

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, the 9th March, 1978

MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY

The Legislative Assembly met at 8.00 p.m.

The SPEAKER (Mr Thompson) 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., K.C.V.O., C.B.E., D.S.O., D.F.C., K.St.J.) summoning the second session of the Twenty-ninth Parliament.

SWEARING-IN OF MEMBER

THE SPEAKER (Mr Thompson): I desire to announce that before me on the 7th March last Mr Keith Alan Ridge did take and subscribe the Oath of Allegiance according to law.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Welcome by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mr Thompson): At this point, in the few minutes before Black Rod appears, I would like to extend a very sincere welcome to our special visitors.

In particular, I wish to make special mention of some of the very distinguished guests in the persons of three of the four surviving former Premiers of Western Australia; four of the surviving Speakers of this Assembly; and two of the former Clerks of the Legislative Assembly.

It is my honour to announce the presence of the Hon. Frank Wise, a member of this House for 18 years and a member of the Legislative Council for 15 years, and Premier from 1945 to 1947; the Hon. Sir David Brand, K.C.M.G., a member of this House for 30 years and Premier from 1959 to 1971; and the Hon. John Tonkin, A.C., a member of this House for 44 years and Premier from 1971 to 1974. They are the three former Premiers to whom I made reference. It is a delight to see them here and on behalf of members I do sincerely welcome them.

It is a pity that the Hon. Bert Hawke, who was a member of this House for 35 years and Premier from 1953 to 1959, unfortunately was unable to accept the invitation to be present this evening. He is attending a former engagement at Kapunda

in South Australia on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of a school which he attended.

The former Speakers who are present this evening are the Hon. John Hearman, C.M.G., a member of this House for 18 years and Speaker from 1959 to 1968; Mr Hugh Guthrie, a member of this House for 12 years and Speaker from 1968 to 1971; Mr Daniel Norton, a member of this House for 21 years and Speaker from 1971 to 1974; and the Hon. Sir Ross Hutchinson, D.F.C., a member of this House for 27 years and Speaker from 1974 to 1977.

The Hon. Charles North, B.A., was unable to attend and from my calculations I estimate he is in his 92nd year. Obviously, he would be a fairly frail man at this age but it is a pity he was not able to be here this evening.

The two Clerks I mentioned are Mr Len Hawley, an officer of this House for 37 years and Clerk from 1966 to 1970; and Mr Joss Bartlett, D.F.M., an officer of this House for 44 years and Clerk from 1970 to 1975.

On behalf of the members of this Chamber I extend a sincere welcome to our special guests, and I thank them for the courtesy they have paid us by attending our opening this evening.

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., K.C.V.O., C.B.E., D.S.O., D.F.C., K.St.J.) deliver the opening Speech (*vide* Council report *ante*), returned to the Legislative Assembly Chamber.

IMMIGRATION

Catherine Dobbs: Petition

MR PEARCE (Gosnells) [8.29 p.m.]: I have a petition from 118 students of the Gosnells High School which reads as follows—

The Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled.

We, the undersigned students of Gosnells High School and citizens of W.A. are of the opinion that the blind girl Catherine Dobbs should be allowed to migrate to Western Australia with her family, and we ask that the W.A. Government take what steps are available to it to facilitate her settlement in W.A.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray

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

The petition conforms with 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.

See petition No. 1.

QUESTIONS

Questions without notice were taken at this stage.

INVENTIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Leave to Introduce

SIR CHARLES COURT (Nedlands—Premier) [8.53 p.m.]: In order to assert and maintain the undoubted rights and privileges of the House to initiate legislation, I move, without notice—

That leave be given to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Inventions Act, 1975.

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 Thompson): 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 among members of this Chamber.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: FIRST DAY

Motion

MR MacKINNON (Murdoch) [8.55 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.

Mr Speaker, the opportunity to move this motion in reply to His Excellency's Speech is an honour I fully appreciate. In doing so, I would like to refer to some items in His Excellency's Speech as well as to some other areas of concern and interest to both my electorate and me. These are sentiments that I share. To show why this is so I feel it is important that we briefly examine some facts in relation to the national economy.

