

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 25 July 1984

MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY

The Legislative Assembly met at 3.00 p.m.

THE SPEAKER (Mr Harman) took the Chair.

PROCLAMATION

The Clerk Assistant of the Assembly (Mr L. G. C. Farrell) read the Proclamation of His Excellency the Governor (Professor Gordon Stanley Reid) summoning the second session of the Thirty-first Parliament.

SUMMONS FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker and members, in response to summons, proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber; and, having heard His Excellency the Governor (Professor Gordon Stanley Reid) deliver the opening Speech (see Council report preceding), returned to the Legislative Assembly Chamber.

VIDEO FILMS

Banning: Petition

MR HASSELL (Cottesloe—Leader of the Opposition) [3.38 p.m.]: I present a petition bearing 14 signatures from residents of Western Australia in the following terms—

TO:

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

We, the undersigned plead that because it will cause serious harm to the community the Parliament will not legalise the sale, hire or supply of any video tape, video disc, slide or any other recording from a visual image which can be produced, which portrays scenes of explicit sexual relations showing genitalia detail; acts of violence and sex; sexual perversion such as sodomy; mutilation; child pornography; coprophilia; bestiality or the use and effect of illicit drug taking.

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

The petition conforms to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly and I have certified accordingly.

The **SPEAKER**: I direct that the petition be brought to the Table of the House.

(See petition No. 1.)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT: WANNEROO SHIRE COUNCIL

Royal Commission: Petition

MRS BEGGS (Whitford) [3.39 p.m.]: I present a petition in the following terms—

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

We, the undersigned citizens of Western Australia, being ratepayers and residents of the Shire of Wanneroo request an urgent Royal Commission to enquire into the actions of the Wanneroo Shire Council in respect to the administration of the Shire of Wanneroo Town Planning Development Schemes and its general acquisition and sale of land since 1970.

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

The petition bears 21 signatures and I certify that it conforms to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

The **SPEAKER**: I direct that the petition be brought to the Table of the House.

(See petition No. 2.)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT: WANNEROO SHIRE COUNCIL

Royal Commission: Petition

MR CRANE (Moore) [3.40 p.m.]: I present a petition couched in terms similar to the previous petition requesting a Royal Commission. This petition bears 59 signatures and I certify that it conforms to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

The **SPEAKER**: I direct that the petition be brought to the Table of the House.

(See petition No. 3.)

FISHERIES: TUNA

Quota: Petition

MR WATT (Albany) [3.41 p.m.]: I present a petition in the following terms—

TO:

The Honourable the Speaker and Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly of

the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament Assembled.

WE, the undersigned citizens of the south coast of Western Australia, urge the Western Australian Minister for Fisheries, Honourable H. D. Evans, MLA to do all in his power to have the Federal Minister for Primary Industry, halt any action on the Industries Assistance Commission recommendations that WA's Bluefin Tuna quota be cut from 4 000 to 1 000 tonnes per annum, until a South Coast Tuna Fisheries Study Group, or a Parliamentary Select Committee is established to investigate and report to the Federal Government on the effects these cuts will have on the Western Australian fishing industry.

WE make this plea as concerned citizens who recognise the disastrous effects the quota reductions will have on the fishing industry and our region with so many tuna fishermen being forced out of business.

YOUR PETITIONERS therefore humbly pray that you will give this matter your earnest consideration and your Petitioners in duty bound will ever pray.

The petition bears 39 signatures and I certify that it conforms to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

The SPEAKER: I direct that the petition be brought to the Table of the House.

(See petition No. 4.)

VIDEO FILMS

Banning: Petition

MR MacKINNON (Murdoch) [3.42 p.m.]: I present two petitions, one bearing 34 signatures and the other bearing 37 signatures which are couched in terms similar to the petition presented by the Leader of the Opposition. I certify that the petitions conform to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

The SPEAKER: I direct that the petitions be brought to the Table of the House.

(See petition Nos. 5 and 6.)

QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

SMALL BUSINESS GUARANTEES BILL

Leave to Introduce

MR BRYCE (Ascot—Acting Premier) [4.09 p.m.]: In order to assert and maintain the undoubted rights and privileges of the House to initiate legislation, I move—

That leave be given to introduce a Bill for "An Act to authorise the execution of guarantees for the repayment of loans made to owners of certain small businesses".

Question put and passed; leave granted.

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Bryce (Acting Premier), and read a first time.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Distribution of Copies

THE SPEAKER (Mr Harman): Accompanied by honourable members of this Chamber, I attended his Excellency the Governor in the Legislative Council Chamber to hear the Speech which His Excellency was pleased to deliver to members of both Houses of Parliament. For the sake of greater accuracy, I have caused printed copies of the Speech to be distributed amongst members of this Chamber.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: FIRST DAY

Motion

MR TROY (Mundaring) [4.10 p.m.]: I move—

That the following Address-in-Reply to his Excellency's Speech be agreed to—

May it please Your Excellency:

We, the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of the State of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and to thank your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to address to Parliament.

I am greatly honoured for the opportunity provided to me to move this motion in reply to His Excellency's Speech.

In accepting this privilege on behalf of members on this side of the House I recognise I speak for all; not only those relatively new members, such as I, who have experienced only one session in this distinguished place, but also for those members who may have witnessed this formal opening day on a number of occasions, yet are still moved by its traditional message and reminder of why we, as elected representatives of the people, sit in this place, the Parliament of Western Australia.

I take this opportunity, on behalf of members on this side of the House, to congratulate our new Governor, His Excellency Gordon Stanley Reid, on his assumption to that high office and extend to both him and Mrs Reid, our very best wishes in the important role they will be undertaking.

When the previous member for Mundaring moved this same motion and spoke at the first session of the thirtieth Parliament, he thanked the electors of Mundaring for two reasons: Firstly, for giving him the opportunity to have this honour in moving the Address-in-Reply; and, secondly, for expressing their confidence in his stewardship as their representative by returning him to this place for a second time.

I too, thank the electors of Mundaring for the same two reasons and for giving me the same unique opportunity.

It would not be gracious of me to thank the previous member for Mundaring for his assistance in giving me this opportunity; however I do thank him for shortening the qualifying period.

As a member of the Burke Government, now entering its second session of this, the thirty-first Parliament, I am extremely proud to have this opportunity, following on from His Excellency's address outlining the initiatives this Government will be taking in the coming session, to briefly review some of the important achievements and initiatives of the past session.

I refer to issues such as technology, with strong initiatives being taken for future industries based on and utilising developing technologies; and regionalisation where the first real effort to establish co-ordinated and integrated industries and economic opportunities outside the metropolitan area in the southern half of the State has occurred.

I refer to "Bunbury 2000", the South West Development Authority, and the "Albany Tomorrow" concept.

Tourism has been given a high priority, with personal attention by the Premier to ensure the fillip from the America's Cup is not a passing memory. Tourism is widely recognised as having the potential of becoming the major industry in Western Australia with a great bonus of employment opportunities. The Government recognises that fact. It is now dependent upon the private sector to respond fully, and there is little doubt that is occurring.

Financial initiatives have been taken to supplement normal State financial sources with involvement in resource projects through the agency of the Western Australian Development Corporation.

The securing of greater flexibility from the Loan Council with overseas borrowings by the State is also an important achievement in this scene.

Of a number of inquiries set in motion, and now being followed up by this Government, none has

more significance than the Beazley inquiry and the McGaw report. The output of our education systems, regardless of the favourable internal comparison to earlier standards by our educators, simply was not producing the product sought by employers.

The speed and response to the Beazley inquiry is a particularly proud moment for this Government.

The unity and enthusiasm amongst all those involved augurs well for youth education in this State for many years ahead.

Women's interests have been addressed through the formation of a women's advisory committee and the appointment of a special adviser to the Premier. Their efforts will be witnessed in legislative form in the forthcoming session as part of the Equal Opportunities Bill, but there is little doubt of the contribution they are making to this Government's efforts to correct the long outstanding injustices of sex discrimination. And, Mr Speaker, I do make that comment without being subjected to any coercion from the member for Gosnells and the member for Joondalup, who sit on either side of me in this Assembly.

