

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

First Session of the Thirty-fourth Parliament

The Legislative Council was prorogued as from 16 December 1992.

The Legislative Assembly was prorogued as from 16 December 1992 and dissolved on 8 January 1993.

The Thirty-fourth Parliament was convened for the despatch of business on 17 June 1993, and the first session was opened by His Excellency the Governor (Sir Francis Burt, AC, KCMG, QC).

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT**Legislative Council**

Thursday, 17 June 1993

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

The Legislative Council met at 11.00 am.

PROCLAMATION

The Clerk of the Parliaments (Mr L.B. Marquet) read the Proclamation of His Excellency the Governor (Sir Francis Burt, AC, KCMG, QC) summoning the first session of the Thirty-fourth Parliament.

GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION

His Excellency's Commissioners (The Honourable Mr Justice Malcolm, AC, Chief Justice of Western Australia, and The Honourable Mr Justice Rowland) having entered the Chamber at 11.00 am, and the Senior Commissioner (The Honourable Mr Justice Malcolm, AC) having taken the Chair, a message was sent to the Legislative Assembly requesting the presence of members in the Council Chamber.

Members of the Legislative Assembly having arrived accordingly, the Senior Commissioner requested the Clerk to read His Excellency's Commission to do all things necessary to be done in the name and on the part of Her Majesty the Queen, or in the name and on the part of His Excellency the Governor, in order to the opening and holding of the first session of the Thirty-fourth Parliament of Western Australia.

The Commission was read.

COMMISSIONER'S STATEMENT

The Senior Commissioner read the following statement -

Honourable members of the Legislative Council and members of the Legislative Assembly:

I have it in command from His Excellency the Governor to inform you that at three o'clock this afternoon, Thursday 17 June 1993, His Excellency will

declare to you the causes of the calling together of this Session of Parliament; and it being necessary that a President of the Legislative Council and a Speaker of the Legislative Assembly be first chosen, it is His Excellency's pleasure that you, honourable members of the Legislative Council after those who have been newly elected have been duly sworn by me in the terms of the Commission granted to me by His Excellency the Governor, do elect your President and notify the same to His Excellency and you, honourable members of the Legislative Assembly, repair to the place where you are to sit and, having been duly sworn by His Honour Mr Justice Rowland in the terms of the Commission granted to him by His Excellency, do elect your Speaker and likewise notify the same to His Excellency.

The Junior Commissioner (The Honourable Mr Justice Rowland) and members of the Legislative Assembly retired from the Chamber.

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Swearing-in

The Senior Commissioner produced his Commission to administer to members the Oath of Allegiance to Her Majesty, or the affirmation required by law. The Commission was read.

The Clerk produced the return of writs for the election of members at the general election held on 6 February 1993, showing that the following had been duly elected -

Agricultural Region

Bruce Kirwan Donaldson
Eric James Charlton
Kimberley Maurice Chance
Murray Davidson Nixon
Murray John Criddle

East Metropolitan Region

Alannah Joan Geraldine MacTiernan
Peter Gilbert Da Conceicao Foss
Thomas George Butler
Derrick Gordon Tomlinson
Nicholas David Griffiths

Mining and Pastoral Region

Thomas Gregory Stephens
Norman Frederick Moore
Mark Warriedar Nevill
Philip Harry Lockyer
Thomas Richard Helm

North Metropolitan Region

Samuel George Ernest Cash
Graham John Edwards
Robert Gerald Pike
Samuel Mathew Piantadosi
George Maxwell Evans
Philip Ross Lightfoot
Reginald Elliott Davies

South Metropolitan Region

Clive Edward Griffiths
Stanley John Halden
Barbara Mary Scott
Cheryl May Davenport
James Alan Scott

South West Region

Barry John House
Robert John Thomas
William Noel Stretch
John Alexander Cowdell
Muriel Grace Patterson
Douglas William Wenn
Murray Scott Montgomery

These members took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance, or made and subscribed the affirmation required by law, and signed the Roll.

The Commissioner retired from the Chamber.

PRESIDENT - ELECTION

The Clerk reported that the office of President was vacant.

HON GEORGE CASH (North Metropolitan - Leader of the House) [11.55 am]: I move -

That Hon Clive Griffiths do take the Chair in the Council as President.

