

# Legislative Council

Thursday, the 16th March, 1978

The **PRESIDENT** (the Hon. Clive Griffiths) took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

## NOTICE OF QUESTIONS

### *Requirements under Standing Orders*

**THE HON. G. C. MacKINNON** (South-West—Leader of the House) [2.46 p.m.]: Mr President, I rise on a point of order. The notice of question given by the Hon. Lyla Elliott this afternoon, relating to the election of members to this House, while seeking some information largely contained a statement giving information or, in fact, an opinion. I would like you to advise me if you can, Sir, whether it is essential that questions asked in this place should seek information and avoid attempting to convey a personal opinion by way of giving explanations in long-winded preambles.

The **PRESIDENT**: The situation is that Standing Order 153 clearly indicates the requirements when members ask questions. When questions are submitted to the Clerks for preparation prior to notice of them being given, the practice is that if there is any suggestion that a question might contravene the requirements of that Standing Order it is referred to me for a ruling.

This particular question, or a similar question, was referred to me and I gave a ruling on it. I will study the question, and before it or any other question of which notice is given is permitted to be printed on the notice paper my approval will be necessary. If, after I have studied this and other questions, I find any which contravene that Standing Order they will not be accepted as questions.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: Thank you, Mr President.

## QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

Question without notice was taken at this stage.

## DEPUTY CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

### *Election*

On motion by the Hon. G. C. MacKinnon (Leader of the House), resolved—

That, in accordance with Standing Order No 34, the following members be elected to act as Deputy Chairmen of Committees for the present Session—The Hons. R. J. L. Williams, D. W. Cooley and T. Knight.

## COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION

### *Election*

On motion by the Hon. G. C. MacKinnon (Leader of the House), resolved—

That, in accordance with Standing Order No. 37, the following members be elected for the present Session:

- (a) Standing Orders Committee—The Hons. R. J. L. Williams, T. Knight, D. W. Cooley;
- (b) Library Committee—The Hons. W. R. Withers and L. D. Elliott;
- (c) House Committee—The Hons. A. A. Lewis, G. E. Masters, D. K. Dans, R. T. Leeson; and
- (d) Printing Committee—The Hons. H. W. Gayfer and R. F. Claughton.

## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: THIRD DAY

### *Motion*

Debate resumed, from the 15th March, on the following motion by the Hon. W. M. Piesse—

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.

**THE HON. GRACE VAUGHAN** (South-East Metropolitan) [2.52 p.m.]: In reply to the Governor's address I feel I must make some remark about what could be termed the almost egotistical matter that was put before the Governor to read on opening day. Having admired the Governor and having spoken to him at some length on cultural, political, and social issues I know that he can deliver a speech which is much more worthy of his own style, much more expressive of his own opinions, and much less resembling a parrot-like repetition of what, in fact, the Leader of the Government should say on what his Government is doing at the present time.

I say that in passing; I know it is a tradition that the Governor has to present what the Premier wants him to present to the people. However, I would prefer a more personal presentation.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: In any particular section, or do you mean generally?

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: In general. I am referring to nothing in particular. The speech represented a glossing over of things that are not so good, and it jumped over matters which I consider to be important. By that method the Government is able to present a happier face to the public rather than that with which the public should be presented.

I wish to fasten onto two particular aspects, one of which was picked up by the Hon. W. M. Piesse. However, I did not like the way the ABC pronounced her name; it was a very messy way to pronounce her name! That aspect relates to unemployment and its relation to the attitudes of the community. This is a very important subject for this State to be considering.

As the top decision-making body in this State, the Government ought to be leading, and it should not merely reflect some of the attitudes which are not typically Australian and not, I believe, representative of the average Australian, because the attitudes presented are continually deprecating the people who are unfortunate during times of economic recession.

In the Governor's Speech reference was made to unemployment. Of course, grasping at straws, he said the ability to create jobs appeared to be a prerogative of just this State. He said it was so far ahead. However, he did not mention that we in this State seem to be losing jobs more rapidly than are being lost in the other States. Recent figures which have been published show that for each job in Western Australia there was an average of 18.6 people applying for it. I do not know what 0.6 of a person represents, and it is hard to imagine. For the rest of Australia for every job there were something like 17.9 persons applying; so we in Western Australia have a higher figure than the average for Australia.

There is worse to come. A report commissioned by the New South Wales Government reveals that things will get worse and not better. I notice in the Governor's Speech that he has advocated that stimulating activity in the private sector will answer all these problems, and we will return to the days of prosperity again. We have gone far beyond stimulating the private sector; we cannot expect employers in the private sector to make sacrifices. There is a need for the people to be buying more goods before the employers can expand. The way to stimulate the buying of goods is for the public sector to increase the consumption rate. If private industry is to go ahead then the workers will have to have money in their pockets to spend, but at the moment we do not find such a state of affairs in the community.