I turn now to comment on regional planning. After many years' operation as a three-element planning organisation, the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority, in association with the Town Planning Board and the Town Planning Department, is being subjected to a timely review. Its effort has been a very significant one in previous years, but few will deny it is time for review. This Government, without the bonds of appointment loyalty and whatever else, has had the wisdom to undertake that long outstanding review of our planning processes. In today's financial structuring, forward planning must be completed well in advance and not hinder the viability of development projects.

And now to the Government's antismoking campaign. Despite the intensity of a well-resourced and well-rehearsed campaign opposing the Government's initiatives toward health consideration of smokers, with young and impressionable smokers as the focal point, the Government has continued to pursue this worthwhile campaign successfully. Few people would query the objectives of this positive approach to minimise one of the State's most serious causes of illness. Furthermore, few people reject the initiatives of the Government toward a preventive approach to health, rather than the escalating cost of the present corrective processes.

Aboriginal land rights has been an issue long outstanding in this State and the Commonwealth. This Government's initiative in establishing a full-

scale inquiry into this issue, an issue which has been a damaging reflection on our society for a long time, is a fine example of a preparedness to face the "too hard basket" of previous Administrations, with a courage to resolve it in a fair and considered way.

This Government will not be trapped by those seeking a politically motivated gain by whipping up racial hatred.

It will await the findings resulting from the Seaman inquiry, relating to the land involved, the nature of the rights, and whatever Mr Seaman, QC, brings down, before making its decision—and then only after consideration of the public comment thereon.

Restructuring of several Government departments and authorities has been set in motion to achieve greater efficiencies. Newly structured organisations have been considered, established, or are being established with—

- youth and community services;
- a single water authority;
- a single land management authority; and
- the Public Health Department.

For the first time, after years of promises, the small business sector can actually see developments with the following—

- the establishment of the Small Business Development Corporation and now its effective work;
- the inquiry into shop rentals now finalised;
- the inquiry into trading hours and weekend market development; and
- the expedited relief from excessive water charges.

State-Federal co-operation has achieved new levels of performance, while maintaining the respect for WA's proud, and greatly cherished rights. This co-operation has resulted in—

- increased employment opportunities;
- decreased unemployment particularly in the youth area;
- lower interest rates;
- a mildly stimulated economy showing very positive signs of a controlled, sustained and favourable period ahead;
- job creation schemes that work;
- an agreement on a wages and prices policy, based on trust and goodwill, incorporating combined employee and employer support; and
- a rational climate for a dialogue between the State and Federal Governments on any issues

that will be beneficial to both Western Australians and Australians generally without confrontation dominating such discussion.

Two other important issues remain, in my opinion, to complete this review of the first session of the thirty-first Parliament.

I refer to the local government amendments achieved in the last session on autonomy, adult franchise, and rating systems. They were achieved despite vigorous opposition by the Opposition in the upper House.

Mr MacKinnon: Amended in the upper House.

Mr TROY: In my view this did an enormous amount to bring together the country and metropolitan sectors of our State, which have been so callously used in the past for political advantage.

Mr Tonkin: Hear, hear!

Mr TROY: I saw that as a significant turning point to the improvement in understanding between those sectors, and an important development before the forthcoming initiatives on electoral reform of this Parliament.

If there was one great disappointment about the first session, it was without a doubt the defeat of electoral reform initiatives. However, I believe that defeat may have its hidden advantages in that so many more people are now more aware of those shortcomings in our existing democratic processes.

Reform is inevitable on this issue. I do hope that negotiations between the parties will see this process advanced to an early time.

Mr Speaker, I am always mindful that I am the member for Mundaring, and while the review I have just given of the Burke Government's first session in Parliament, coupled with those future intentions as outlined in His Excellency's Address today, makes me very proud to be a member of that Government, the needs of my electorate and the eastern region of the metropolitan area in general come strongly to mind.

Before mentioning them, however, I would like to place on record my appreciation for the assistance and consideration given by all Ministers and their staff during the past session in dealing with issues relating to the Mundaring electorate.

