

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Third Session of the Twenty-eighth Parliament

Parliament was prorogued on the 11th February, 1976, to the 25th March, 1976, when it met for the despatch of business.

Parliament was opened by His Excellency the Governor (Air Chief Marshal Sir Wallace Kyle, G.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., D.F.C.).

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

Legislative Council

Thursday, the 25th March, 1976

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

The Legislative Council met at 8.00 p.m. The PRESIDENT (the Hon. A. F. Griffith) took the Chair.

PROCLAMATION

The Clerk of the Parliaments (Mr J. B. Roberts) 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.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Delivery

His Excellency the Governor (Air Chief Marshal Sir Wallace Kyle, G.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., D.F.C.) entered the Council Chamber at 8.05 p.m.; and, the members of the Legislative Assembly having also attended in the Chamber obediently to summons, His Excellency was pleased to deliver the following speech—

Mr President and Honourable Members of the Legislative Council:

Mr Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly:

You meet here today for the Third Session of the 28th Parliament of Western Australia.

This is the first occasion as the representative of Her Majesty The Queen that I am privileged to open State Parliament.

May I record my sincere appreciation of the warm reaction my appointment generated among Western Australians, and for the most friendly welcome to my wife and me.

We look forward to meeting as many people as possible on our visits throughout the State.

With profound regret I refer to the deaths of four former Parliamentarians who served this State well. They were:

The Honourable Arthur Valentine Rutherford Abbott, formerly Member for Mt. Lawley, who held the Attorney-Generalship and other portfolios;

The Honourable Mervyn Forrest, formerly Member for the North Province in the Legislative Council;

Mr Percival George Charles Potter, formerly Member for Subiaco;

Mr Henry Curran, formerly Member for Cockburn.

It is also with regret we record the retirement from Parliament of the Honourable Sir David Brand. He was Member for Greenough for 30 years, and during that time served a record term as Premier of this State from 1959 to 1971.

Electoral Boundaries

Amendments to the Electoral Districts Act approved last year by State Parliament provided for four additional Metropolitan seats in the Legislative Assembly, and one additional Metropolitan Province in the Legislative Council.

The electoral Commissioners have submitted proposals for re-distribution of State Electoral Districts and Provinces.

Emergency Services

The efficiency of the State Emergency Service in co-operation with Local Government, Mining Companies and voluntary bodies was once again evidenced when Cyclone Joan struck Port Hedland on December 8.

Port Hedland citizens deserve the highest commendation for their self-reliant attitude during and immediately after the cyclone.

Special relief programmes and funds greatly ameliorated the effect on local residents and pastoralists.

State Finances

Indications are that the Budget introduced in State Parliament in October will achieve a balance in 1975/76, notwithstanding current inflation and other adverse economic factors.

The Government is most concerned about the present nation-wide inflation and unemployment.

While the recession and unemployment has been less severe than elsewhere in Australia, Western Australia still suffers an unacceptable level of inflation and unemployment.

The State Government will co-operate with the Commonwealth Government in its efforts to abate and control inflation, as the key to re-building investor and consumer confidence, and ultimately, improved employment prospects for the people of Western Australia.

Federal-State Relations

The Interstate Co-operation Agreement, recently signed by Western Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, provides for a Council of States to co-ordinate and maximise co-operation between the Commonwealth and the States.

The State Government supports Federal Government tax-sharing proposals embodied in the "New Federalism".

The February Premiers' Conference agreed on initial steps to introduce the scheme.

The proposals are the most significant since Uniform Taxation was introduced in 1942. They could reverse dramatically a well-entrenched tendency in Australian administration to over-centralise power and decision making.

The Government welcomes the inclusion of Local Government in the proposals. It is a positive recognition of the increased responsibility accruing to this tier of Government.

Industrial and Resource Development

The year ahead presents great challenges and opportunities for our industrial growth and resources development.