While I do not go along wholly with the Keynesian theory, I think that over the years this aspect has proven itself. Unless the people are given money to spend there will not be any increased activity in the economy or in manpower requirements.

Before I deal with the matter of unemployment in greater detail and what it is doing to, shall we call it, the moral fibre of the community I would like to mention that this matter of settling inflation first is typical of the attitude of the conservative parties. What they value foremost is property; however, inflation affects the people. While we all agree that inflation has to be reduced, we also realise that the people have to be considered first.

Once the boom which usually follows a trough—we hope this will happen again as is usual in a capitalist economy—comes about there is a need to have the people ready and competent to fill the jobs, and thereby carry on that boom to, perhaps, a higher level and for a longer period than we have usually experienced.

It is possible that some members think the description by the Leader of the Opposition of what is happening to people who are unemployed is somewhat a lugubrious lament, but I do not think he has described the position as darkly as he could have.

I know what happened in the depression of the 1930s. During the war when I was employed by that great capitalist entrepreneur, Australian Consolidated Industries of Sydney, in its industrial office, I remember the relatively young people sent to us by the Manpower Office to try to find employment for them. They were so depressed and so choked with feelings of being worthless that, in fact, it was very difficult to get any productive work out of them. These were people who had been living under bridges and sleeping in parks for years and years at a time when New South Wales experienced a 35 per cent unemployment rate.

When we are thinking of an economic recession it is very important to bear in mind what is happening to our people socially. We have to consider how we can make efforts to compensate people who have suffered very greatly. Of course, it is very easy for most of us who are comfortable, well fed, and assured of our future, to say that the blame is with the person and not with the system. We have to look very seriously at the system. It is of no use to harangue people in a monopolistic, capitalistic system to pull themselves up by their boot strings when many of them do not have boots to wear.

We have to start thinking of ways to compensate people, and to keep the education of our young people on a high level so that we do not have a repetition of what is happening now—youngsters leaving school because they feel their parents cannot keep them there, and there is no future for them.

So, we have a very poor situation in Western Australia, where we are still lagging behind the other States in that the number of children who leave school when they are only 14 years of age is very high. This can be overcome only by an assurance that the whole community and not just the parents are going to look after those children and encourage them and ensure their future is safe, in the occupation sense at any rate.

We spend a tremendous amount of money on carefully and expensively rearing young human beings. We establish fantastic pre-natal care for them. We build enormous hospitals, with every facility known to modern medical technology. Then, of course, once they come home from the hospitals, all sorts of alterations are made to the homes. Often, the wife has been working either full time or part time, and she must stay home, which represents a further economic loss. A survey recently taken in the United States revealed that something like \$40 000 is spent on the average child before it reaches adulthood.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: Do you think that too much emphasis is placed on this sort of thing, where institutions and parents spoonfeed their children? Do you think it may take initiative away from the children?

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: I think that every parent and, in fact, teachers and the community at large socialise children to prepare them for what they see the world as being at the moment. They are inclined to try to give the children as much as they can in their early days, because they know what a competitive world they are going into.

I am glad the Hon. Mick Gayfer mentioned that point, because that is the theme behind what I am saying. We must start thinking of a different style of life rather than of socialising our children to believe that economic growth and success in their occupations are the principal things which matter.

Such things are important, of course, in so far as they support the society, but they are not the be-all and end-all of life. Life has much more to offer. I believe the "Life—be in it" programme which recently has been promoted in Australia is

a very worth-while one. However, I do not think it goes deep enough. I believe that, in the main, people simply look upon it as a means of encouraging them to exercise their muscles, to notice the sun and the flowers, to hear the birds singing, and so on, rather than thinking about some of the deeper things of life.

We should begin to contemplate the sort of contributions we can make in an attempt to improve the lot of those people who are disadvantaged, who are out of work, and whose children are accustomed to a nonworking family. Many young people grow up in such an atmosphere; they do not believe there is a job for them, and therefore look for other ways of living.

If we are going to compensate those people we must look towards those who have more to contribute, more material assets and more brains. These are the people who should be contributing towards the upkeep and the morale of those people who at present are in a depressed state. It is not an insignificant number of people. In fact, it is quite frightening to look at the number of young people who are out of work.

While there are not the same number of married people out of work and therefore the young children are not being threatened at the moment, the young parents of tomorrow are the ones who are in a very sorry state. In fact, some are thinking in terms of being sterilised. Many young men, before they have even had the opportunity to settle down into a family and become fathers, are talking about having vasectomies because they believe there are enough unfortunate children in the world already, and they do not see how they are going to support them. Studies of the reasons given by young people seeking vasectomies in the United States reveal that this is one of the principal reasons.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: I think that is quite foolish; no-one would be so silly.