I am confident that the issues that remain such as—

- education facilities;
- regional planning, development and employment opportunities;
- health services;
- special problems of fringe metropolitan authorities on road funding, recreation facilities

ties, water provision, drainage, transport, power, valuation, and rating problems; protection of valuable horticultural based industries such as table grapes and the wine industry, and other related industries; and

tourist initiatives through the eastern region will be effectively handled in the future by that same co-operative enthusiastic and open approach.

The Burke Government has proved conclusively in its first session that it is a Government of achievement, new and exciting conceptions, resilience, and compassion, in its effort to bring together all sectors of the Western Australian community with a sense of unity and direction. We, on this side of the House, are proud to be

involved with such a Government and look forward in this forthcoming session to continuing our work for Western Australians.

MRS WATKINS (Joondalup) [4.21 p.m.]: I formally second the motion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Hassell.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE: SPECIAL

MR TONKIN (Morley-Swan—Leader of the House) [4.22 p.m.]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Thursday, 26 July at 10.45 a.m.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.23 p.m.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Office Buildings: Kalgoorlie

1. Mr HASSELL, to the Acting Premier:

- (1) Is he aware of Government plans for the construction of a Government office building in Kalgoorlie?
- (2) Is it correct that an agreement has been made for the Government to lease the building for \$150 per square metre per annum or thereabouts, plus outgoings on a very long term lease?
- (3) Is he also aware that current rental rates in Kalgoorlie are of the order of \$80 to \$100 per square metre per annum?
- (4) Is it correct that the building is to be constructed under an arrangement with a person by the name of Max Viskovich who is a major significant contributor and member of the Labor Party in Kalgoorlie?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) to (4) I indicate to the Leader of the Opposition in the most unequivocal fashion that I have no knowledge whatsoever of proposals for a Government building of the type that he has described in Kalgoorlie. I would be very happy if the Leader of the Opposition were to put the question on notice so that we can establish the facts. Other people may be interested in the concept—whether it be the one in the precise form that the Leader of the Opposition has described, I would not have a clue—but at this stage I have no knowledge of any building of the type described by the Leader of the Opposition.

ECONOMY

OECD Forecasts

2. Mr D. L. SMITH, to the Acting Premier:

- (1) Has the Acting Premier read the latest OECD forecasts which show that economic growth in Australia will continue to be strong over the next 18 months and that growth is estimated to be four per cent in 1984-85 following a 6.1 per cent growth in 1983-84?
- (2) What are the implications of these forecasts for the Western Australian economy?

Mr BRYCE replied:

- (1) and (2) It is evident from the OECD forecasts and the strong growth recorded in the level of national economic activity over the first three quarters of 1983-84 that Australia is emerging from recession. These increases brought the rate of economic growth in Australia, in real gross domestic product terms, over the 12 months to March 1984 to 7.9 per cent, well above the negative growth of 1.3 per cent recorded in the preceding 12 month period.

We can confidently say that the Western Australian economy is solidly on the way to recovery and to a buoyant economic future. This is borne out by the following indicators—

Mr Hassell: Is that why there are 5 000 more people unemployed today than there were a year ago?

Mr BRYCE: Mr Speaker, I know you would want me to ignore the disorderly interjection from the Leader of the Opposition. I am sorely tempted to remind members opposite, members on our side of the House, and all our friends in the Chamber today, that during the period from 1974-1983—a nine year period—in which the Leader of the Opposition was introduced to the process of Government, unemployment in this State reached a new plateau under the stewardship of the coalition Government. When the coalition took office in 1974, 7 700 Western Australians were out of work; nine years later when it left office, 64 000 Western Australians were out of work. I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition would choose this moment to interject and to suggest that this Government is responsible for the mess that it inherited 15 months ago.

Mr Hassell: How long are you going to try to blame someone else?

Mr BRYCE: It might take us slightly less than the decade it took for the economy to disintegrate—

Mr Hassell: You will not have that long.

Mr O'Connor: Your election promise was you would have it down to three per cent in less than 18 months.