Priority is thus accorded to negotiating development of North-West Shelf natural gas. It will serve existing and proposed industry in the Pilbara, and the increasing demand in the metropolitan and other areas in the south of the State.

Much complex negotiation remains both within Australia and abroad. The Government is looking for decisions on developing the North-West Shelf this year, but to begin physical development will certainly take longer.

During his brief visit to Japan in April, to discuss policy affecting Western Australian development, the Premier conferred with the Prime Minister of Japan, senior Japanese Ministers and industry leaders.

Visits by the Premier to Britain and the United States in July related to the Government's decision to seek immediate negotiations direct with the companies for development of North-West Shelf gas and thus circumvent the then Commonwealth Government's reluctance to co-operate.

Despite the current international recession in minerals and metals, the State Government is proceeding with negotiations for several other large-scale resource developments.

The Government believes that in the foreseeable future, increased world demand will create shortages and that potential developers should place emphasis on this probability in considering any imminent decisions to expand.

Trade Promotion

The Department of Industrial Development's vigorous export promotion programme includes a number of Government-sponsored visits by industrialists and departmental officers to South-East Asia, the Arabian Gulf and Libya. Only recently the Minister returned after negotiating resource development and trade promotion in Britain, Europe, Japan and South-East Asia.

The Rural Sector

It is hoped 1976 will bring recovery to those agricultural industries which have suffered economic hardship in recent years.

There are grounds for cautious optimism in the promise of another good wheat year.

There has been another good grain harvest and Western Australia will probably see another record planting.

The wool market appears to be strengthening and the wool stockpile is being reduced. In fact, it is proving valuable as an assured supply for Australia's customers.

Also, 1976 should see better consolidation of the dairy industry with expansion of the wholemilk quota system and increased promotional activity.

The Government, following consideration in Kununurra by a Cabinet Committee and advisers, of an interim report by C.S.R. on sugar growing and milling potential in the Ord Valley, has decided to proceed with a sugar cane pilot farm.

Field and research work on some other promising crops like rice and peanuts, will also be stepped up.

Mining

Value of mineral production for the calendar year 1975 is expected to exceed \$1 000 million. This is despite the difficulty experienced by the mineral industry in faltering world markets and restrictive regulations on development of fuel and energy resources.

Representations by the State Government for Commonwealth financial assistance for the goldmining industry were unsuccessful. The Government regrets that such assistance is not forthcoming.

The State Government made generous contributions to try and keep both KLV's Fimiston and Hill 50's Mt. Magnet mine development programmes going. It is still ready and willing to participate further if the companies can arrange the required matching funds.

Education

The Government continues its long-standing commitment to education. It has received, and currently is studying the exhaustive Partridge Committee Report on Western Australian Post-Secondary and Technical Education.

Enrolments at Government primary and secondary schools increased from 195 000 in 1975 to more than 200 000 this year. Technical division enrolments also have increased by about nine per cent.

The recent opening of the Chidley Education Centre at Mosman Park brought a significant development for country pupils requiring remedial education. Accommodation is provided at the Centre for parents, whose presence will help a child's remedial programme.

Housing

The State Housing Commission expects to complete its 1975/76 programme of 757 units by the end of the financial year. Greater emphasis on construction in rural areas is reflected in the 361 country units included in the programme.

The home-building industry is currently responding to an increased demand with completions likely to reach 16 000—or 2 000 above last year's total.

Meanwhile, Government policies are geared to meeting the demands of prospective home-owners by ensuring a continuing flow of serviced residential lots on to the market.

Cultural Affairs

During 1975 Western Australia's major performing arts companies attracted higher attendances than for many years, reflecting growing appreciation of cultural activities.

It is expected that tenders for the proposed new Art Gallery will be called mid-November, 1976. This will be recognised as the first major step in the Government's programme to provide Perth with an outstanding cultural centre.

