
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Second Session of the Thirtieth Parliament

Parliament was prorogued on 4 February 1981, to 19 March 1981 when it met for the despatch of business.

Parliament was opened by His Excellency the Governor (Rear-Admiral Sir Richard John Trowbridge, K.C.V.O., K.St.J.)

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

Legislative Council

Thursday, 19 March 1981

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

The Legislative Council met at 8.00 p.m.

The PRESIDENT (the Hon. Clive Griffiths) took the Chair.

PROCLAMATION

The Acting Clerk of the Council (Mr L. A. Hoft) read the Proclamation of His Excellency the Governor (Rear-Admiral Sir Richard John Trowbridge, K.C.V.O., K.St.J.) summoning the second session of the Thirtieth Parliament.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Delivery

His Excellency the Governor (Rear-Admiral Sir Richard John Trowbridge, K.C.V.O., K.St.J.) 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 tonight for the Second Session of the Thirtieth Parliament of Western Australia.

This is the first occasion on which I have the honour to perform this ceremony as the Representative of Her Majesty the Queen.

I should like to record my sincere thanks to the people of Western Australia for the warm and friendly welcome given my wife and me since taking up my Vice-Regal appointment.

It will be our objective to serve the people and this State with vigour and enthusiasm. We look forward to meeting as many people as possible on our visits throughout the State.

I am sure that everyone was delighted with the announcement that Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh, are to make another official visit to Western Australia later this year.

Likewise there was a spontaneous reaction of great pleasure on the announcement of the engagement of His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales to Lady Diana Spencer. On behalf of all our people I have wished the young couple every happiness.

We were pleased in January of this year to welcome a former Prime Minister of Britain, the Right Honourable James Callaghan, M.P.

The Economy

The indicators for Western Australia show an upsurge in development of resource-based industries which is already having a pronounced influence on the State's economy. The high level of capital inflow is expected to promote further substantial increases in employment and career opportunities.

State Finances

For the sixth year in succession the Consolidated Revenue Fund Budget for 1980/81 has been framed to achieve a balanced result. The Budget strategy reflects the Government's determination that State taxes should not be increased and that scarce capital funds should not be diverted to day-to-day administration costs.

A matter of considerable concern to the Government in formulating its financial strategy over recent years has been the disappointing Loan Council allocation for the State's general loan programme.

Despite sustained pressure from the States, Loan Council allocations for essential State capital works under the general works programme have been cut by over one-third in real terms during the last four years.

I refer to the forthcoming review of tax sharing arrangements between the Commonwealth and the States, and the Commonwealth Grants Commission's examination of existing revenue allocations as between the States. The critical importance of decisions to be made on these matters cannot be over-emphasised because they affect some 40 per cent of Western Australia's recurrent revenue.

The special needs for Western Australia have been forcefully represented.

To help meet expenditures incurred in 1980/81, Loan Council has approved infrastructure borrowings in excess of \$50 million towards major Western Australian development projects and for which \$1.1 billion in total borrowings is eventually required.

State Taxation and Charges

The Committee of Inquiry investigating rates, taxes and charges related to land values is expected to submit its final report to the Government by the middle of the year.

Resources Development and Fuel and Energy

With major mineral and energy resource projects totalling more than \$12 000 million either under construction, approved or undergoing final assessment, Western Australia is expected to achieve a scale of development during the next seven years greater than anything previously achieved in double that time.

Japanese steel mills are currently examining their future iron ore needs. With rising freight costs favouring Western Australian producers, the development of an additional iron ore project—to go on stream in 1985 at a cost of about \$750

million—is under negotiation. The depressed state of the world's steel industry is an important inhibiting factor in negotiations.

Because the Pilbara iron ore industry is facing high imported fuel costs, studies are advanced for the introduction of coal-fired power into the region and consideration is also being given to electrification of Pilbara railways.

The Kimberley diamond mining venture above Lake Argyle is well advanced with pilot-plant operation under way, with limited production from alluvial deposits anticipated in the near future, and with full-scale production expected by 1984.

The State's objective of increasing the value of its mineral exports through the added value from processing is exemplified by the proposal to establish an aluminium smelter in the South West which would employ 1 000 people—with the possibility of a second one during this decade.