Mr BRYCE: There is some good news and I know members opposite are looking forward to it, so I would like to give that news to them in an orderly fashion if

they are prepared to accept it in that way.

During the 12 months to March 1984, prices fell in Perth for the first time since 1975. The increase in the CPI was six per cent, the lowest annual increase recorded since March 1973.

Western Australian consumer demand in real terms grew faster than that of the rest of Australia.

The value of retail sales in Western Australia during the first 11 months of 1983-84 was 9.1 per cent above the value of sales for the same period a year earlier. Corresponding figures for Australia showed an increase of 8.3 per cent.

Wages growth moderated during 1983-84. For Western Australia, the increase in total average weekly earnings for all employees in the 12 months to March 1984 was 7.2 per cent, well below the growth of 12.5 per cent recorded for the year to March 1983.

Positive movements in industry growth for this State have occurred over the last 12 months. These include—

increased recruitment in the north-west mining industry;

increased activity in hotel developments and associated employment in the number of building workers; and,

an upturn in boat building activities.

The actual items of good news run to considerable length, but in the interest of brevity I indicate to members opposite that I will take the first opportunity in the ensuing weeks in a debating sense to give them the rest of the good news.

PASTORAL INDUSTRY

Lease: Ord River Station

3. Mr MacKINNON, to the Minister for Lands and Surveys:

- (1) Why has the Ord River Station been offered to foreign interests without any consideration being given to local participation in the operation of the station?
- (2) Why also is the Government considering reopening the station as a pastoral lease when its own professional officers' advice is that the station is still prone to erosion and its recovery is not complete?

Mr McIVER replied:

- (1) and (2) I say quite categorically that no discussion has taken place with any foreign interest in relation to Ord River Station. The Government is only discussing this matter—it is in the discussion stage.

Mr MacKinnon: You just said there had been no discussions.

Mr McIVER: No further negotiation has taken place with the Sarawak Government, to which the member refers, and not one letter has been written to that Government in that form. I am afraid the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is out of his depth.

PARLIAMENT WEEK

Public Response

4. Mr BURKETT to the Minister for Parliamentary and Electoral Reform:

Is the Minister pleased with the public response to his announcement of Parliament Week?

Mr TONKIN replied:

The reception given to the idea of a Parliament Week has been almost universally enthusiastic.

Mr Hassell: Except for half of the Parliament.

Mr TONKIN: In a democracy, one of our most precious institutions is our Parliament, and the Government sees as a duty the strengthening and enhancing of the status and role of Parliament. The responsibility rests with every member of this Parliament, even those opposite who are carping, to ensure that the people of Western Australia fully understand the operation and significance of Parliament to our way of life.

The Government has therefore decided that a week be set aside to acquaint people with the history and ongoing nature of the development of representation and Parliament and to foster discussion of the meaning of democracy and of the rights and responsibilities of electors. I would have thought that all members of this House would welcome such a decision.

The idea has been welcomed by the two presiding officers of our Parliament and but for one voice, I would have been able

to say that the enthusiastic reception of the idea had been universal. Unfortunately the Leader of the Opposition has seen fit to seize upon the concept and attempt to give it a party political twist by suggesting it is a party political stunt.

Mr Hassell: It is a disgraceful use of taxpayers' money and the schoolchildren in this State. You will hear a lot more about it. I heard about this thing from one of your advisers and not from the Government.

Mr TONKIN: For the Leader of the Opposition to object and to try to drag this down to that level is an indication of what sort of man he is.

Several members interjected.

Mr TONKIN: What we should all remember in this Parliament is that this institution does not exist for the benefit of party political advantage.

Several members interjected.

Mr TONKIN: It exists so that we, the people, may govern ourselves with fairness and understanding.

Several members interjected.

Mr TONKIN: I find it sad that a leading parliamentarian of this State, such as the Leader of the Opposition, should take this opportunity to denigrate our sincere desire to enhance the standing of the Parliament and to help all our people to understand it better. I hope the Opposition will reconsider its very negative and "knocker" attitude so that we may together try to enhance the standing of this Parliament and help people in this State to understand it better.