The Environment

The Government continues to plan for preservation and improvement of our natural environment. In co-operation with Perth City Council, it is currently beautifying Heirisson Island and this will enhance greatly one of the city's main approaches.

The 4 000 hectares set aside for future institutional, recreational and environmental purposes north of Beechboro includes a planned 1 156 hectare playground reserve incorporating flora and fauna reserves, artificial lakes, and improvements to the Mussel Pool area.

The Government announced recently that an additional 75 600 square kilometres would be set aside for National Parks and Nature Reserves throughout Western Australia.

Regional Administration

In implementing proposals for regional administration, the first two Centres are already operating in Kimberley and Pilbara, and the establishment of other Centres is being organised and will be finalised before March of next year.

Legal Affairs

The State is already administering the provisions of the Family Law Act of Australia. Shortly the Family Court of Western Australia will come into operation when the Family Court Act is proclaimed.

A District Court complex is to be built in central Perth to accommodate District Court, Local Court and Petty Sessional matters, and improved Court facilities will be provided in some country centres.

Progressive measures in the legal system will include provision for written statements of evidence in committal proceedings, and the introduction of a Community Service Order Scheme as an alternative penalty for certain offenders.

An important facility has been developed for the care of victims of sexual assault.

The scheme to involve the Aboriginal community in law enforcement promises success, and will provide valuable assistance to Police Officers. Eighteen trained Aboriginal Police Aides are now stationed in areas of strong tribal influence throughout the State.

The Government has also successfully initiated a system of Honorary Aboriginal Probation and Parole Officers.

Hospitals and Health

Community Health Services now cover most of the State, and mobile medical and nursing teams are practising community preventive medicine.

In some areas the scheme is already resulting in reduced hospital admissions and length of stay in hospitals.

Major projects have been, or will be commenced during the year at the Perth Medical Centre site, and at Royal Perth, King Edward Memorial and Fremantle Hospitals.

In addition, tenders were let earlier this year for the construction of a 45-bed hospital at Bridgetown and a 57-bed hospital at Busselton. The combined cost of these two new hospitals will exceed \$5 million.

It is pleasing to note that replacement buildings to the value of \$1½ million will be brought into use next month at the Port Hedland Hospital which was almost totally destroyed by Cyclone Joan last December.

Under State/Commonwealth arrangement for training and employing dental therapists, schools have been established at Mt. Henry and Warwick.

Transport and Traffic

In public transport, patronage of metropolitan bus services increased over the previous year. The Metropolitan Transport Trust's programme of attracting additional passengers by providing more comfortable buses is thus proving effective, but operating losses continue to mount alarmingly.

The Government's current Transport study of the State's southern areas aims to determine the effectiveness of policies largely unchanged since 1934. Preliminary findings are expected by the end of the year.

To serve the mineral sands industry, a new rail link Eneabba/Dongara will open by the end of April.

A combined rail terminal/administration headquarters will be completed at East Perth later this year for Westrail.

By the end of 1976, the Road Traffic Authority will virtually control traffic State-wide.

There was a welcome reduction of 31 in the number of fatal accidents on Western Australian roads in 1975. The Government will continue its campaign to reduce the road toll further.

The Government has fulfilled its promise of one return air-fare yearly to eligible pensioners in northern areas, effective from January 1.

Public Works

Bunbury's new Inner Harbour will be officially opened on Friday, April 2. Dredging is completed, and work on both the Alcoa and woodchip berths is nearing completion.

A \$2.4 million berth is being built at Geraldton.

Before the end of 1976, completion of the South Australian link will seal the Eyre Highway over its entire trans-continental length with great benefits to our tourist and transport industries.

The Western Australian Government completed sealing the section to the Western Australian/South Australian border in 1969.

Deferred Legislation

A number of Bills held over from the last Session in order that the views of interested persons and groups could be obtained, will be re-submitted for the consideration of Honourable Members. These

will include amendments to the Liquor Act (with revisions); repeal and re-enactment of the Dog Act; and the Public Areas (Use of Vehicles) Bill, which seeks to regulate the operations—on public lands—of recreational vehicles such as mini-bikes, trail bikes and beach buggies.