Titanium and tantalum are two products which also have good employment and export prospects.

Production of caustic soda and chlorine using Western Australian salt and natural gas is being studied.

There is a revival of gold mining with major investment under way to further lift production.

The joint Woodside venturers in the huge North West Shelf natural gas project are committed to bringing gas ashore by 1984.

A contract between the partners and the Government was signed last year to secure natural gas over a 20-year period for State domestic and industrial requirements.

To further reduce dependence on oil, another two 120 MW units at Kwinana Power Station will be converted to dual coal/oil firing and another two 200 MW coal-fired generating units are being built at Muja Power Station.

A new \$700 million coal-fired power station is being studied—including environmental aspects—for construction on the coast near Bunbury.

In the meantime our known economically recoverable coal reserves are increasing at Collic and some other areas are currently the subject of intense and encouraging exploration programmes.

The State Energy Commission is seeking finance to extend the interconnected grid system to the Eastern Goldfields.

The Solar Energy Research Institute has been successful in supporting over 50 research projects—making Western Australia the most advanced State in solar energy research.

The pilot plant at Kalgoorlie for the Yeelirrie uranium project has been built and is working as a prerequisite to development of the mine.

Industrial Development and Commerce

The Government, through the Department of Industrial Development and Commerce, is emphasising the importance of modern management and marketing practices.

A new financial incentive scheme under the Industry (Advances) Amendment Act 1980 will foster viable industry, including those incorporating new and advanced technologies.

A Technology Review Group and Electronics Task Force will assist policy-making and provide enterprise with a better guide to technology and innovation.

The Government is assisting Western Australian industry to receive a greater share of Defence spending contracts.

It is supporting the recently-formed Small Business Advisory Services Limited Company.

The Government will step up the promotion of Western Australian goods and services overseas, particularly in South East Asia and the Middle East.

Agriculture

The contribution of Western Australia's rural sector to the State's economy is evident from the forecast gross value of agricultural production for this financial year of \$1 629 million—\$27 million above last year's figure.

This likely improvement is in spite of drought conditions which continue to plague much of the State's agricultural zone. The current drought-declared areas cover some 3 500 farms, or about 40 per cent of the State's wheat producers. Since 1976, drought loan approvals have totalled \$43 million.

A further \$1.6 million has been made available for development of farm water supplies under the Farm Water Supply Loan Scheme.

Our sympathy goes out to farmers in the South West whose properties were damaged seriously by bushfires earlier this year. Once again the Government is prepared to provide assistance in the form of freight concessions for fencing materials and fodder and transport of agisted livestock and exemption from royalty of fence post timbers.

The extensive drought in the State's pastoral areas has at last been broken and graziers are restocking—confident of renewed viability.

Through the Department of Agriculture, the Government is actively supporting research programmes to assist farmers further to improve efficiency, increase productivity and contain or reduce costs.

Salinity and erosion problems are causing concern in some areas and the Government is continuing its research and extension programmes in conformity with its policy of full examination and stringent restrictions governing new land releases.

Lands and Forests

There is a strong and continuing demand for release of Crown Land and attention is being given to satisfying an expanding demand for Conditional Purchase Land as well as for urban residential and industrial blocks.

Consideration is being given to legislation to give additional security of tenure to management priority areas as set out in the Forests Department's General Working Plan. This will recognise the concept of forest parks recommended by the Environmental Protection Authority and already approved by the Government.

A further five-year General Working Plan for State Forests is being prepared.

Fisheries, Conservation and the Environment

Achieving a balance between sound economic development and environmental protection remains one of the Government's prime objectives.

Recent changes to the Environmental Protection Act, creating new appointments to the Environmental Protection Authority and the Conservation and Environment Council, will ensure that the Government receives the best possible advice.

The total area of National Parks in Western Australia has increased substantially over the last decade to 4.3 million hectares in December 1980. More than half of the increase has occurred since 1974. These reserves now include nearly all the main Eco system types represented in Western Australia.

Western Australia maintains its position as Australia's top fishing State with a 1979/80 catch worth \$102 million (exceeding \$100 million for the first time)—or more than one-third of the nation's total value of fish caught.