EDUCATION: TERTIARY

University of Western Australia

5. Mr CLARKO, to the Minister for Education:

Concerning the decision by the University of Western Australia not to accept English as a tertiary admissions subject, contrary to the Minister's wishes and his reported statements today that, "It is time the UWA became aware that its dictatorship over the secondary school curriculum is over" and that the university has been, "completely irresponsible" on this issue, would he—

- (1) Take the necessary steps to finalise a new syllabus, of TAE standard, in English so that it may be introduced

next year when the new system begins, thereby overcoming the objections of UWA?

- (2) In the light of his repeated assertions that he has brought consensus to education in Western Australia, would he agree that his public response to the University of WA is confrontationalist in the extreme when the need is for rational negotiation?

Mr PEARCE replied:

- (1) and (2) I appreciate this opportunity, which the member has given me by asking his question, to indicate two things. The first is that the action which the member seeks from me to establish a curriculum for English which would be of TAE standard and, more importantly, to ensure that that curriculum is examined at TAE level, is already in train.

Mr Clarko: I am asking when it will be ready.

Mr PEARCE: It will be ready to be started at the beginning of next year, but that will not be necessary, of course, for the TAE level because under the new arrangements—I suggest the member read the McGaw report—it would be divided into year 11 and year 12 units so that only year 12 will be examined. Therefore, for TAE purposes it will not be necessary to have the curriculum and the examination in place until 1986.

Secondly, the University of Western Australia is well aware that that will be the case. I have not only corresponded with the university in those terms, but I have also discussed the matter with the Vice-Chancellor of the University and indicated to him that that will be the case. The University of WA's position that it will accept these things when they are in place is based on the clear knowledge that they will be available in 1986. Therefore, there is no substance to the UWA's view that the curriculum will not be ready until 1987.

I address also the second aspect—that is, consensus versus confrontation—because I regret that it is necessary to take on the University of Western Australia in the way that it has become necessary. I have given a great deal of my time to establishing a consensus on education in Western Australia. However, there is one difficulty in the consensus approach;

that is, that when one is able to get people to the negotiating table and reach agreements, there must be goodwill of all parties to adhere to that consensus. Negotiations took place regarding this matter more than a year ago when the McGaw committee was established and when I invited the University of WA to nominate a representative on that committee. The university appointed one of its deputy vice-chancellors as its representative on that committee and at a later stage in the discussions its representative came up with a compromise that no-one had previously considered, and in the spirit of consensus the McGaw committee accepted that proposition from the UWA's representative. I did not approve of the nature of that compromise, but I accepted the recommendation. The University of Western Australia then sought to withdraw from that consensus and it required a degree of private pressure and public confrontation before it would agree to the consensus provision that had been set in place by its own representative.

Mr CLARKO: You use consensus when it works.

Mr PEARCE: When the question about literacy arose I called a literacy summit and the UWA was invited to send four representatives. All the other institutions sent four representatives—the school sector was represented as was the Education Department. The only group not represented was the Government. There was a large consensus—3½ institutions agreed. They were Murdoch University, the Western Australian College of Advanced Education, the Western Australian Institute of Technology and the half group from the University of Western Australia.

The difficulty with the University of Western Australia is that its representatives will attend negotiations and hold discussions, but if they do not get what they want they go away and do their own thing. That is the difficulty when dealing with people who will not be part of the consensus process unless they get precisely what they want. They seek to get out of the whole agreement with regard to the three subjects coverage by adding a fourth subject. It may well be that the University of Western Australia can follow this separate path until 1986 because

there will not be the opportunity between now and the time when students choose their subjects for 1985 to get that position changed. The UWA is now making itself a laughing stock across Australia by insisting that it will not consider English for tertiary admissions, but will consider Latin. It might get away with it until 1986, but not thereafter.

DEFENCE

Defence Projects Advisory Committee

6. Mrs BUCHANAN, to the Minister for Defence Liaison:

The Minister may recall that earlier this year he announced the Government's intention to form a defence projects advisory committee.

Could he please inform the House of the progress that has been made in this matter?

Mr BRYCE replied:

I thank the member for notice of the question.