Proposed Legislation

I now refer broadly to other Bills it is proposed to place before Parliament this Session. These will provide for—

- Legislation to replace and modernise existing laws relating to land taxes.
 - Repealing and re-enacting the Building Societies' Act which, *inter alia*, will allow Societies greater participation in land and property development, and to finance their own rental projects.
 - Establishing a National Parks Authority to more effectively control and improve management of National Parks.
 - Implementing Law Reform Commission recommendations regarding children not independently or separately represented in legal proceedings.
 - Amending the Bush Fires Act to decentralise decision-making and streamline administration of the Act.
 - Amending the Local Government Act in keeping with the need for constant review of the responsibilities and duties of Municipal Councils.
 - Amending the Death Duty legislation.
 - Extensively amending the Child Welfare Act.
 - Amending the Forests Act to meet current requirements for management of forest lands.
 - Assisting primary producers to obtain home loan finance in rural areas and to build houses on farms.
 - Registering and controlling subsidised hostels for discharged mental patients.
- Other legislation will include Bills to:—
- Amend the Western Australian Tertiary Education Commission Act.
 - Transfer responsibility for the protection of native flora from the Forests Department to the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife.
 - Amend the Government Employees' (Promotions Appeal Board) Act to clarify certain aspects of promotion and other associated matters.

Update and re-write the Employment Brokers' Act for the registration and regulation of fee-charging employment agents.

Amend the Business Names Act.

It is proposed also to introduce legislation to provide for establishment of a Rivers and Estuaries Protection Board.

I now declare this Session of Parliament open, and trust that Providence may bless your labours.

His Excellency and the members of the Legislative Assembly then withdrew from the Chamber, and the President resumed the Chair.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

COCKBURN SOUND NAVAL BASE

Nuclear Vessels

The Hon. R. THOMPSON, to the Minister for Federal Affairs:

- (1) Did the respective State and Federal Ministers reach agreement prior to the announcement that the Cockburn Sound naval base would be made available for nuclear powered warships?
- (2) If so, would the Minister advise of the date and text of the agreement?

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF replied:

- (1) and (2) There was and still is a clear understanding between the present Commonwealth and State Governments on the use of port facilities in this State by visiting allied warships whether conventional or nuclear powered. The usual administrative arrangements will apply for such visits.

BUSINESS NAMES ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Leave to Introduce

THE HON. N. McNEILL (Lower West—Minister for Justice) [8.45 p.m.]: In order to assert and maintain the undoubted rights and privileges of this House to initiate legislation, I move, without notice—

For leave to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Business Names Act, 1962.

Question put and passed; leave granted.

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by the Hon. N. McNeill (Minister for Justice), and read a first time.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Distribution of Copies

THE PRESIDENT (the Hon. A. F. Griffith): I have to announce that for the sake of accuracy I have obtained copies of His Excellency's Speech which will now be distributed to members.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: FIRST DAY

Motion

THE HON. M. McALEER (Upper West) [8.47 p.m.]: I move—

That the following address be presented to His Excellency—

May it please Your Excellency:

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

Mr President, I appreciate the honour of being given the opportunity to thank His Excellency. Although I am a comparatively inexperienced parliamentarian I welcome the opportunity to initiate this debate and give consideration to the Speech which His Excellency has just been pleased to deliver.

Because it is a Speech which expresses the purpose of the Government and the aspirations with which it came to office, it gives an indication of the measure of success which the Government has achieved so far and the direction it proposes to follow. In particular it marks the great opportunity given to Western Australia by the new federalist policy in Canberra, which aims at a return to and an extension of decentralised government. It is an opportunity, if we are able to grasp it, which will enable us to provide better government, to bring government closer to the people, and to involve people more than has been done previously. In this way we will be better able to reflect their aspirations, and be able to continue our development as people no less than the development of our resources.