The Government is encouraging the development of a multi-million dollar industry

which would convert previously unused lobster head meat to high-protein paste.

It has approved construction of a new fishing boat harbour at Esperance and a sheltered facility at Port Walcott. The slipway at Carnarvon has been upgraded and new navigation aids provided at Denison and Ledge Point. Service jetties have been completed at Port Gregory and Denison.

Labour and Industry, Consumer Affairs and Immigration

The Department of Labour and Industry, through its Division of Industrial Training, is further promoting development of trade skills to meet demands of major resource projects now moving forward.

The State Government is also actively assisting industry in obtaining skilled labour from overseas where shortfalls are likely to occur.

Under the Joint Commonwealth-State Special Trade Training Programme, courses are proceeding for 400 trainees with two additional courses expected to commence during 1981.

Meanwhile the number of young people being trained within the traditional apprenticeship scheme continues to increase.

Amendments to the Industrial Training Act provide for the transfer of apprentice training functions from the Western Australian Industrial Commission to the Department of Labour and Industry's Division of Industrial Training. This will give the Division more central control of apprenticeship matters.

State Emergency Services

Facilities at the State Emergency Service headquarters have been further improved and work has started on a new training centre at Belmont. The upgrading of the State-wide communications system is continuing.

Transport

The Government is pursuing, as a priority objective, greater flexibility and operational efficiency in the State's land, sea and air transport systems.

The next stage of the Land Freight Transport policy, introduced last year to provide a greater user choice between road and rail transport, will remove load restrictions within defined areas.

New motorised railcars and trailercars are on order and 39 new buses will be introduced into suburban services. A new bus transfer station will

be brought into use at Rockingham Park in May, and work will begin soon on another at Warwick.

The State's internal air services are being reviewed as is its Maritime administration and Ports legislation.

The State Shipping Service's cargo terminal at Fremantle is being redesigned and equipped to service the m.v. "Kimberley" and two Multiflex sister ships to be commissioned later this year.

At the same time, Fremantle Port Authority is rebuilding two berths, extending cargo areas and installing new crane equipment to reduce turn-around time.

The Government has allocated \$2.25 million for a new grain handling and storage facility at Broome.

The Government has allocated \$150 million for State roadworks this financial year. Sealing of the Port Hedland-Broome road will be completed shortly at a cost of \$50 million, the \$36 million sealing of the Fitzroy Crossing-Halls Creek section of the National Highway will start this year, and the \$35 million Kwinana freeway extension to Bull Creek will open early in 1982.

Health Services

The cost of providing health services to Western Australians is expected to rise to more than \$539 million this financial year, including more than \$30 million on capital works.

Construction is nearing completion on an 86-bed ward and outpatient block at Fremantle Hospital and the podium and ward block of the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital.

Multi-stage re-development programmes are continuing at Broome District Hospital and Kalgoorlie Regional Hospital, and construction is well advanced on a replacement hospital at Donnybrook.

Work has started on construction of an \$8 million hospital at Karratha.

A campaign is being conducted to heighten community awareness of the importance of immunisation. Initially directed mainly at health professionals, it is highlighting the importance of rubella immunisation, but broader fields of immunisation will not be neglected.

Aboriginal health in the metropolitan area has improved to such an extent that it now equates with non-Aboriginal health.

The Mental Health Services' new Bennett Brook complex is nearing completion as part of an on-going move to help intellectually handicapped people take their rightful place in society.

Education, Cultural Affairs and Recreation

The Government will accelerate a programme of improved opportunities for handicapped children during 1981—the United Nations' International Year of Disabled Persons.

The Education Department has appointed a Director with special responsibility for the handicapped young. Teachers are being trained to more effectively help these students.

New Special Education facilities have been opened in the Pilbara and Kimberley Regions and two new Special Schools are now under construction in the metropolitan area.

An expenditure of \$433 million on Education this financial year represents 23.5 per cent of total Consolidated Revenue Fund expenditure—an increase of 17 per cent on last year's figure. In addition, capital expenditure in 1980/81 is of the order of \$40 million.