On 31 May, at a seminar organised by the Defence Industries Council of WA, I announced the formation of a defence projects advisory committee, whose role would be to advise me, as Minister for Defence Liaison, on defence and defence industry matters.

Members would be aware that this Government created a State portfolio of Defence Liaison after the last election. The reason for this was that we recognised that there was a need to stress to the Federal Government the specific defence requirements of Western Australia, after years of neglect and false hopes engendered by previous Governments at State and Federal levels.

The Government has also recognised the importance to industry of defence-related activity and has thus placed the portfolio within the responsibility of the Minister for Industrial Development with the aim of increasing WA's share of defence contracts.

The new defence projects advisory committee will combine these two aims of promoting defence and defence industry in Western Australia, and it is with much pleasure that I am now able to announce to members the names of the members of the committee.

The members of the committee, who have been appointed for a 12 month period, are as follows—:

Chairman: Mr R. L. Seares, Director and State Manager for James Hardie & Co. Pty. Ltd., and a member of the Federal Government's offsets advisory committee.

Members:

Commodore R. H. Percy, C.B.E.,
ex-Commanding Officer,
HMAS *Stirling*.

Mr J. Cox, Chairman, Defence Industries Council of WA.

Mr R. Lewis, Director, Business Development, Magellan Corporation (Australia) Pty. Ltd.

Mr R. J. Fisher, Director, Department of Industrial Development.

Mr C. McNamara, Executive Officer, Defence Liaison in the State Government.

I seek leave of the House to table the terms of reference of the Committee.

The terms of reference were tabled (see paper No. 20).

TRANSPORT

Freight: Grain

7. Mr COWAN, to the Minister for Transport:

Can the Minister advise the House of any developments which may have taken place in the final negotiations of the proposed grain freight contract, particularly as it affects growers in the eastern wheatbelt?

Mr GRILL replied:

The negotiations by the grain freight steering committee and Westrail to set the grain freight rates for 1984-85 are still in progress. Westrail has put forward what in many respects is a very attractive offer to the grain industry. It will involve reductions of some significance in grain freight rates in certain areas and in all other areas there will be no increase this year. Under the proposal put forward by Westrail in real terms there will be a decrease in all areas of the State in the cost of rail transport.

If that particular contract is accepted I understand it will be the first time in this State that all sectors of the primary cost of putting grain onto rail have not increased or have decreased in real terms. However, the offer has been subject to controversy in some areas—one such area is the lakes area and others are the Ongerup and Gnowangerup areas. Growers in the far eastern regions of the State, partially represented by the member for Merredin, have requested even greater reductions in the grain freight rate. I think it is unlikely that decreases beyond those already offered by Westrail can be effected. However, we are still looking at the problem. The grain freight steering committee understands the difficulties and is grappling with them very well indeed.

Over the last few months, and to the present, enormous efforts have been made within Westrail to increase efficiency, and by and large those efforts have been successful. As an example I refer to the introduction of two-man train crews. This breakthrough has been achieved in Western Australia far ahead of any other State and it has been achieved without any significant industrial disruption. Other efficiencies are being effected, the benefits of which are being passed to the growers. Of course, these efficiencies create some conjecture and controversy and from time to time brickbats are thrown at the Government. However, the bottom line is that this State is now able to offer to the grain growers of Western Australia lower grain freight rates in real terms. In some areas the rates are much lower than previously. In general terms these rates are competitive with road transport rates.

PASTORAL INDUSTRY

Lease: Mt. Anderson

8. Mr BLAIKIE, to the Minister for Lands and Surveys:

- (1) Is it correctly reported that the Minister held off approving the transfer of the Mt. Anderson Station pastoral lease because of a request by the Minister with special responsibility for Aboriginal Affairs?

- (2) If not, why has the Minister not approved the transfer of Mt. Anderson Station, Derby, to A. A. and A. M. Blair when a contract of sale between the vendor and the Blairs was finalised some months ago?

Mr McIVER replied:

- (1) and (2) This matter is now before Cabinet and therefore can be considered to be *sub judice*. If the member would like further information I ask him to place the question on the Notice Paper.

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