HON E.J. CHARLTON (Agricultural - Minister for Transport) [11.55 am]: I second the motion.

HON CLIVE GRIFFITHS (South Metropolitan) [11.55 am]: I submit myself to the will of the House.

HON GRAHAM EDWARDS (North Metropolitan - Leader of the Opposition) [11.56 am]: I move -

That Hon Doug Wenn do take the Chair in the Council as President.

HON TOM HELM (Mining and Pastoral) [11.56 am]: I second the motion.

HON DOUG WENN (South West) [11.56 am]: I submit myself to the will of the House.

[A ballot was taken with Hon Muriel Patterson acting as scrutineer. Hon Clive Griffiths was declared by the Clerk to have been elected by a majority of votes, and he was conducted to the Chair by Hon George Cash and Hon Eric Charlton.]

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Clive Griffiths): I most sincerely thank honourable members for their confidence in re-electing me to the position of President. I will continue to uphold the traditions and dignity of this Chamber and at the same time protect the interests of all members while they act on behalf of the people they represent.

HON GEORGE CASH (North Metropolitan - Leader of the House) [11.59 am]: On behalf of Government members I congratulate you, Sir, on your re-election to the high office of President of the Legislative Council in Western Australia. You were first elected as President of this Chamber in 1977, and after 16 years in the position you have become one of the longest serving Presiding Officers in the Parliaments of the Commonwealth. Undoubtedly, during that time you have upheld the strong traditions of this House and the principles of the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy.

Mr President, I trust that you will continue to uphold those traditions and discharge your duties and responsibilities without fear or favour.

HON GRAHAM EDWARDS (North Metropolitan - Leader of the Opposition) [12.01 pm]: Mr President, I convey to you the congratulations of Opposition members on your re-election. I also thank Hon Doug Wenn for allowing his name to be submitted to the will of the House. Given his experience in this place I am sure he would have made an outstanding President. Mr President, your reputation is very good not only in this State but also in various parts of the world served by Houses similar to ours. I hope that you continue to apply the degree of fairness necessary to control the House to ensure that all members of the Legislative Council are given a fair go.

HON REG DAVIES (North Metropolitan) [12.02 pm]: As the first Independent elected to this House in over half a century I speak on behalf of minority groups and offer you, Mr President, my sincere congratulations on your re-election to this high office. You, Sir,

will be the superior arbiter of the upper House of the Parliament of Western Australia and the upholder of the rights, privileges, customs and traditions of the Westminster system of Government. As the guardian of the rights to freedom of speech without fear or favour I wish you infallible judgment in your decision making.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Clive Griffiths): I thank honourable members for the very kind words spoken on my re-election as President. I assure each and every member that the rules have not changed and until they do change they will be implemented in the same way they have been implemented over the past 16 years. As the protector of the rights and privileges of the members of this place I will continue to be a careful guardian. All members can be assured they will be heard when they wish to address this Chamber, and that it is my desire to ensure that the minority voice is at all times given every opportunity to be heard.

I congratulate new members who have been elected to this place and welcome them to the membership of the Legislative Council. I trust that they will have many years to rejoice in the choice that the people have made in sending them here, and that the people will have no cause to believe they have made the wrong choice. I hope new members have a happy time here. I thank all members for the very kind words that have been extended to me.

PRESIDENT - GOVERNOR TO RECEIVE

HON GEORGE CASH (North Metropolitan - Leader of the House) [12.03 pm]: His Excellency the Governor will be pleased to receive the President-elect at 12.30 pm today with such members who desire to accompany him.

Sitting suspended from 12.04 to 3.00 pm

THE PRESIDENT resumed the Chair and read prayers.

PARLIAMENT HOUSE - VISITORS

Welcome

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Clive Griffiths): On behalf of the members of the Legislative Council I welcome all our guests to the opening of this session of the Parliament. I hope that your stay with us will be interesting and educational, and that you will leave us knowing that the affairs of State are in good hands.

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Election of President - Governor's Congratulations

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Clive Griffiths): Honourable members, I wish to announce that I have presented myself to His Excellency the Governor, who has been pleased to express satisfaction with the choice of the Council in the following terms -

Mr President,

It is with much pleasure I learn that you have been elected by the Members of the Legislative Council to the high and honourable office of President of the House.