The Government will further expand the educational provision for four-year-old children by encouraging the formation of additional play groups and by making unused space in Pre-Primary Centres available to them where necessary.

To expand educational opportunities in remote areas, a Distance Education Centre, combining functions of the Correspondence School, Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme and School of the Air, is to be established.

Continued expansion will occur in the fields of Technical and Further Education with particular emphasis on trade and technician training.

Integration of the School of Mines and the Eastern Goldfields Technical College as the Western Australian School of Mines and Further Education will give the Kalgoorlie Region an improved range of post-secondary education courses. Construction of post-secondary education colleges at Karratha and Port Hedland is proceeding.

Development of the new State Library Services Building—to be known as the Alexander Library Building—is continuing. The Government will provide a new Museum entrance building to link existing structures within the Perth Cultural Centre.

The Government will continue to expand its recreation services as additional funds can be made available.

Works and Water Resources

The Government will introduce legislation governing the structure and responsibilities of the

Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board and also for establishment of a statutory advisory council on water resources.

Extension of the Mirrabooka borefield has reached the stage where the plant will soon be capable of supplying 10 per cent of the metropolitan area's annual water consumption.

Expenditure of \$5.1 million on the Tamworth Hill Reservoir will supplement water supplies to the Kwinana industrial area and cater for developing residential areas of Rockingham, Safety Bay and Warnbro.

\$1 million is being spent this year to roof tanks and install additional chlorinators in country water supplies. This will improve water quality and reduce the risk of amoebic meningitis infection.

The West Pilbara Water Supply scheme is being upgraded to meet increasing industrial and domestic needs at Dampier, Karratha, Wickham and Cape Lambert and future demands of the North-West Shelf natural gas project.

Chief Secretary, Police and Traffic and Community Welfare

Consideration is being given to recommendations of a Government Committee which reported on the Liquor Act late last year.

Building projects within the Police Department include a new police station, cell block and court house at Wiluna, a replacement station at York and extensive additions at Karratha.

The police launch "Cygnet III" will be replaced by a new craft capable of supplementing ocean search and rescue operations, in addition to its normal police work.

During the last Parliamentary Session, a Misuse of Drugs Bill was introduced to provide a single, coherent code relating to addictive and specified drugs and prohibited plants. Public response was invited. As a result a modified Bill is scheduled for introduction this Session.

In a continuing attempt to reduce loss of life and injury on the roads, the Government will continue to support diligent enforcement of traffic laws. Emphasis will be placed on alcohol-affected driving and measures to promote a more responsible community attitude to road safety.

A new regional centre for the Road Traffic Authority is under construction at Rockingham and should be brought in to use in May.

The Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison at Boulder—a joint venture by Boulder Shire, Public Works Department and Department of Corrections—is now operative.

The Canning Vale Medium Security prison, now nearing completion, will be reclassified as a maximum security institution. This results from design changes incorporated during construction. It will, as a maximum security prison, ease the strain on Fremantle as the State's major prison.

The Department for Community Welfare plans to establish a new welfare office at Norseman. Longer term planning includes a group home for children in the Meekatharra/Wiluna area.

Establishment of a crisis care unit to help with domestic conflict will be examined by the Department.

Under the auspices of the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority, a village of brick and tile homes near Perth was opened recently to house Aboriginal people who previously lived as camp dwellers throughout the metropolitan area.

Aboriginal housing programmes are continuing at Carnarvon, Wiluna, Mowanjum, Lombardina, Beagle Bay, Balgo, La Grange, Yandeyarra, Jigalong and Turkey Creek.

The Government is investigating means by which formal arrangements of consultation with Aborigines can be strengthened and improved.

Local Government, Urban Development and Town Planning

The Government proposes to introduce a Bill for re-enactment of Part IV of the Local Government Act covering electoral procedures and other related matters.

Plans amending the South-West Corridor and South-East Corridor schemes, together with the relevant documents, have been tabled for consideration by Honourable Members of both Houses. The amendments include proposals for extending the urban deferred zone, additions to the industrial zone as well as reserves for various purposes.