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: These are studies which have been documented by urologists in the United States. They have put this forward as one of the most prominent reasons for being sterilised. Of course, sterilisation is a very serious step.

The Hon. R. F. Cloughton: It is not a new phenomenon; it happened in the 1930s as well.

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: I did not know that was the case. I thought that people were so hungry they did not have the energy to do those sorts of things.

The Hon. R. F. Cloughton: They did not have vasectomies; they simply did not have children.

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: That is right; there is always less of an increase in the natural population growth when people cannot see into the future with confidence. They say, "There is no guarantee we are going to be able to care for our family and be employed."

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: How then do you account for those horrifying photographs we see of babes in arms who are simply bundles of bones, starving to death?

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: They are like that all the time. I am talking about people who are disadvantaged in our society.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: They are not like that all the time. At other times, we see photographs showing them to be as fat as butter.

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: We are not saying that all people are like that, but there are a number of disadvantaged people in our society who would take such action. Certainly, it is not everybody.

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: I am sure the Leader of the House and the Hon. Roy Claughton can sort that out later. I do know what I am talking about, although the Leader of the House always likes to say that people who disagree with him do not know what they are talking about. That is the easy way of getting rid of an argument.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: It is not, you know. Those people are not always skin and bone; they are often quite plump, fat, rosy and happy.

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: I do not quite follow what the Leader of the House is getting at.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: No, and I do not follow what you are getting at.

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: The Leader of the House should try to listen to what speakers on this side have to say.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: We are all listening very carefully, but it takes so much of an effort to follow your argument.

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: If the Leader of the House spent a little more time listening to speakers from this side and a little less time in making sure what he has in his head will stay there, and nobody—either from this side or from any other side—will ever alter it, he may begin to understand what we are trying to say.

I believe there is a very important message here; in fact, the Hon. Win Piesse touched on it in her remarks. We need to reassess the fabric of our

society; we need to see what it is made up of; we need to call ourselves to task and see what we can contribute, instead of adopting this continual materialistic approach of, "What can we get out of this? Who can we rip off?" I was in Charlie Carters the other day and I said to the girl on the check-out, "These sardines are 33c, but they were only 11c 12 months ago." She said, "Yes, I know. I feel ashamed about it." This happens every week; people pay more and more for their groceries.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Where were they canned?

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: Sardines are sardines! If they are canned in Norway, Japan, or Australia, they are exactly the same.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: No, they are not. If they are canned in Norway, it could be that the inflation in Norway has caused the increase to 33c.

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: They are exactly the same sardines, and from one week to the next, Charlie Carters is able to pop them up another 10c or so. When the Leader of the House does the weekly shopping, he will be able to speak with authority.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: There is a world of difference between the price of Canadian salmon and King George salmon.

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: I am well aware of the difference. One of the indications that the part of the nation which is better off is not accepting its responsibility to those who are less fortunate and for whom I am making a plea today is the fact that, almost surreptitiously, the Federal Government has introduced an almost flat rate of taxation, where everybody on a taxable income of less than \$16,000 pays 30 per cent in taxation. Of course, the smart alecks are able to keep their taxable income below \$16,000, so that the number of people paying more than 30 per cent is very small indeed.

Progressive taxation has always been a simple way of redistributing income and here we find ourselves with a 30 per cent income tax rate. If our taxable income is \$5,000 we will pay the same rate as someone who has an income of \$15,000. This is not equitable and it is not the sort of policy that will lead to some sort of compensation for people who are falling behind. So, more and more, we have people falling behind.

What I am leading to is the general attitude to unemployment. People want to get rich quickly and if they are smart enough perhaps

they can do this by ripping off others; this is condoned in our society. We will have incompetence in positions of decision-making, and leadership in the country will not be available. We will not have people who will stay longer at school and who will have the confidence to contribute to the running of the country. Many people are now taking a back seat and the level of competence will become lower and lower.

We do not have to look far to see incompetence being displayed. A recent advertisement by the Public Health Department which came to my notice shows that the department should have a look at its incompetence. On Tuesday I read the department's notice informing people of a free immunisation programme at certain mobile clinics. The trouble was that no mention was made of what the immunisation would be against. Perhaps we could say we want to be immunised against inflation or rises in some SEC charges. Certainly that is the type of thing I would like to be immunised against.