I congratulate you upon your election; and I recognise and I shall respect your undoubted rights and privileges and I have every confidence that you will fill the office in a worthy and dignified manner.

Sir Francis Burt

Governor.

PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Clive Griffiths): Honourable members, I have received a Commission authorising me to administer the oath of allegiance and this will be presented and read by the Clerk.

[The Commission was read.]

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Delivery

His Excellency the Governor (Sir Francis Burt, AC, KCMG, QC) entered the Council Chamber at 3.04 pm; 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 honourable members of the Legislative Assembly.

Before I outline the Government's legislative program for this session, it is appropriate that I note the retirement of members from the Legislative Council including several members with many years of service. They are Hon Joe Berinson, Hon Garry Kelly, Hon Fred McKenzie, Hon Valma Ferguson, Hon Beryl Jones, Hon John Caldwell, Hon Margaret McAleer, Hon David Wordsworth and Hon Diane Airey.

I also note the retirements from the Legislative Assembly of Hon Bob Pearce, Hon Ian Thompson and Mr Gavan Troy. I note similarly the retirements of Barry MacKinnon, Ian Alexander, Frank Donovan and Leon Watt from the Legislative Assembly.

The Economy

The opening of this Thirty-fourth Parliament of our magnificent State occurs while harsh economic conditions continue. I have remarked before in this place about the unacceptably high unemployment level in Western Australia. Western Australia has the economic potential to lead Australia out of recession and create a new generation of employment opportunities. What is required is a fundamental change of attitude and behaviour by government to give private enterprise its rightful place as the generator of economic development and full employment. The Government is totally committed to this change. It believes that private enterprise alone can build a secure economic future and it will govern accordingly. It is committed to rebuilding investor confidence to overcome the investment stagnation of the last five years. It has already begun to develop new trade links which private enterprise will develop into economic reality, and it is cooperating strongly with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in its efforts to build effective links with its counterparts in Asia.

The Government is already working hard to reduce the cost of energy and other public services, and to improve industrial relations so that the private sector can flourish and create employment for all. Some of our rural industries, for so long the mainstay of the State's growth and wellbeing, are facing great difficulties. The wool industry is in crisis, with prices so low that many efficient producers cannot continue in the industry. Other rural commodities are subject to international trade restrictions and unfair practices which have reduced prices at the farm gate to subsistence levels.

The current situation creates a new challenge for the initiative and ingenuity of our resilient farming community. It will be supported by reforms in transport, processing costs, and regulatory burdens, and by a determined and sustained search for new markets for existing and new agricultural products. Our patterns of agricultural production and marketing may need to undergo some change, but we can emerge from the challenge stronger, more diversified and more stable than ever before.

The world picture of minerals and energy is very mixed, but for Western Australia the opportunities are good. Our LNG energy markets are secure and substantial new sales are within reach. Despite low oil prices, Western Australia's production is rising and by the end of the Government's first term this State will be Australia's biggest producer of oil.

The outlook for iron ore continues to be favourable and the gold industry is gaining strength. Improved industrial relations, deregulation and more competitively priced energy will enable us to hold our competitive edge in the minerals market and be the first to benefit from an increase in world demand and price.

When investors are looking for security of tenure, minimum sovereign risk and administrative consistency, the change in Government attitudes in Western Australia has come at an auspicious time. This State is already the nation's biggest export earner with

70 per cent of its exports now going to the Asian region. Opportunities abound in this region and there has been a strong response to the Government's trade visits to Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Indonesia. The Government will put maximum effort into creating enduring trade links which will enable local businesses to gain access to new and expanding markets.

Public Sector Efficiency

The Government will also do its part by achieving an efficient public sector. Our businesses cannot be internationally competitive unless the State has efficient public services. The Government will announce shortly the findings of the independent commission to review public sector finances, which is expected to identify opportunities for efficiency improvements. Achieving these improvements may cause short term readjustments but the Government is determined to gain the long term benefits available from constructive change.

The Government will act to restore sound financial management and will implement an effective debt management plan. It will introduce a Bill to amend the Financial Administration and Audit Act to allow recurrent and capital accounts to be consolidated. This will facilitate the Government's commitment to give Parliament a better account of the State's financial dealings and its overall position.