The Government will introduce a Bill to amend the Metropolitan Region Town Planning Scheme Act in relation to interim control of development and the Town Planning and Development Act relating to leases of land which might not necessarily need to be dealt with by the Town Planning Board.

Housing

The new Housing Act has made it possible to streamline procedures and for the State Housing Commission to engage in a wider range of essential housing activities.

This year the Commission's main thrust will be to keep pace with the State's development, with special emphasis on the needs of the North-West, Kalgoorlie and Collie.

In accordance with Government policy, the Commission will employ more apprentices in the building industry.

Tourism

An investment of several hundred million dollars by the private sector in capital works for the State's tourist industry is anticipated. An early start on at least one new international hotel in Perth is expected.

A range of new initiatives has been introduced to assist country tourist bureau organisations to develop and promote their areas.

Attorney General

The Government proposes amendments and comprehensive revision of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act further to help the unfortunate victims of crime.

Amendments will be proposed to the Juries Act to improve procedures for selecting jury panels and also to provide for a jury pool system within the new District Court building.

A Bill introducing a Bail Act will codify and simplify the bail system by clarifying the rights of those seeking bail and improving conditions under which it is sought.

Further Bills will be required to make the State's laws affecting companies and securities consistent with those in other States as required for efficient functioning of the National Companies and Securities Commission.

Legislation will also be introduced to provide a Law Reporting Advisory Board to assist in upholding the standards and widening the scope of law reporting in Western Australia.

Legislation

I now refer broadly to some other Bills which will be included in the legislation to be placed before Parliament during this Session.

These include Bills—

for a new Act covering Workers' Compensation,

to repeal and replace the Bread Act to bring it into line with current trends in the baking industry,

to establish the Western Australian Mining and Petroleum Institute,

to replace the Prisons Act with a new Act,
to regulate, control and license Settlement
Agents.

to regulate, control and license Insurance
Brokers.

to review the Child Welfare Act to ensure it
continues to reflect the current needs and
attitudes of the community.

to transfer responsibility for control over
taxi-cars in areas outside of the Perth
metropolitan area from the Road Traffic
Authority to the Commissioner of Transport.

Other legislation will amend the Liquor Act,
Greyhound Racing Act, Health Act, Art Gallery
Act, Factories and Shops Act, Grain Marketing
Act, Skeleton Weed (Eradication) Act, and the
Country Areas Water Supply Act.

*Mr President and Honourable Members of the
Legislative Council.*

*Mr Speaker and Members of the Legislative
Assembly.*

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

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

COCKBURN SOUND

Nuclear Warships: Petition

THE HON. LYLA ELLIOTT (North-East
Metropolitan) [8.41 p.m.]: I wish to present a
petition from citizens of Western Australia
requesting that the Government oppose the
development of a base in Cockburn Sound for
nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed warships.
The petition contains 1 285 signatures, and bears
the certificate of the Clerk that it is in conformity
with the Standing Orders. The petition reads as
follows—

To the Honourable the President and
Honourable Members of the Legislative
Council of the Parliament of Western
Australia in the Parliament assembled.

The petition of the undersigned citizens of
Western Australia respectfully sheweth:

That the Western Australian Government
should oppose the development of a base
in Cockburn Sound for nuclear-powered,
nuclear-armed warships by

*conveying to the Australian
Federal Government and the

United States Consulate the wishes
of the people that a nuclear base in
Cockburn Sound not be built, in
view of

- a. the danger posed to the people
of Western Australia in the
event of an accidental or
planned nuclear conflict
- b. the environmental hazards
posed to present and future
generations of Western
Australians through the
presence of nuclear vessels in
Perth waters.

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

I move—

That the petition be received, and ordered
to lie upon the Table of the House.

Question put and passed.

The petition was tabled (see paper No. 7)

TRAFFIC

Reduction of Road Carnage: Petition

THE HON. P. H. WELLS (North Metro-
politan) [8.44 p.m.]: I wish to present a petition
from concerned citizens of the State of Western
Australia praying that the Government shall
continue to support the effective measures by the
Road Traffic Authority to reduce the carnage on
our roads. The petition contains 329 signatures,
and bears the certificate of the Clerk that it is in
conformity with the Standing Orders. The
petition reads as follows—

TO: The Honourable, The President and
members of the LEGISLATIVE
COUNCIL at the Parliament of
Western Australia in Parliament
assembled.