The Department of Public Health recently issued a notice informing people where dental therapy units were available. This is a very worth-while project and one which was promoted by the Tonkin Government. It is a very good thing for people to know where the dental therapy units are. However, one noticed that the sites of the clinics were listed under "Provinces" and there was no East Metropolitan Province mentioned. In my province, the South-East Metropolitan Province, schools were grouped which were no longer within the boundaries of the province. This is just carelessness, but it shows incompetence.

This sort of thing happens because we are not using all the potential we have in our society. I believe this is tied up with unemployment and the need for people to compensate those who have fewer resources, including physical, emotional and educational resources. I believe incompetence will grow unless we use all the people who are able to contribute to society. People should be made to believe they are important. It is all very well for us, who are already advantaged or have resources, to say that others should do this or that; it is not good enough.

If we know we are suffering from a period of unemployment we must start to think about ways and means of injecting some sense of responsibility into the unemployed and, as Mrs Piesse pointed out, we must give these people confidence. We must tell them we expect them to make a contribution to society and not just sit back and take handouts. However, it is just as bad to

accuse people of taking handouts as accusing them of ripping off others. We can make these charges against people but it is an argument that can go on forever.

We need to take a different look at life and we need a sense of responsibility, not just to our own children but to people in general. We should not concern ourselves merely with keeping our own heads comfortably above water. We have to think about our responsibilities to the whole of society and what we can contribute. This is where the old socialist adage applies; we should learn "from each according to his ability and to each according to his needs".

The Hon. R. G. Pike: I thought Karl Marx said that and then the socialists took it.

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: One does not have to follow a particular philosophy to see the worth of a particular adage. I have found it very prevalent in the work I have been doing and in society generally for people to say, "I look after my children and keep them off the streets. I go to my job each week. If everyone did the same we all would be better off and society would be marvellous." However the "if" is a big question.

We all have the ability to rise to certain levels. Some can reach the top while others reach half way and are happy with that. However, the opportunities must be available in our society. People must have access to resources that will enable them to contribute. They should not just be satisfied with themselves; they should contribute.

That was all I wanted to get across, Mr President. I want to say a couple of other things related to this theme of a lack of confidence occurring owing to the lack of opportunities which leads to a consequent incompetence in society. I suppose everyone has received a letter from Mr Michael Farr who wants to be permitted to sing and dance in the Mall. Here we have enterprise. Why are we not encouraging it? We should, even if we have to make new regulations to say he cannot sing off key or above a certain decibel point. We should give permission to allow this. It is better than having him on the dole.

I received some literature this week from a marvellous group of people; they are parents of subnormal children and they call themselves Watchdog. They have done a great deal to promote the welfare of subnormal children in this State. These people have had to struggle hard as they are left almost on their own. Certainly

the contributions by the Public Health Department and the Department for Community Welfare have grown quite appreciably over the last few years. Nevertheless these parents are still very much on their own in coping with the problems of tending subnormal children.

If we can give those children the opportunity to do the sorts of jobs that are right down the bottom of the ladder in our society we would have more potential among the rest of society to climb up and do more important jobs. These points are all tied together. These parents and people like Mr Farr should be encouraged to make contributions to society, along with the contributions of people who are already well off. This should be done in order that those who have had a bad start or will never be of much overt value in their contributions to society can be of some help.

We can look at the most unworthy person in our society and can say we do not wish to be like him, and in this way that person has made some contribution because he has stimulated us to think we do not wish to be like him—such as a drunkard in the gutter. So everyone is of some value and is able to contribute to society.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: One would have to be a sociologist to understand all that.

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: Come, come! I am sure the honourable member understands it.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: The honourable member also gives me an idea!

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: It might be difficult for the honourable member to achieve.

There really was not very much in the Governor's Speech on which one could comment, I am afraid. However, I did pick on the matter I have discussed, and I did want to take up what the Hon. Win Piessé had to say. Thank you, Mr Deputy President.

**THE HON. N. F. MOORE** (Lower North) [3.21 p.m.]: I want to take this opportunity to speak about something which is dear to my heart; that is, the subject of decentralisation.

The concept of decentralisation is one about which we have heard a great deal, yet what we observe to be happening in our society is the exact opposite. By "centralisation" I refer to the fact that cities are growing at a greater rate than the surrounding rural areas. So, whilst we talk about decentralisation what is happening, in fact, is that we are becoming more and more centralised.

Australia is regarded by many people as being one of the most urbanised countries in the world. In fact, 70 per cent of the population of Western Australia is in the Perth metropolitan area whereas in 1900 the figure was only 40 per cent. There has been a steady increase over the years in the percentage of people living in the metropolitan area as compared with country areas. So, we become almost like the ancient Greek city-states.