To improve public sector performance the Government will concentrate on the core activities of each department or agency. It will test all programs and activities in relation to core services and in this way it will reduce costs, improve efficiency and guarantee the quality of services now and in the future.

The Government will introduce immediately a Bill for a public sector management Act, including the establishment of a commissioner for public sector standards. This will give effect to key recommendations of the Royal Commission into Commercial Activities of Government and Other Matters. To ensure the recommendations of the royal commission are properly considered and implemented, the Government will introduce immediately a Commission on Government Bill and a Bill to strengthen the Official Corruption Commission. The Commission on Government Bill will include the matters recommended by the royal commission but additionally will provide for consideration of other initiatives aimed specifically at preventing corrupt, illegal or improper conduct in the public sector. Members of both Houses will be involved directly through a proposed joint committee to oversee the commission on Government.

Economic Stimulus

Given its crucial importance in the State's economy, the mining industry will receive particular attention from the Government. Bills to amend the Mining Act, the Mines Regulation Act and the Petroleum Act will be introduced early in the session to encourage investment and economic activity.

A workplace agreements Act will be another key component of the Government's drive to lift both economic performance and employee wellbeing. The Government will introduce a Bill for this Act early in the session. Legislation for the establishment of minimum conditions of employment will complement this Bill. These initiatives will give management and employees greater personal responsibility for their relationships in the workplace. It will encourage the abandonment of the "them and us" mentality which has bedevilled many enterprises, and it will remove the implied legislative statement that our citizens cannot manage their own affairs without the centralised control of the existing system.

As a key part of its program to remove investor uncertainty, the Government will introduce a Bill for an Act to confirm the validity of land titles issued since October 1975. The Act will also confirm the State's responsibility for all land management matters. The Government will cooperate with other jurisdictions where appropriate to achieve a system of land management based on sound principles which can be applied with equal justice to all Australian people.

The Government will introduce a Bill to provide for the transitional changes needed to divide the State Energy Commission into separate gas and electricity utilities. This is part of what will be a sustained campaign by the Government to reduce energy costs for industry and, eventually, the community at large. Cheaper energy prices cannot be created artificially but they are crucial to the future of our State and the Government will use all appropriate strategies to achieve them.

A Bill will be introduced forthwith to provide for a separation of the positions of Chairman, Environmental Protection Authority and Chief Executive Officer, Department of Environmental Protection. The Government will protect all environmental values and safeguard the independence of the environmental protection process, while encouraging legitimate aspirations for economic and social advancement.

Early in this first session the Government will be introducing a Bill to amend the Valuation of Land Act and the Land Tax Assessment Act to allow all land subject to land tax to be valued each year at a common date of valuation. As a consequence, land tax will be more predictable for business planning.

Additionally, the Government will bring forward several Bills affecting agriculture. These concern stock brands, agricultural chemicals, exotic animal diseases, plant diseases, horticultural produce, soil and land conservation, and the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation. These Bills taken together represent important measures to control threats to our farming and pastoral industries and to enhance the quality of their products.

The Government will amend port authority legislation to enable ports to operate on a more commercial footing. The Departments of Transport and Marine and Harbours will be amalgamated. Improvements in land, sea and air transport are vital to our economic performance.

A new fisheries Bill will be introduced to meet the needs of a modern fishing industry, accommodate the growing aquaculture industry and better manage recreational fishing.

Social Initiatives

While the Government will focus on measures to stimulate economic growth and reduce unemployment, it will not neglect its promised social initiatives. The Government will introduce a Bill for an Act to establish a Ministry of Justice, comprising Crown Law Department, Youth Justice Bureau and Department of Corrections. There will be Bills to amend the Bail Act and to establish a Sentencing Act. The former will check what has become known as the revolving door syndrome in the Children's Court by requiring adult involvement in juvenile bail. The latter will lead to greater consistency of sentencing to ensure that justice is done to the individual and the community.