We, the undersigned residents in the State
of Western Australia do herewith pray that
Her Majesty's Government of Western
Australia shall continue to support the
effective measures being used by the Road
Traffic Authority to reduce the carnage on
our roads.

Further that they will introduce necessary
legislation to reduce the legal blood alcohol
limit from 0.08 to 0.05 as now applying in
Victoria and New South Wales.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray
that your Honourable House will give this

matter earnest consideration and your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

I move—

That the petition be received, and ordered to lie upon the Table of the House.

Question put and passed.

The petition was tabled (see paper No. 8).

QUESTIONS

Questions without notice were taken at this stage.

LAW REPORTING BILL

Leave to Introduce

THE HON. I. G. MEDCALF (Metropolitan—Leader of the House) [9.04 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 regulate the reporting of Judicial decisions and to constitute a Law Reporting Advisory Board and define its functions”.

Question put and passed; leave granted.

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by the Hon. I. G. Medcalf (Leader of the House), and read a first time.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Distribution of Copies

THE PRESIDENT (the Hon. Clive Griffiths): I wish 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. NEIL McNEILL (Lower West) [9.06 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, it is with the greatest respect that I address myself to this motion and convey to His Excellency my sincere good wishes on this his first opening of the Parliament of Western Australia. May I express the hope that he and Lady Trowbridge gain much satisfaction from this appointment and that, as with their predecessors, it will be of mutual benefit to them and to the people of this State.

The role of Governor as representative of Her Majesty is not simply one of high office and authority. It is a key element—a cornerstone of the structure of Government which has become the model for many nations and many millions of people. That structure is a protection fought for and won in order that Parliament, as representative of the people, can rightly hold its place against those who would use or misuse the people, and against those who would manipulate the people, whether it be for an ideological purpose or as part of some grand design of power—whatever its motivation—or whether it be from within or from outside this country.

These abuses represent tyrannies little different from those of which the need for constitutional parliamentary government was born, and for which the struggle still continues as our knowledge of today's international affairs confirms.

This opening is not simply a display of pomp and the trappings of power. It is a public presentation of the physical and visible aspects of the structure of Government, comprising the Monarch, the Executive Government, the Parliament, and the law, without which the lot of our people could be totally and deplorably different.

The privilege of moving this motion often rests with a new member in this place. A new member can express his hopes and those of his electorate, and reflect the excitement he feels for the parliamentary career ahead. Having been here a little time, I would like to say that surely no-one, however long his stay, is immune from the excitement of a formal parliamentary opening.

I, too, have many hopes, some arising from experiences in the several years I have been here. The one uppermost in my mind at this moment concerns my experience as a delegate of an association within this Parliament at a meeting of the representatives of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth in Ottawa. Without question, this would be one of the greatest of parliamentary experiences, not just for the pleasure I gained personally, but also for what it means, however indirectly, to all the people of this State and the

people of my province. Perhaps this can be measured by way of comparison with my attendance at and active participation in a great congress of a constituent organisation of the United Nations in Geneva; for it has also been my privilege to have been involved in that.

Let me say that the spirit of the oneness of that meeting of representatives of some 90 Parliaments of the Commonwealth was more than impressive. That oneness was unlike the Geneva congress. Despite the differences in the people—not the least of which differences being those of colour and creed—that gathering in Ottawa was the greatest stimulus of hope in the power and the value of the Commonwealth. Indeed, those differences of colour and creed, to which are attributed much of the distress and the tragedy around the world today, are regrettably not without mention in this country; but they could be barely identified at the meeting I attended.

It was my conviction that differences such as those were all but obliterated by that oneness based upon the perception, the appreciation, and the acceptance of that overwhelming something that we all have in common—the unique, albeit traditional, system of parliamentary government based upon the Mother of Parliaments at Westminster. Being able to set aside those differences which are mistakenly or mischievously thought by others to be a major consequence of that organisation is, in itself, a major achievement.