It is perhaps significant that very early in the Speech His Excellency made reference to the self-reliance and resourcefulness of the people of Port Hedland in the wake of cyclone Joan. I think we would all agree that courage and self-reliance are root virtues and without them other virtues tend to fail. If we are to take advantage of these opportunities offered to Western Australia by the new federalism and our own Government's commitment to wider responsibilities for local government and a decentralised administration, we are going to need as individuals, as Western Australians, and as Australians, both courage and self-reliance.

The Government came to office committed to combat inflation and unemployment. However, State Governments on their own can do only a limited amount, particularly when the Federal Government is following inflationary policies and insists on extending its control as far as possible over the policies and programmes of the State.

However, now that the Federal Government is also committed to the fight against inflation, one of our first responsibilities has been to accept the co-operation which it offers so that our efforts will be concerted with those of other States and the Commonwealth, and thus be so much more effective. It is a pity that the Labor Governments of South Australia and Tasmania did not sign the Interstate Co-operation Agreement, but perhaps when the new federalism policy is fully worked out and functioning they will see the advantage and the need to do so. In the meantime our own policies will need to continue to be as noninflationary as possible. The fact that the Government was able to achieve a balanced Budget last year and hopes to achieve it again this year is evidence of its determination to tailor expenditure to its income. It is not an easy path to follow with the ever-increasing expectation of people for better living standards. I think many of us, perhaps most of us, agree with cuts in public spending, but for other people, and for interests other than our own.

No member representing a large rural area as I do, can fail to be conscious every day of the things that are still lacking in our communities, whether they are in housing, in communications, in doctors, in education, in the decentralisation of industry, or in basic facilities such as water supplies and electricity. The Government has addressed itself to all these matters during its term of office, and progress has been made within the limits of the Budget; although sometimes it has been only the important first steps that have been taken.

For instance, it is not only the number of country units constructed by the State Housing Commission which is welcomed, or even the greater proportion of funds allocated to housing in rural areas but also the new policy approach which allows the commission discretion to build houses for developing areas without being entirely bound by numbers of listed applicants—so often a self-defeating criterion.

The proposed legislation to assist primary producers to obtain home loan finance in rural areas and to build houses on farms will meet a great need that has existed for many years, and which has been difficult to overcome.

The reorganisation of the State Energy Commission, together with the easing of the supply position, has resulted in a speeding up of SEC extensions and the possibility of firmer planning and the equalising of charges throughout the State.

In education the Government has honoured its promise to provide additional funds for isolated children living away from home. It has begun to implement its pre-primary school policy with unexpected rapidity, to the great benefit of many areas which were either deprived or in difficulties. The Government has begun

a pilot matriculation scheme for children who are isolated which has the possibility of bringing a new opportunity in secondary education to country children.

I would particularly like to compliment the Government on the recent opening of the Chidly Education Centre, which should go a long way towards remedying a very difficult situation for people in the country whose children require remedial education.

I would like to compliment and congratulate the Government on the success it has had in encouraging new industry and mineral development in a very unfavourable economic climate.

However, it is not only the State Government which is involved in the provision of amenities and the development of resources. Throughout the country areas—in every shire of my province, for example—there is evidence of the will to expand and develop. Local authorities are willing to assume new responsibilities and to broaden the scope of their involvement in the community; and they are also interested in the promotion of industry and commercial activities in order to assist the decentralising process. It is very heartening that under the new Commonwealth-State financial arrangements provision is to be made for funds to go to local authorities—funds which will be given as of right with no influence from either Commonwealth or State as to their spending. Just as the State Government has to adopt a responsible attitude in its finances, so also have local authorities.

Public money is so easily wasted. It is so easy to accept a specific grant which does not really suit the need and circumstances and to spend it any old how, rather than lose the chance of getting the money. I believe that the giving of grants of right to local government will place the responsibility for their spending firmly and squarely on the councils, and will encourage them to obtain the maximum value.