That inflation is on the decline in Australia is beyond doubt. Reference to the Consumer Price Index in recent years will evidence this. For example, the Consumer Price Index for the year ended the 31st December, 1974, showed an increase of 16.3 per cent. This has declined during the following years. The figure for the 12 months ended the 31st December, 1975, was 14 per cent, the figure for the 12 months ended the 31st December, 1976, was 14.4 per cent, and the figure for the last 12-month period to the 31st December, 1977, was 9.3 per cent.

It is confidently expected that the CPI will be below this figure at the end of this year.

It is apparent that the Federal Government with the assistance of the State Government's economic policies which have been primarily aimed at reducing inflation are working effectively. We can see the benefits of lower inflation beginning to emerge. Interest rates have begun to decline and provided inflation continues to moderate the downward movement of interest rates will continue.

These lower interest rates will benefit many individuals as well as encourage investment in both housing and industry. The decline in the rate of inflation will bring lasting benefits of greater purchasing power to consumers. This, combined with the indexation of tax rates and the recent Federal Government tax cuts, means that real spending power as exercised by consumers is increasing.

We all in Western Australia must, however, remember three important facts when discussing the economy. Firstly, we cannot have a meaningful and permanent reduction of interest rates without a permanent reduction in the underlying rate of inflation. Secondly, as was stated in the *Bank of New South Wales Review* of December last, and I quote—

Overriding concern to reduce inflation further needs to remain the critical preoccupation of economic management. Though manifestly moderating, Australia's rate of inflation is still relatively high

compared with that of most other developed economies.

Thirdly, it is important for us all to understand that there will be no meaningful recovery in employment until such time as inflation moderates on a permanent basis. We must not attempt, therefore, to solve our employment problems nationally, or in Western Australia, by spending our way out.

If this were attempted, whilst we may have a short-term reduction in unemployment, the long-term effects would be disastrous. In a short time, the deficit budgeting involved would almost certainly be financed by higher personal taxation. The rate of inflation and interest rates would also begin to increase rather than to decline as at present. This would eventually lead us to a situation where the cost of our labour would price our goods and services, as well as our future projects, out of world markets.

Thankfully this is not the case at present in Western Australia. We should all be aware that our State Government's record in relation to employment is second to none in Australia. Since the election in February last year, in Western Australia jobs have been created at the rate of 1 250 a month.

Mr B. T. Burke: Unemployment is a vicious rumour started by people who cannot find work!

Mr MacKINNON: The percentage of the population employed in the labour force has been consistently greater in Western Australia than in the rest of Australia in past years. This cannot be denied. It is despite the fact that our population in Western Australia is increasing at twice the national rate.

Future projects which have been actively promoted and encouraged by the State Government also ensure future employment prospects in Western Australia. The largest of these, referred to by His Excellency this evening, is the North-West Shelf gas project. The first stage is behind us and necessitated the expenditure of \$200 million in the proving up of the gas field. The second stage, which is the design stage, and includes research into marketing and finance, is currently in progress and will require the expenditure of \$50 million.

The final stage of this project will involve a total expenditure probably in excess of \$3 000 million and will include such feats as gas rigs 84 miles out to sea bringing gas up from a depth of 400 feet. That gas will be piped 84 miles to the shore, a major feat in itself, and by the time it gets to the shore there will be a 1 000 mile pipeline from the Pilbara to the metropolitan area

and Pinjarra to service industries. Production will commence by 1984.

Also the revival of off-shore petroleum exploration will provide many employment and business opportunities for Western Australians.

The Government has also been active in its attempts to assist small business people and employees. As announced by His Excellency this evening there will be a thorough review of the Workers' Compensation Act and I am sure this will be welcomed by all small business people who face rapidly increasing insurance premiums.

Mr B. T. Burke: Pass a law outlawing injury!

Mr MacKINNON: The Government has also taken action in relation to worker participation in industry and has recently appointed a full-time officer to promote the idea throughout Western Australia. I commend this action by the Government as it is apparent to me that the imposition, by legislation, of a system of forced worker participation in industry would not only be unsuccessful, but also would certainly stifle the initiative and enterprise of workers and industry which are often present today.

Whilst the employment, industrial, and development prospects for Western Australia thus look most encouraging, I am sure we all share the Government's concern about the current situation facing many people in rural areas. Climatic conditions have caused severe droughts in some areas, and, more recently, devastating floods. Poor overseas markets in other areas have depressed other rural enterprise. However, with both Government assistance and encouragement, these unfortunate setbacks will be overcome by people in rural areas so that they will again play their most important role in the State's development.