The reasons for the trends towards urbanisation are quite obvious when we observe what happens when a country develops. As a basic principle, as a country develops its technology and mechanisation, its primary industries require fewer and fewer people. As a result, fewer and fewer people are engaged in the primary industries and more and more people work in the secondary and tertiary industries. This occurs in practically all developing countries throughout the world. There is a tendency for fewer and fewer people to be involved in primary industries and more and more people to be involved in secondary and tertiary industries.

I would like to give some statistics to illustrate how the trend has taken place over the years. In 1921, 23 per cent of the population were engaged in primary industry; in 1947, 17 per cent were engaged in primary industry; and in 1965 the figure was 10 per cent. In 1921, 34 per cent of the population were engaged in secondary industry; in 1947, 38 per cent were engaged in secondary industry; and in 1965 the figure was 40 per cent. In 1921 the proportion of people employed in the tertiary industries was 43 per cent; in 1947, it was 45 per cent; and in 1965, it was 50 per cent. So, we can see that over the years there has been an increase in the percentage of people engaged in secondary and tertiary industries, and a corresponding decline in the number engaged in primary industries. This trend is understandable when one considers how technology has developed.

If we look for future trends, and take the United States as an example, we will see that there is likely to be a further decrease in the work force engaged in primary industries, a possible decline in the number of those engaged in secondary industries, and a marked increase in the number of people engaged in the tertiary sector.

That simply means that, percentage-wise, more and more people in the work force are being engaged in service industries, and less and less are being engaged in productive industries. Thus, we

have the situation at the present time where there is a steady increase in urbanisation because of the steady increase in the demand and supply of services to cater for this increased centralisation.

Foremost amongst the organisations which provide services are the Government departments, and we find the Public Service is one of the most centralised sectors of our society. It is centralised not only in physical terms, but also in terms of power and decision-making.

Whether this is a desirable state of affairs is naturally a subject of much debate. I would like to suggest today that this is not a desirable situation, and something should be done to reverse the trends which have taken place over the years.

An indication of the present trends in relation to Government departments is clearly stated in a report by Dr A. Skerchly entitled, "The Arnold System of Public Administration". At page 36 of the report, under the heading, "Trend H", he states—

#### The Size of Departments:

There will be two trends; departments that are already large will slowly become larger by natural growth and by amalgamation and, secondly, there will be a great increase in the number of small service sections. To put these trends another way: the total number of services will increase but the number of large departments will not increase at anywhere near the rate of increase in the number of small specialized sections. There may even be fewer large departments but they will be larger, due, of course, to the effect of amalgamations.

The trends are clear; Government departments have been growing and will continue to grow. What we must now consider are the effects of the centralisation tendency in the Public Service, and the effect it is having outside the Public Service. One way to look at this problem is from the point of view of management efficiency. In order to examine the effect of this centralisation of Government departments in terms of management efficiency, I will again quote from the report by Dr Skerchly. When considering the effect of the continued growth of Government departments, he states—

The effect of these trends on managers will be to accentuate all the problems of management. In fact the problems of management in small departments or sections (up to, say, two or three hundred employees) are seldom very severe and are not likely to become much more severe in the next decade.

In departments much above this size, however, the problems are already considerable and they grow as the department grows—if departments are to become even larger, and we are suggesting that they will, it follows that the management of departments will become more difficult throughout the decade.

I think that is fairly straightforward and indicates the attitude of that particular academic to what will happen if the growth of the Public Service continues.

Further on at page 56 of the document "The Arnold System of Public Administration", is a general outline of the main recommendations by Dr Skerchly. Under the heading "Trend I: Conflict with Central Authority", Dr Skerchly states—

As a result of several of the trends noted above, particularly the increasing size of departments, the improvement in communications and the spread of computers, there will be a tendency towards further centralization of power and decision-making. This trend is in direct conflict with the desire of many managers to use their own initiatives, partly as a result of improved education, and in the larger departments this conflict may become acute, leading to strikes, more powerful trade unions, higher staff turnover and low productivity, not only on the shop floor where it is already evident but spreading upwards to the higher ranks and blue and white-collared staff.

I think we must accept the fact that as organisations grow the commitment of their employees diminishes; they become smaller cogs in a bigger and bigger machine. In other words, the employees become less and less involved. They have less commitment to the aims and functions of the department or the organisation in which they are involved. This does not relate just to Government departments, but to all organisations which become too large. The people within those organisations become small cogs in a big wheel.

Therefore, from a purely effectiveness of management argument, we must conclude that in terms of Government departments "big is not always best". So from a management efficiency point of view there appears to be sound arguments in favour of decentralisation of Government departments.