Just as there has been a need in recent years for far more partnership between the Commonwealth and State Governments, so too there has been a need in Western Australia for fuller co-operation and consultation between State Government and local authorities. I am glad that this need is in fact being recognised, although there is some way to go before the attitude of every department ceases to be that it alone knows what is best for an area and the locals can either accept what it offers or go without.

When local authorities and other people think of government, what usually comes to mind is the youngster at the front desk whom they sometimes do not seem to be able to get past in order to state their case, or the more senior official who is endeavouring to apply policy and planning as it already exists. Parliament, as an aspect of government, is not often taken into account. Certainly there are people

who say there is very little to take into account and that it can hardly be reckoned to be more than a rubber stamp for whatever Executive happens to be in power. It is an attitude sometimes shared by parliamentarians themselves, no matter how hard they work in their electorates to solve the problems of individuals, however much they may mediate between their constituents and the departments, or whatever they may achieve by their individual contributions to legislation.

I believe the stress that electors put on the local appearances of their parliamentarians makes many members feel that very little, if any, of the work they devote to legislation is of any moment at all to their constituents. Again, it is felt—and I believe even by the best parliamentarians—that there is only a limited area in which they can contribute to legislation, partly as a result of the party system and Executive government, and partly as a consequence of the great complexity of modern government.

It can be fairly argued that every member has the possibility of specialising in one or two fields, and that there is a great willingness in the departments to provide information. It can also be said that in the party room and through party committees a back-bencher does have the chance to influence legislation and to inform himself to a certain extent. There is even some scope for a private member to initiate legislation. But in these days of complicated government these things are limited; and because of these limitations it can be said that one of the functions of Parliament—the legislative function—is also limited.

It is one of the justifications of two Houses of Parliament that they provide the opportunity for a second look at legislation, and time for the consideration of complex Bills or Bills which have a particular community interest. It is the Legislative Council which is particularly charged with this reviewing function.

Sometimes through pressure of business and the way in which it comes to the Council from the Assembly it is not possible to give all Bills the consideration they deserve. So again Parliament is limited in this function. One remedy of course would be simply to provide more time, but I suggest that we should go further than this and make at least a modest start in this House with the system of standing committees as well as make more use of the Select Committee system, and in this way remove some of the limitations on both the legislative and reviewing functions of the House.

By using Select Committees and standing committees to investigate matters of public interest or inquire into specific Bills members of Parliament can draw on all available expert opinion and become well informed. Both sides of the House are able to contribute in a nonparty political way and members of the electorate who give

evidence and make submissions take part in the proceedings of Parliament itself, and at the same time an important new channel of communication is opened up between citizens and Parliament. Further, so long as the committees are held in public, and preferably away from the House, the electorate has the opportunity to see Parliament at work in a way that is sometimes more impressive than a set debate or the House working as a Committee of the whole.

I know very well that members of the Legislative Council have many calls on their time and heavy electorate duties and that we have only a small number of members of Parliament in this Chamber as compared with the Senate, for instance. Nevertheless, it should not be impossible to support at least one or two standing committees—one to look at subordinate legislation and keep regulations under constant review, and another to cover legislation dealing with commerce, for instance, since there is so much of this in the Western Australian Parliament. I think it would be well worth the effort of experimenting with them if in this way members become more versed in important areas of public interest, and the public more involved in the parliamentary process. This House, which has a tradition of independence and a function of review, will be better equipped to support the one and carry out the other.

The Hon. John Williams has from time to time made a strong case for greater use of the committee system, and I would like to add to his plea for its establishment and hope that the Government will be prepared to move on the matter.

We live in difficult and complex times—times when Parliaments are under challenge not only as instruments of government, but also as representatives of the people. If we can, as others have, improve on the system we have been following then this can only lead to better government.

