be received, and the second will provide that it shall be printed and distributed to members for consideration by the Council at a subsequent sitting.

I move—

That the report be received.

Question put and passed.

THE HON. J. HEITMAN (Upper West) [4.42 p.m.]: I move—

That the report be printed and that consideration of the report be made an order of the day for a subsequent sitting.

Question put and passed.

The report was tabled (see paper No. 104).

QUESTIONS (7): ON NOTICE

1. INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

Reports

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON, to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for Industrial Development:

- (1) Is the Government aware that the Australian Associated Chamber of Manufactures has opposed the decision of the Australian Government not to publish final reports of the Industries Assistance Commission as had been the practice of the previous Labor Administration?
- (2) Has the Government received representation on this matter from the Western Australian Chamber of Manufactures?
- (3) Has the Western Australian Government protested to the Australian Government in support of the Chamber of Manufactures?
- (4) If not, will it do so?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

- (1) Yes, the Government is aware that the Associated Chamber of Manufactures of Australia has opposed the decision of the Commonwealth Government to publish "draft" reports of the Industries Assistance Commission rather than "final" reports.
- (2) No.
- (3) No, the Government has not protested to the Commonwealth Government.
- (4) Action by the Government will be considered at the appropriate time.

2. KINLOCK SCHOOL

Accommodation

The Hon. CLIVE GRIFFITHS, to the Minister for Education:

As many parents are concerned at the accommodation problem which necessitated the changing of the boundaries for the Kinlock Primary school at the beginning of this school year, and in view of the continuing high rate of home building in the Ferndale area, would the Minister advise—

- (a) what steps his department intends taking to ensure that next year no parents, or