The Commonwealth gives us hope which is not readily available elsewhere. Differences and objectives can be negotiated on a basis of common accord rather than on the very shaky ground of discord, conflict, or even uncertainty.

I have heard the Commonwealth described as an exclusive club, but it is exclusive to a very limited extent only. The membership is voluntary, and so is the retirement. There is no admission charge, although the apprenticeship may have been long and hard. One can also join other clubs and enter other alliances—almost rival clubs, in fact—and no clearance is required. At the same time, membership is administered pretty loosely. The remarkable thing is that while two or three members have dropped out in the past 20 or 30 years, some of them have subjected themselves to the most dreadful traumas to gain readmission. Surely it must be of consequence that in some cases it has been only when the pre-occupation with those differences has been dissipated that readmission has become more certain.

The Commonwealth is a remarkable club. It is the most cohesive, multiracial forum on earth,

with 43 independent, sovereign nations or countries, and a population of over 1 100 million people. For those people the future is more important than the past. It is unthinkable that Australia, the seventh in order of population, should not take part in that future.

I recognise that the system is always under some stress, but what system is not? However, it is the threats to the system to which I want to devote a moment or two. "Government in the streets" is an expression which is peddled from time to time, according to the degree of the political fervour of its promoters. Currently it has its most literal interpretation in parts of South America or the Middle East. However, I suggest there are other interpretations which may be not as easy to recognise; but they exist nonetheless, and they are growing steadily. The threats gain their substance from the naive, the innocent, and the not so innocent. They gain their substance from parliamentary sources, as well as from pressure groups outside the Parliament. Such threats are to be measured by the extent to which the parliamentary process is bypassed or avoided by those who seek to usurp the rightful role of the Parliament.

The usurpation may be by resorting to the media—and I am not speaking about the simple airing of grievances or administrative wrongs which need to be put right, or even of the currently topical "marching through the streets". However, on that aspect I must confess I am a little curious as to how one type of lawful march can be regarded in some quarters as acceptable, yet another is described as "divisive". That point aside, electoral or political judgments based on so-called public opinion polls or newspaper columns are no more and no less a threat than that posed by parliamentarians themselves, as well as by others, in their scramble for media coverage under the pretext of seeking solutions to electorate or national problems. In the case of parliamentarians, this is described usually as "good PR".

I must emphasise that I am speaking about avoiding the parliamentary process, not supplementing it. In this the media is, and has been, used as a most valuable aid. However, these things do present a threat to the confidence and trust in the institution of Parliament, as well as to those who currently comprise that Parliament. While there is a responsibility on everyone to take care, perhaps a greater responsibility rests with the media. However, the solution may well rest with the Parliament and the Executive Government.

Perhaps I can best sum this up by suggesting that we refer to the Parliament those things which rightfully belong to the Parliament. It is by this means that power will remain where it should—with the Parliament, as the representative of the people.

It is implicit that the Government should not only give the opportunity of reference, but more importantly both the Government and the people should require that matters of high public importance be determined by the Parliament. They should not be dictated by powerful bodies outside the Parliament.

In making a reference to the Parliament, I would like to turn for a moment to the Speech delivered tonight by His Excellency. It reports a fine balance of enterprise and welfare, and of initiative and consolidation. Who can resist the impact of education's 23.5 per cent share of the Consolidated Revenue Fund expenditure? I make reference also to something close to my heart—the provision for the pre-school education of four-year-olds and the encouragement of play groups.

The Speech clearly has private enterprise as its major theme, and nowhere is this more evident than in the attention given to resources and energy; properly so, in my opinion, as I well remember the "Cinderella" period in our history when it seemed that nobody would ever invite us to the ball!

Our aim surely must be to accept our role in the international scene—after all, we struggled for it for a long time. However, we must also do everything possible to enhance the material, health, and social benefit to the people of this country, for there are still people who are deprived and in need.

This applies no less to another great resource—that is, agriculture—for which we must accept responsibilities to our own as well as to the people of a demanding, if uncertain and inconsistent, world. For instance, why should the people of this State be paying an import bill of many millions of dollars for such basic items as dairy products for which we have an undoubted productive capacity?