In addition, the Government will consolidate legislation relating to young offenders into a separate Young Offenders Act. This will involve changes to the Child Welfare Act and new provisions to permit supervised release programs. The Government's approach to juvenile justice will not be harsh or excessively punitive, but at the same time it will bring young offenders face to face with the physical and moral strength of the community so that they can more easily recognise the value of being part of the community instead of being antisocial.

A new Disability Services Bill 1993, to be introduced early in the session, will see the repeal of the Authority for Intellectually Handicapped Persons Act and the Disability Services Act 1992. The Bill represents the clear implementation of a Government commitment to create a commission structure for the disability services field, while at the same time reaffirming the Government's commitment to the principles and objectives of the Disability Services Act 1992. The new Bill will enhance the ability of people with disabilities, their families and advocates to influence both the style and level of services available for them and the many areas of public policy and community activity where people with disabilities have a vital interest.

The Commonwealth Government's superannuation guarantee legislation has made necessary many consequential changes to Acts affecting superannuation schemes in Western Australia. A Bill related to superannuation will be introduced to modernise schemes and give effect to the Commonwealth requirement. The Bill will also address deficiencies in superannuation arrangements for Government employees and members of Parliament.

The Metropolitan (Perth) Passenger Transport Trust Act will be amended to increase the fine for fare evasion on the public transport system. The Government will introduce a Regional Development Commission (Administration) Act to establish four new regional development commissions and consolidate regional development administration into one Act. The maintenance of social infrastructure and the encouragement of diversified economic growth in the regions are important supports for our agricultural industries.

A Land Administration Act will replace the Land Act. It will include reforms to pastoral land tenure and will create a single register for both the Crown estate and freehold land. Much needed reforms to the Strata Titles Act will be introduced. The Transfer of Land Act will be amended to remove outmoded procedures and to permit implementation of modern land registration practices.

There will be several Bills to address deficiencies in the health delivery system. These include quality assurance (confidentiality), conciliation and complaints and mental health Bills. As part of an overall drive to generate pride in our State, the Government will legislate to create effective discouragement of graffiti, and at the same time it will encourage the community to take its own initiatives to rid itself of this costly and unsightly nuisance.

Challenge

Before concluding, I appeal to both Houses, and the community generally, to pull together to meet the challenges facing our State. The challenges come with opportunities which, if grasped, can give us the strong growth we must have to defeat chronic unemployment. Better management of Government affairs, renewed contacts and confidence among our international trading partners, and the restoration of a proper relationship between Government and private enterprise without confusion of roles will give us the clarity and strength of purpose to create for all Western Australians not only jobs, but a real future.

Mr President, Mr Speaker and members of both Houses, I now have much pleasure in declaring the first session of the Thirty-fourth Parliament open. I trust that providence will bless your deliberations.

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

PETITION - NINGALOO MARINE PARK

Drilling Opposition

The following petition bearing the signatures of 927 persons was presented by Hon P.H. Lockyer -

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

We, the undersigned, people of Exmouth are unanimous that we do not want drilling on our coast line, in particular the Ningaloo Reef Marine Park.

We are the caretakers of the most precious natural untouched treasure left in our world.

Please listen to our plea to stop any negotiations.

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

[See paper No 293.]

[Questions without notice taken.]

MINING AMENDMENT BILL

Leave to Introduce

HON GEORGE CASH (North Metropolitan - Leader of the House) [3.47 pm]: 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 the Mining Amendment Bill.

Point of Order

Hon MARK NEVILL: The Bill the member seeks to introduce amends an Act for which I have already given notice to introduce legislation in an earlier motion.

The PRESIDENT: Notice of motion does not constitute a matter being before the House.

The member gave notice today but the Minister for Mines is moving without notice for leave to introduce the Bill now.

Debate Resumed

Question put and passed; leave granted.

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by Hon George Cash (Leader of the House), and read a first time.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Distribution of Copies

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Clive Griffiths): For the sake of accuracy I have obtained copies of His Excellency's speech, which will now be distributed to all honourable members.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

HON B.K. DONALDSON (Agricultural) [3.49 pm]: I move -

That the following Address be presented to His Excellency, Sir Francis Burt, AC, KCMG, QC, Governor in and over the State of Western Australia and its dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia.

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.