City electors also are experiencing many problems under drought conditions. The electors whom I represent in Murdoch are no exception. The electorate is a new one with development proceeding rapidly. This development does not occur without problems and traffic congestion at peak hours is one of them.

It is pleasing, therefore, to note that tomorrow we will see this problem relieved with the opening of the \$2.8 million Shelley Bridge across the Canning River. This will allow traffic to flow more freely, and will assist not only those people in my electorate, but also the many other people who use that area of the city. Hopefully, the peak hour problem at the Riverton Bridge will become a thing of the past. I am sure the people who live in my electorate will be most grateful.

However, whilst I do understand the problems

confronting the Government with regard to road funding, and the demands placed upon its resources from other areas of the State, I do urge the Government to endeavour to maintain its programme of improving road facilities to the southern suburbs, and to maintain its pressure on the Federal Government for a further allocation of funds. This need is evidenced daily by the peak hour situation at Canning Bridge.

Finally, I would like to make some brief comments on the problems facing the youth in our community today. These problems are many and varied, and include employment difficulties; educational concerns; emotional upsets; and social and family problems. These difficulties often lead our youth into other areas such as drug abuse, abuse of alcohol, and vandalism. These people often feel that they are ostracised by society and that they are not fairly treated in the allocation of resources within our community.

Much can be done by the Government to assist in this area. Our State Government has expanded its programmes under the Arts Council and the Community Recreation Council. Extended multiple use of schools is taking place, and is encouraged widely throughout Western Australia.

Action against drug trafficking, and an increased programme of drug awareness, has been undertaken. The "Life, be in it" programme has been supported by our Government.

The creation of temporary jobs for 500 young people in our Public Service has been undertaken in order to give those young people some work experience. However, that will be a waste of time if we do not, as a community, remember that family and community involvement and solidarity is the best form of assistance our young people of today can receive. This opinion has been confirmed as a result of talks to people in the community in the areas of community services, social services, employment counselling, and education. The theme has been consistent.

The lack of parental involvement in the activities of parents and citizens' organisations, youth club activities, progress associations, and other community and family-interested groups never ceases to amaze me. It seems to me it is always the same few people who become involved as against the apathetic majority, and this is where our problem lies.

We must all remember that Government expenditure and involvement can rarely prevent community problems; it can only assist in overcoming them as they develop. If we could all remember to be a little less selfish, and a little

more family and community minded, these problems may become less and less.

The Government has made much progress in implementing its 1977 election promises. It has continued its commitment to policies aimed at stimulating activity in the private sector. I am confident that the Government will continue this progress during the coming parliamentary session.

MR WATT (Albany) [9.08 p.m.]: I formally second the motion.

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

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE: SPECIAL

SIR CHARLES COURT (Nedlands—Premier) [9.09 p.m.]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until 2.15 p.m. on Wednesday, the 15th March.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.10 p.m.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

WATER SUPPLIES

Restrictions

1. Mr DAVIES, to the Treasurer:

What effect, if any, are the current water restrictions having, or are likely to have on—

- (i) the finances of the Metropolitan Water Board,
- (ii) the finances of the Country Water Supply,
- (iii) the State's finances as a whole?

Sir CHARLES COURT replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some prior notice of the question, the answer to which is as follows—

(i) Total consumption of water and therefore revenue for the current year will not be known until final meter readings are taken towards the end of the year.

It is to be expected that there will be a substantial loss of revenue to the Metropolitan Water Board as a result of the restrictions and the board's overall financial position will be reviewed when final figures for the year are known.

- (ii) An estimated revenue loss of \$500 000, which will be borne by the Consolidated Revenue Fund.
- (iii) Answered by (i) and (ii)

STATE FORESTS

Dieback

2. Mr BRYCE, to the Minister for Lands and Forests:

- (1) Is it a fact that nearly 12 months ago Alcoa offered the Forests Department \$500 000 over a five-year period to assist with jarrah dieback research?
- (2) Has the offer been declined and, if so, will the Minister explain why?
- (3) If no decision has yet been made in respect of this offer will the Minister indicate why no decision has been reached?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) to (3) I am not aware of an offer of a sum of \$500 000 by Alcoa to the Forests Department so I believe it would be convenient if the Deputy Leader of the Opposition were to place his question on the notice paper for the next sitting of the House. I will make quite sure that the honourable member is answered accordingly.