The agricultural industry is one in which private enterprise is the life blood, and yet today it seems to me to illustrate the need for great promotional leadership, in order that its position as the mainspring of Australian and Western Australian industry is maintained.

I do not mean leadership in an industrial, engineering, or technical sense, because we are very well served in that regard; nor do I mean it even in the sense of competition with other industries, for there is no cause, and yet I suspect there are some doubts about this.

If there are doubts, whether widely or firmly held, I wonder whether they are in part the long-term results of too much reliance on Governments, or perhaps of the toleration of too much Government involvement in the management of industry—an involvement which has not always been Government inspired.

The leadership of which I speak has as its task the dispelling of these doubts and the reassertion of agriculture as the great bastion of initiative and enterprise, enabling the fullest achievement of that warm, comfortable feeling that we, among those people in few countries in the world, need never be in want. Having a belief in the material and social value of agriculture to this State, I entertain that too as a hope.

As has been observed by His Excellency, this is the "year of the wedding" and I express the pleasure shared by many thousands. This is an expression not only of good wishes to His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, and his bride-to-be, but also of an awareness that, with that event, as with the procedures of this opening ceremony tonight, there is the reminder of the need to provide the continuity and the utmost stability of our chosen system. It is a system which surely has as its core the dependence upon the example of a good family relationship, whether it be between people or between nations.

THE HON. P. H. LOCKYER (Lower North) [9.24 p.m.]: I formally second the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. D. K. Dans (Leader of the Opposition).

House adjourned at 9.25 p.m.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT ACT 1980

Validity

1. The Hon. H. W. OLNEY, to the Attorney General:

- (1) Has any action been taken yet to test the validity of the Constitution Amendment Act 1980?
- (2) If not, has he any knowledge when such action is likely to be taken?

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF replied:

- (1) and (2) We had a number of amending Bills to the Constitution in 1980. However, if the member is referring to the one dealing with the increase in the Ministry, that is a matter which is in the hands of the private members concerned. I am not aware of the latest position, but I shall ascertain it and let the honourable member know.

PARLIAMENT

Opening

2. The Hon. J. M. BERINSON, to the Leader of the House:

- (1) Can the Minister advise the House of the reasons for the Government's insistence each year on proroguing Parliament immediately prior to a formal re-opening?
- (2) Is it not a fact that a simple adjournment from session to session would have the same effect for all practical purposes?
- (3) To put it another way, what practical benefit in the Government's view justifies the pomp and cost of these annual, formal openings?

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF replied:

- (1) to (3) I am not familiar with the history of the proroguing of Parliament, although I know it is a long and detailed history. I do not doubt there are good

reasons that the Government continues to adopt this practice. However, being unfamiliar with them, I shall obtain the information and let the honourable member know.

DEFAMATION LAW

Uniformity

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

- (1) Is the Government giving consideration to co-operating with the Australian Government and the Governments of the States and Territories to facilitate a uniform law of defamation in Australia?
- (2) If so, does he consider that a reference of power by the States to the national Parliament would be the most convenient method of achieving uniformity?

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF replied:

- (1) and (2) The Government of Western Australia is co-operating with the other States and the Commonwealth in regard to this matter. The present position is that following a report by the Commonwealth Law Reform Commission and a report by the Western Australian Law Reform Commission—neither of which made exactly the same recommendations—the matter was referred to the Standing Committee of Attorneys General. The Federal Attorney General requested that in view of the various comments made the matter should be submitted to the public for further comment, and this was done.

The comments made are now being collated and considered by a committee of officers of the Commonwealth and the States, and the matter is likely to be referred to again at the April meeting of the Standing Committee of Attorneys General.

With respect to the reference of power, the answer is that there is little likelihood that will be found a satisfactory means to overcome the problem.

COURT: SUPREME

Appeals to Privy Council

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

In view of the refusal of the Full Court of the Supreme Court of Western Australia to grant leave to the Government to appeal to the Privy Council in the Wilsmore case, does the Government now consider that this avenue of appeal should be abolished?

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF replied:

The short answer is "No". However, I remind the member that he is asking me to give an opinion, and that is contrary to the rules of this House.