I express my great sense of privilege in moving this Address-in-Reply. I should also like to express the honour I feel at having been elected a representative of the Agricultural Region. I have enjoyed a close affinity with the people of the region at the farming and community levels for 37 years. My involvement in recent years has been with the Country Shire Councils Association and the Western Australian Municipal Association. It is an honour to now represent electors of the Agricultural Region in this Parliament. I am deeply conscious of the responsibility and commitment that is needed to meet their expectations.

I recall an incident which took place at last year's Esperance agricultural show in the lead-up to the last State election. I was manning a party booth at the show giving away balloons which had the word "Liberal" printed on them. I was asked by two girls if they could have two balloons. They followed up their request by saying that they would give me some of their Maltesers because all politicians liked to be bribed! One could say that remark was pretty cheeky, but it made me think about the public's perception of politicians. To have made a comment like that those two young girls must have had discussions round the family table - or possibly it was what they have read or heard in the media - about what was happening, not only in this Parliament but in other Parliaments in the world. It was a reminder of the standards we need to set in this House in order to rebuild people's confidence in us as legislators. They did not get their balloons, and I was not eating Maltesers for the rest of the day! Instead, I gave a diplomatic reply that politicians did not stand for bribery and corruption, and that they were standards we did not strive to achieve. Unfortunately in society we find bad apples whose behaviour inevitably leaves a smear on others. This view is not a legacy I wish to leave, nor must it be a perception of this Parliament.

I attended a lecture by a professor on advanced studies discussing the need to strive for excellence. He took the line that in the pursuit of excellence many people look in the wrong place. It is found in the mind - yours and mine. That means that it is up to all of us here to set our own standards and to strive to achieve those standards during our time in this House. Anything less would be unacceptable to those people who chose us as their representatives.

It would be remiss of me not to pay a tribute to the unsung heroes in the Agricultural Region. I refer to those people who played a major role in ensuring my presence here this afternoon. They are not apathetic in politics. They sought suitable representation in the legislative framework and got off their backsides to ensure that happened. I refer to the lay party

members and supporters who sit for 14 hours at preselection time, who continue to organise functions and events, who attend the conferences and meetings, and who make it all happen. The dedication of the enthusiastic staff at the O'Connor division, Marcia, Adrienne and Neil, left a mark on all of us and a desire to try a little harder. The hard working office bearers and members of the O'Connor and Pearce divisions gave invaluable help. I acknowledge my colleagues on the Agricultural Region ticket, for whom I have the highest regard; they made a solid contribution. I single out Wilson Tuckey, the Federal member for O'Connor. His support and guidance, as well as the threat of his famous iron bar if we did not measure up, certainly kept us motivated. The respect and high regard with which he is held in that electorate is testimony to his representation of the community that constitutes the seat of O'Connor. I know that if I falter, these people will remind me very quickly what they expect.

Without the support of spouse and family none of us would aspire to be in this House. I am truly indebted to my wife Lyn. At a time of family tragedy some six years ago when our eldest son was seriously injured she encouraged me to continue in government at the local, State and national level and shouldered the whole burden of our son's rehabilitation. I thank my wife for that ongoing support without which I would not be in this House today.

My involvement as a local government councillor, first as the President of the Country Shire Councils Association and then with the Western Australian Municipal Association, has given me an insight into community expectations not only in Western Australia but also in the Eastern States. I have been pleased to see an erosion in the long held view that differences exist between city and country councils. In reality, it is a scale of relativity existing between the delivery of services to meet specific community needs - these are not differences. I often wonder whether the Darling Range has created an artificial barrier between the country and the city over which metropolitan residents cannot see to understand the problems that exist in country areas - and vice versa, as it may be that country people do not see the problems facing people in the metropolitan area. Seeing those barriers broken down, at least in local government, was a most rewarding period of my life. I have a healthy respect for local government, the councillors and staff who work for those councils. It saddens me to see problems that arise from time to time within a local government council that smear and overshadow the good work that has been going on in local government for many years. Over many years local government has played a prominent role in the development of Western Australia and its communities.