I should like to congratulate the Government on the progress it has made so far, and on the policies and programmes that it has initiated and is carrying forward. No-one would deny that a great deal remains to be done as will always be the case, but the Government is going in the right direction, and I very much hope that in accepting the challenge of new responsibilities it will successfully contribute to the well-being and progress of this State and Australia.

THE HON. CLIVE GRIFFITHS (South-East Metropolitan) [9.04 p.m.]: I formally second the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. R. Thompson (Leader of the Opposition).

House adjourned at 9.05 p.m.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: No-one could ever build a factory in Kununurra while the present legislation exists in Canberra.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I will also quote what you have said, but it will be the other way around.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: Those figures from Manitoba were very interesting, but you did not mention the relief from probate in order to induce people into the industry.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: No, I admit I have not followed that up. If you, Mr President, or other members in this Chamber wish to sight any of the specific costings on the factors I have mentioned I will be pleased to supply the papers to prove the need for changes in Government thinking. I have used my hometown of Kununurra as an example, because I do have a family business there and the figures are more readily available from that source. Kununurra is also one of the towns in this State which has extremes of high costs caused by freight and district allowances.

It should also be noted, however, that there are other remote area towns which have similar problems and disabilities in varying degrees. To emphasise this in relation to larger enterprises, I will quote from the chairman's statement to Hamersley Iron Pty. Ltd. The statement was made in March, 1976, and in part reads as follows—

The current low return on assets employed adversely affects the capacity of the Company, in an inflationary situation, to generate the funds necessary to maintain and to expand the business as well as carrying out working capital requirements.

Hamersley took an opportunity to carry out two major borrowings during 1975 in May. \$US35,000,000 were raised on the Eurobond market. This was Hamersley's fourth Eurobond issue. In November, Hamersley became the third Australian company to place a debenture issue on the US institutional market. Six US Life Offices, with wide experience in project financing, were involved. The issue raised \$US30,000,000. By entering this new market, Hamersley further broadened its borrowing base.

Funds required for stocks and stores rose to \$48,724,000 at the end of 1975, compared with \$28,422,000 a year earlier...

That is nearly double. To continue with the report—

... Further cost inflation and the increased stockpiles, together with materials purchased for the railway re-railing programme, the main factors requiring the additional funds.

In 1975 capital expenditures totalled \$53,150,000. These expenditures were required primarily to maintain or improve the efficiency and productivity of the operations and better serve the needs of the steel industry of Japan and other countries. The ability of the Company to continue programmes of fixed and working capital investments depends ultimately on the achievement of an adequate level of profitability in real terms. The level of selling prices is a major overriding factor. At present ore prices, capital expenditure of the current magnitude cannot be sustained.

"Himet" still not viable.

I wish to thank those Ministers and officers who have done so much to achieve some equity for northern people, particularly in the fields of State Housing Commission rentals—which was absolutely marvellous—power costs—commercial power costs have been equalised throughout the State which is a tremendous move forward—and education allowances which the previous Labor Government had cancelled have now been partially reinstated at a figure calculated by the Government and satisfactory to some people. I also mention pensioner concessions, which I and others have asked for and which have been approved by the Treasurer; and also recreation allowances. There is certainly an imbalance in this item, but in the right direction. I must congratulate the Minister for allowing that to be done.

I also thank the Ministers in this House who have provided services which previously did not exist in some parts of the north. Some of those services still have a long way to go before parity is reached. However, I hope the understanding of our problems will produce further goals of achievement in the policy of decentralisation.

I hope that all members of this House will be able to support my views and project them in conversation with Western Australians and visitors from the Eastern States. With this method of communication, and with the help of the media, we might jointly achieve equity for those people who work towards the development of our remote areas for the benefit of our State and our nation. I support the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. R. T. Leeson.

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION

Assembly Personnel

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying the personnel of sessional committees appointed by that House.

House adjourned at 8.07 p.m.