Also, there are many good arguments for decentralisation of Government departments when one considers the effect these departments have on the people they supposedly serve. The Public Service, by its very name, is there to serve the

public and we have to look at whether it is doing that job effectively and decide whether the centralised system is the best way to serve the public, and whether there should be decentralisation. I am suggesting that decentralisation will improve the Public Service and provide a better service to the public which it is supposed to serve.

I have always held the belief that people know best how they want to be governed, and not, as some political parties suggest, that Governments know best what the people want. I believe the people know what they want, and where possible, decisions should be made by the people themselves.

With the present system of public administration, practically all power resides in the metropolitan area and practically all decisions emanate from the head offices of Government departments located in the city. Unfortunately these decisions are not always based on the demands and the needs of the people and particularly the people who live in isolated or remote areas.

I would like to give members a very simple example of what I mean when I say that these decisions are not always based on the needs of the people. Recently a new school was erected at Meekatharra; it was provided with carpets throughout, but no air-conditioning. Obviously the Education Department made a decision that all new schools should be carpeted, regardless of any other needs of the people of the area concerned. Had the people of Meekatharra been given the choice between carpets and air-conditioning, I know what they would have chosen. They would willingly have foregone the carpets and chosen air-conditioning. This is a very simple example of the lack of sufficient consultation at the local level, and no doubt all members could quote similar examples in their areas where money has been expended incorrectly.

Centralised administration leads also to problems and inefficiency in regard to putting decisions into effect. Officers in Government departments are not given sufficient authority to carry out their functions. They must refer continually to head office for approval to spend funds over a certain amount or to initiate any new programme. There is fragmentation also of roles within departments. Because all Public Works Department officers are responsible to head office, there is little liaison between different sections of the department within each region.

We all know the ludicrous situations that arise when one section of a department decides that a particular job has to be done in one part of a building, and another section decides that work

needs to be done somewhere else. There is no liaison, and this leads to absurd situations. It may happen that a school needs repainting, and it also needs attention to its electrical system. So the school is painted, and within a few days an electrician comes along and pulls down the walls to put his wiring through. The painter must then return to repaint the walls.

One needs only to observe the situation with our roads to see this sort of thing happening all the time. A road may be dug up by Telecom, and after it is repaired it is then dug up by the Main Roads Department or by some other department to provide a particular service. There is no liaison between different departments, and even within certain departments there is a grave lack of liaison.

With our present centralised system, we have also an overlap occurring where different Government departments are attempting to do the same thing in the same town. A good example of this is a situation where the Education Department and the Public Health Department endeavour to provide the same service in small towns. Because of the lack of liaison between departments, we have this overlap of activity.

It can be seen from the two matters I have mentioned that centralised Government departments are less efficient in terms of management. They are less efficient also in terms of providing the services they should to the public. It seems that the centralised system we have is both inefficient and inappropriate in modern Western Australia.

I would like, therefore, to propose a possible solution to this situation, and my solution lies in the concept of regionalism. Dr Skertchly, to whom I referred earlier, was involved in assessing the Liberal Party's 1974 Policy Statement on Regionalisation. He produced a report entitled, "Regional Administration in Western Australia". I would like to quote from page 22 of this report where he states—

One of the important things about regions, I think, is that the concept of regionalisation is very much to do with involving people much more in determining their own futures, involving them in decision-making, and giving officers much greater authority and delegated responsibilities. All these things tie in exactly with what modern management, theorists, and those who are able to "practice what they preach", indeed, are talking about.



Then on page 25 of the same report he states—

There is a need for much better information flow from the bureaucracy to inform the people. This is exactly what regionalisation would bring about because of the impossibility of hiding in small country communities.

Regionalisation embraces an approach to public administration congruent with sound administrative thinking. I would presume then, Sir, that there is sufficient evidence available to suggest that decentralisation of public administration is a desirable aim. I must admit and confess that a start has been made. We have regional administrators in various regions throughout the country areas of Western Australia, and I commend the people involved in these particular positions on the work they are doing.

We have also regional development committees which are doing a sterling job, and we have regional superintendents of education who are working to the best of their ability. I would like to suggest, however, that there is still insufficient decentralisation of decision-making within the particular framework we have now. I do not believe that regional administrators, regional development committees, and regional superintendents of education have anywhere near enough authority and responsibility to make decisions. Whilst I accept the fact that we must crawl before we can walk, I suggest, respectfully, that we are not crawling quickly enough at the present time.

I would like to outline a system of regional administration which I believe could possibly work. I do not suggest it is an original idea, but I put it forward as an idea about which people may think and which they may modify if necessary, and then perhaps we can do something about it.

I believe four Government departments are suited by their nature and structure for decentralising or regionalising. These are the Public Works Department, the Education Department, the Public Health Department, and the Medical Department. Other departments could be regionalised, of course, but the four I mentioned are more suited than others for an initial trial period.