I realise the time constraints, but I would like to raise a few issues that are of concern to my electorate. It has been said many times that if a person wanted to cripple a country's economy, especially in a nation as vast as ours, the best way would be to tax transport. That is because it is a burden we all share whether we live in metropolitan, rural or remote areas. Western Australia is reliant on the Eastern States for consumer items, and the vast distances involved in distributing those items mean a cost imposition on the family income. It is more than an imposition for those who live and work in country areas, it is also a tax on valuable exports such as mining, fishing and agriculture. Until we find a way to remove this burden from the exporters of our wealth it will continue to erode our competitive position and create hardships for our electors.

I turn now to the bombing range north of Lancelin. I wonder how many nations use their own coastline for target practice and bombing as we approach the twenty-first century. Western Australia has a pristine coastline, so it is horrifying that it is still being used in this way. I sometimes wonder where all our conservationists are and why they are not standing up and being counted among people wanting to stop this practice. The coastline between Lancelin and Cervantes demands the construction of a coast road to develop and encourage tourism and to better manage the coastal environment. Off road, four wheel drive vehicles must be kept away from this sensitive coastline and prevented from damaging this valuable natural attraction of great beauty. I hope enough pressure will be brought to bear to see the use of this area as a bombing and firing range cease, and a road established.

Another area of interest to me is the development of the Mt Lesueur National Park. Nobody could dispute the need for this park to be gazetted; however, I dispute the inclusion of the Crown vacant land, which has proved to contain valuable coal seams. I do not accept that any Government of any persuasion has the right to lock away proven resources, denying our children's children resources which they may seek to make use of in the future.

Finally, I refer to the ongoing concerns which confront the community in the Agricultural Region. I must mention those Western Australians who have suffered personal and financial losses during recent years, particularly in country areas, while this country has battled the effects of the recession. Although this subject has probably been mentioned many times in this House, much pain and anguish still remains over the dramatic fall in wool prices since the dismantling of the reserve price scheme and the stockpile debt which must be serviced. The vagaries of grain price commodities have already been mentioned today. People with children to educate are struggling to fund the basic requirements to enable their children to meet what is needed in this day and age. There continues to be a vacuum in recognising the high cost of living and of educating a family in regions such as that which I represent. I foresee many heartbreaks if this situation is not addressed by the Federal Government and if it does not recognise its obligation to ensure that all Australians receive an equal opportunity to participate in this nation's quality of life expectations. The communities in such towns face hardship and disappointment as young people leave school and undertake further training, only to find at the end of the day that no work is available in that town. It becomes increasingly difficult for young families to establish themselves and prosper. Unemployment and the seemingly helpless outlook for our young people have probably contributed to the increased crime rate in our community.

Mr President, I have given a brief outline of some of the concerns which touch all our lives; concerns which must be addressed to restore Western Australia to a prosperous and vibrant community. I thank you, Mr President, and honourable members, for your attention this afternoon, and for the privilege of moving the Address-in-Reply.

Government members: Hear, hear!

HON M.J. CRIDDLE (Agricultural) [4.15 pm]: I formally second the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Hon Graham Edwards (Leader of the Opposition).

House adjourned at 4.15 pm

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY - RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS to the Parliamentary Secretary:
- Can the Parliamentary Secretary advise -
- (1) What his responsibilities entail?
 - (2) The areas on which he is able to take parliamentary questions?
 - (3) The staff and resources to which he has access in his day to day duties?

Hon R.G. PIKE replied:

I ask that the question be placed on notice.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I want members to allow the proceedings of this afternoon's sitting to proceed with a minimum of interjection. I have said to members many times that they do not have to like what people say in this place and they do not have to believe it, but they do have to listen to it.

NINGALOO MARINE PARK - DRILLING ANNOUNCEMENT

Minister's Apologies

2. Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS to the Minister for Mines:
- Has the Minister yet travelled to Exmouth in order to apologise to the residents of Exmouth for the offhanded manner in which he announced the drilling on Ningaloo and the changes to the boundaries of the Ningaloo Marine Park, without any prior consultation?

Hon GEORGE CASH replied:

The matter was certainly not handled in an offhanded manner. The people of Exmouth are aware of the positive steps that this Government has taken in respect of the environment. The Government is currently finalising its policy about petroleum exploration on marine conservation areas and other areas within the State. That will allow some certainty for petroleum companies and, indeed, some certainty for the community as a whole.