STATE FORESTS

Dieback, Bauxite Mining, and Water Salinity

3. Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Lands and Forests:

My question is without notice but it is of a nature that requires no research, and can be answered readily. Is it correct that officers of the Forests Department have been instructed not to make public utterances on matters connected with bauxite mining, jarrah dieback, water salinity, and related matters? If so, does this instruction apply to those officers in their capacity as members of the Western Australian Chapter of the Foresters Institute?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

The answer to the honourable member's question is very simply, "No, not so far as I am aware."

STATE FORESTS

Dieback and Bauxite Mining

4. Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Lands and Forests:

- (1) Is it a fact that the Forests Department conservatively estimates that three hectares of forest will be devastated by dieback for every hectare of diseased forest mined?

- (2) Is it also a fact that it is proposed to mine 1 500 hectares of forest annually?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

- (1) I am certainly aware that the three hectares to one is a ratio that has been quoted in recent times in the Press. If the honourable member requires more information on this matter, I would be very pleased to give it to him at the next sitting of the House.
- (2) I suggest that this part of the question also should be put on notice.

STATE FORESTS

Bauxite Mining

5. Mr B. T. BURKE, to the Minister for Lands and Forests:

Is the Minister aware that under present expansion plans, in the next 12 months Alcoa will be moving in at least a preliminary fashion into that area of the jarrah forests which presently is quarantined? Is the Minister prepared to give the House an assurance that the company will not be allowed to move into the quarantined area while such moving will cause or assist the spread of dieback?

Mrs CRAIG replied:

I presume the expansion plans to which the honourable member refers are those that Alcoa made public in its submission to System 6. In fact, he is talking about something upon which this Government has not yet made a statement. In relation to the suggestion that there will be activity in the quarantined area of the forests, I can assure the honourable member that Alcoa has scrupulously observed the fact that we do have quarantined areas in this State. I am certainly not aware of any move in the near future which will make that situation any different.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Tax Sharing

6. Mr CARR, to the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) Has the Western Australian Government made any official protest to the Prime Minister over the decision to defer his election promise to give a guaranteed 2 per cent of income tax to local government?

- (2) If "Yes" will he please advise the House of the form of the protest?
- (3) If no protest has been made will he please explain why he has failed to represent local government in this way?

The SPEAKER: In calling the Minister for Local Government I indicate I am prepared to take a maximum of two more questions.

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) to (3) In reply to the honourable member I can say there is no need to make a protest because not only has this Government supported the increase of the 2 per cent of tax sharing, but it is also the policy of the Commonwealth Government to move towards this figure. Therefore there is no need to protest in the way the honourable member suggests.

WATER SUPPLIES

Restrictions

- 7. Mr JAMIESON, to the Minister for Water Supplies:

Provided sufficient water supply is contained in the reservoirs servicing the metropolitan area at the end of next winter, will the Metropolitan Water Board be able to allow unrestricted garden watering next summer bearing in mind the number of lawns and gardens it will be necessary to re-establish?

Mr O'CONNOR replied:

In answer to the honourable member I indicate that under those circumstances it is anticipated we would.

ABORIGINES

Excessive Drinking of Alcohol

- 8. Mr HARMAN, to the Minister for Community Welfare:

- (1) Has the Minister seen Press reports referring to the tragic consequences of excessive drinking by Aborigines at Wiluna?
- (2) Has the Minister taken the opportunity to visit Wiluna to inform himself at first hand of those consequences?
- (3) Will the Minister make a statement to this Parliament next Wednesday indicating the attitude of the Government and what action it has taken or will take in order to minimise this problem, not only at Wiluna, but also at other centres in Western Australia, of which centres the Minister no doubt is aware?

Mr RIDGE replied:

- (1) Yes, I have seen the Press reports to which he referred.
- (2) No. However, it is anticipated I will be visiting that particular area in the not-too-distant future.
- (3) I would not be in a position to make a statement to the House next Wednesday indicating how the Government proposes to overcome this problem, which has been studied by Select Committees of the Federal Parliament and by people all over Australia. No-one has yet been able to come up with an answer to it. It concerns the present State Government greatly and if the honourable member thinks he has the answer to the problem, the State Government would be happy to listen to him.