Basically, the scheme is this: Each of these departments would set up in each region a regional office which would be staffed structurally in much the same way as the head office. Of course there would not be as many employees in these offices, but the management structure would be similar to that of head office. A person would be put in charge of the regional office, and his role would be to administer that office.

Naturally he would have the support of staff as required to enable the office to function. I suggest that the personnel should come from the head office of the department rather than by outside appointment, as there would be less need for their services in head office. This would be a first step towards decentralising the huge departmental offices we have in the city. The regional office of each department would be responsible for all activities of that department within the region as far as is possible.

Once we have this situation developing, the person in charge of each department—under the chairmanship of the regional administrator—would form a committee to operate within that region. The purpose of this committee would be to co-ordinate the workings of the departments and to determine a budget for that region. Finance for the budget would have to be provided by the State Government; it would be based on previous records of expenditure in each region, and also on a formula in much the same way as the Local Government Grants Commission funds are disbursed.

The money would have to be provided on a "no strings attached" basis, and the regional committee, after consultation with Government officers in the region and local authorities, would determine how the money is to be spent. In other words, this committee would determine the budget. Of course the budget would have to be approved by the State Treasurer, and so the State Government would have the necessary control of the funds.

After approval is granted, each Government department in the region would go ahead and spend the money. Where possible the money would be spent in the region concerned thus assisting in decentralisation, as there would be an assured demand for certain products in each of the regions.

Whilst this outline is by necessity stated very simply, and obviously many difficulties will arise when people think about it, I reiterate that I put it forward in the hope of stimulating some interest in the concept of taking decision-making out of the cities and placing it in the regions where the decisions will be put into effect.

I would like also to reiterate that I do not advocate the setting up of a fourth level of government at the regional level. I do not agree with the policy of the Labor Party of disposing of State Governments and replacing them with

stronger local governments. What I am suggesting is simply that the manner in which money is spent in a region should be decided by the people in the region and not by some centralised, bureaucratic organisation.

Because this is a new system, I am again somewhat encouraged by Dr Skerchly when he states in his document "Regional Administration in Western Australia"—

Regional administrative problems and tasks should be approached anew, with no obsolescent preconceptions, using the best available contemporary public administrative knowledge, insights and experiences.

I am further encouraged when I read the Premier's policy document for the 1977 elections, wherein it is stated on page 39—

Regionalism is fundamental to our total policy for the State. It is the means by which we reinforce our recognition of the individuality of each community and its separate requirements and aspirations.

Decentralisation has been defined in a dictionary I found as "undoing centralism". That is not a particularly wonderful definition, but if we think about it in relation to the present situation that is exactly what it is. We have a centralised system, and we are trying to undo it. To me the concept of regionalism provides the logical means by which we can achieve decentralisation and undo centralism. Should this occur the 300 000 people who live in country areas and who produce so much of the wealth of this country will all be better for it.

I would like to conclude by mentioning a matter of particular concern to my province; that is, the proposed downgrading of the Windarra nickel mine.

The town of Laverton has grown considerably since the commencement of operations at Windarra, and today it is a modern thriving community of some 1 500 to 2 000 people. Those who knew Laverton prior to the commencement of the Windarra nickel project will understand that a tremendous amount of progress has been made.

The proposed downgrading of the mine will reduce the population figure to about 500. Obviously the effects on Laverton will be severe. Not only will the miners themselves be affected, but businesses and Government departments also will feel the blow.

As a child I lived in Bullfinch, a small gold-mining town, which in my childhood had a population of some 1 000 people. I saw the town die when the gold petered out; it was a very sad occasion. I fear the same thing might occur in Laverton.

The reasons for the company's decision are quite obvious, and I agree with the remark Mr Dans made last night that it is nobody's fault; and I am pleased he included the Government in that comment when he was talking about fault being apportioned. It is nobody's fault that the demand for nickel has declined and that the Windarra operation must close down. However, it is still a sad event, particularly for a town like Laverton.

I am pleased that the company operating Windarra will retain a small work force to continue exploratory work. At least it gives some hope that the mine will reopen in the future. I support the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. A. A. Lewis.

#### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions on notice were taken at this stage.

*House adjourned at 3.50 p.m.*

#### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

##### EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

*Government's Press Statement*

8. The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON, to the Leader of the House:

Would the Minister table a copy of the Government press statement which formed the basis of the report in *The West Australian* of the 23rd February, 1978, headed "W.A. Claims Jobs Record"?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

Yes.—Copy tabled herewith.