I have been invited by Hon Phil Lockyer to accompany him to Exmouth within a few weeks in order to take up any outstanding matters in respect of the alleged oil drilling on Ningaloo Reef. At that meeting I will clearly advise the people of Exmouth that it was never the Government's intention to drill the reef structure at Exmouth.

Hon Mark Nevill: You were just going to change the boundaries!

Hon GEORGE CASH: Once again, we have from the Opposition mischievous comments designed clearly to misrepresent the Government's position.

The PRESIDENT: If the comments were mischievous, why does the Leader of the House not ignore them?

Hon GEORGE CASH: Shortly, I will be visiting Exmouth with Hon Phil Lockyer to advise the Exmouth people of our plans, about which I believe they will be entirely satisfied.

NINGALOO MARINE PARK - DRILLING ANNOUNCEMENT

Changing of Boundaries Statement

3. Hon GRAHAM EDWARDS to the Minister for Mines:
- Does he recall that his press release announcing the drilling of Ningaloo also contained a statement that, if necessary, the boundaries for the Ningaloo Marine Park would be changed?

Hon GEORGE CASH replied:

I have indicated to the Leader of the Opposition that when the Government finalises its petroleum exploration in marine parks policy he will receive a copy.

QUESTION TIME - EXTENSION OF TIME CONSIDERATION

4. Hon REG DAVIES to the Leader of the House:

In the interests of open and accountable government, and considering that we now have five Ministers in this Chamber with portfolios covering over half the State Budget, does he intend to extend question time to a more reasonable 60 minutes?

Hon GEORGE CASH replied:

That is a matter that can be discussed by the House in due course. I certainly do not intend to make an announcement today.

MIDLAND WORKSHOPS - CLOSURE DECISION

Financial Assessment of Impact

5. Hon JOHN HALDEN to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Will he confirm that prior to his decision to seek Cabinet approval to close the Midland Workshops he received no detail on a financial assessment of the impact of that closure on Westrail?
- (2) If he received such a detailed assessment, who prepared it?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON replied:

- (1) I did not receive any such advice prior to the decision.
- (2) Not applicable.

MIDLAND WORKSHOPS - REDUNDANCY PACKAGES

6. Hon JOHN HALDEN to the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Is it correct that as of last Monday only 86 Midland Workshops employees had accepted the Government's redundancy offer?
- (2) If that is correct, does it indicate that the number of people taking up the redundancy offer is well short of the Government's expectations?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON replied:

(1)-(2)

On the contrary, the response has been overwhelming as about 1 200 people have signified an intention to seek redundancy. Also, about 200 positions have been identified within Westrail, the appointment for which the people from the Midland Workshops will be given priority. In fact, the expressions of interest in these matters have been far in excess of Westrail's expectations.

STATE FINANCE - AUDIT

7. Hon MARK NEVILL to the Minister for Finance:

- (1) Regarding the independent, commissioned audit of the State's finances, how often has the Minister been in contact with the members of the audit team and its officers?
- (2) Has the Minister seen a draft report from this audit?

Hon MAX EVANS replied:

(1)-(2)

I have been in contact with the official audit only in relation to Radio 6PR and the Totalisator Agency Board, which come within my jurisdiction. I have not seen draft reports of the first and second parts of the audit.

STATE FINANCE - AUDIT

8. Hon MARK NEVILL to the Minister for Finance:

Has the Minister had access to any material provided to the commissioned audit relating to his portfolios?

Hon MAX EVANS replied:

None.

MIDLAND WORKSHOPS - CLOSURE DECISION

9. Hon JOHN HALDEN to the Minister for Transport:

If he received no advice before deciding to close the Midland Workshops, as he indicated in an earlier answer, and before presenting his decision to Cabinet, on what information was his decision based?

Hon E.J. CHARLTON replied:

The Government's action was as a consequence of a Cabinet submission which I had had prepared by Westrail. Cabinet made its decision on that basis.

STATE FINANCE - AUDIT

10. Hon MARK NEVILL to the Minister for Finance:

Did he have any influence, directly or indirectly, over the consultants employed for the independent, commissioned audit, and over what fees were paid?

Hon MAX EVANS replied:

I had no influence over who was employed. In fact a firm contacted me regarding why it was not employed in the audit, but I was not aware of the matter.