*The statement was tabled (see paper No. 94).*

9. *This question was postponed.*

#### POLICE

*Special Branch*

10. The Hon. R. F. Claughton for the Hon. D. K. DANS, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Police and Traffic:

Is the Minister for Police correctly reported in the *Daily News* of the 18th January, 1978, as having said with reference to the W.A. Police Special Branch

"Some files were necessary for security reasons, but there was no special branch in W.A. similar to the South Australian group"?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

The honourable member has left out two significant words which precede his quotation. Those words are "He believed".

### ELECTORAL ACT

#### *Review.*

11. The Hon. F. E. McKenzie for the Hon. R. HETHERINGTON, to the Leader of the House representing the Chief Secretary:

- (1) Has a judge yet been appointed to enquire into the Electoral Act?
- (2) When will the terms of reference be announced?
- (3) Will the public be invited to make submissions?
- (4) When is the enquiry expected to begin?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

- (1) to (4) These matters are still under consideration.

### POLICE

#### *Special Branch*

12. The Hon. R. F. Cloughton for the Hon. D. K. DANS, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Police and Traffic:

Was the Minister correctly reported in *The West Australian* of Thursday, the 19th January, 1978, where it stated "Mr O'Neil would neither confirm nor deny the existence of files similar to those in South Australia"?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

Yes.

### CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

#### *Star Swamp Area*

13. The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON, to the Minister for Conservation and the Environment:

- (1) Has the Minister, or any of his Cabinet colleagues, met with representatives of the Trigg, North Beach, Waterman's Community Association since the 13th February, 1978, to discuss the reservation of the area known as Star Swamp?
- (2) If so, will the Minister advise what decision, if any, has been made for the future of the swamp?

- (3) If not, will he advise if plans have been made to meet with representatives of the above Association?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

- (1) No. However, since that date correspondence has been exchanged and a copy of the report of the Environmental Protection Authority has been forwarded to the Community Association.
- (2) The report is under consideration by other Statutory bodies. An early response has been called for.
- (3) No.

### TEACHERS

#### *Personal Files*

14. The Hon. F. E. McKenzie for the Hon. R. HETHERINGTON, to the Minister for Transport representing the Minister for Education:

Will the Minister for Education press for the removal of Public Service regulations forbidding access of Government employees to their files, so that teachers may view personal files kept on them by the Education Department?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

Teachers are not subject to Public Service regulations and there is no regulation in the Education Regulations on this matter.

### STREET PERFORMERS

#### *Hay Street Mall*

15. The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON, to the Minister for Transport representing the Minister for Cultural Affairs:

Will the Minister take action to ensure that artists are allowed to perform in the Hay Street Mall provided they conform to the following conditions—

- (a) no amplified music;
- (b) only those engaged in musical, dramatic or artistic activities, be allowed to collect money;
- (c) the performers should not solicit funds; and
- (d) the activities be limited to the following times—

Monday to Friday—12 midday to 2 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday—unrestricted?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

In view of the question on notice in the Legislative Assembly from the Member for Mt. Hawthorn requesting a different course of action, including the proposal that such performers should be paid, it is respectfully suggested that he discuss this matter with his colleague so that the Government might have an informed opinion as to where the Opposition stands on this issue.

### EDUCATION

#### *Student Guilds*

16. The Hon. R. HETHERINGTON, to the Minister for Transport representing the Minister for Education:

- (1) Can the Minister inform me what percentage of students in each tertiary education institution has joined the Student Guild or equivalent body?
- (2) Is the Minister satisfied with the way the legislation passed last year in regard to Student Guilds is operating?
- (3) Is it the present intention of the Government to amend that legislation in any way this session?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

- (1) (a) University of Western Australia  
Figures not yet finalised but indications are that approximately 80% of all students (i.e. undergraduate and post-graduate) have joined.
- (b) Murdoch University  
All re-enrolling students became members under the legislation then applying; 20% of new enrolments have joined.

(c) W.A.I.T.

Figures not yet finalised but estimated at approximately 65%.

(d) Teachers Colleges

Graylands—99%.

Churchlands—75%.

Claremont—59%.

Mt. Lawley—66%.

Secondary—78%.

to make a final judgment.

(2) In general "yes", but it is still too early

(3) Not yet determined.

### QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

#### LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

#### *Fans in Chamber*

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER, to the Leader of the House:

Will the Minister take up with the President of this Chamber the possibility of having fans installed in the corners of the Chamber so as to relieve the oppressive atmosphere such as that prevailing last night and which could occur frequently during this month of March? If I may be permitted, I will add that I thought the Leader of the Opposition might have been more comfortable last evening had a fan been installed in the corner of the Chamber.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

Certainly. It might be more correct to say "the replacement of the fans", because I think we used to have them at one time. I will approach you later on, Mr. President, with a request of that nature.