

I believe the editorial in *The West Australian* of 4 May 1988 stated the real crux of the situation of literacy as follows -

However, the solution does not lie exclusively with the education system. Literacy has its beginnings in the home. It is up to parents to set a good example with their use of the language and to encourage their children to spend less time watching television and more time reading good books.

The member for Dale in his maiden speech criticised the Government for the way in which the Unit Curriculum system was rushed upon teachers. The system was not rushed upon teachers any more than perhaps the Achievement Certificate was in 1969-72. There is a limit on how much time can be given while changing over a system in pilot schools before the problems which people talk about, such as transferring from school to school, or State to State, become apparent. Some schools would have introduced Unit Curriculum and others would not, and there would be chaos in those schools that do not have Unit Curriculum when teachers tried to introduce it and when students and teachers transferred between schools.

Mr Clarko: What the member for Dale said was excellent.

Several members interjected.

Mr P.J. SMITH: The member for Dale did praise the efforts of teachers and I know we all praise them because last year was difficult for them and they were under tremendous pressure. They had to set up a complete course for two years and split each subject up so that not only would the courses be meaningful for the students, but also they would have to study them, remember them and pass the tests. For the first time, teachers, parents and students have appreciated the fact that we have a system whereby a student can fail a particular course. This was not the case with the Achievement Certificate.

This year teachers have been pleased and surprised at the success of the Unit Curriculum. It is successful and I know that it will continue to be successful.

Mr Clarko: It is a flop.

Mr P.J. SMITH: It is not a flop.

Mr Wiese: A single kid has not yet gone through it.

Mr P.J. SMITH: I am making a judgment from the reaction of teachers, parents and students. I suggest members opposite talk to them. I have spoken with them and the one thing they said at the end of last year was that it was a stressful year, but they hoped it would work. Now, as the first results have become known, they say it is working and I hope it will continue to work.

Several members interjected.

Mr P.J. SMITH: The deputy principals of high schools have worked under tremendous stress and they will need assistance each year because the timetabling is difficult and requires computerised assistance.

Of course the Opposition would like to think that it has not been a success. They see it as their job to undermine it. They must remember that every time they knock the teachers they are undermining the confidence of the parents and the students, and eventually it will lead to an undermining of the education system.

We cannot afford to finish up with an education system that lacks confidence because of rumours and untruths. The teachers are dedicated and we should give them full marks for introducing a system which the community asked for; that is, a better system than the Achievement Certificate and a much more efficient system than that which operated under the Achievement Certificate. We need a system where children can achieve and the Government, the public, and the teachers can be proud that we have such a system in the Unit Curriculum.

MR MASLEN (Gascoyne) [9.54 pm]: I congratulate the three new members recently elected to this House - the member for Dale, the member for Balga and the member for Ascot.

First, I want to make a semi statement and not play politics with the disaster of cyclone Herbie which devastated a large part of my electorate. I thank the Minister for Police and

Emergency Services for the prompt action he took in visiting Camarvon and Denham. His physical appearance in those areas was reassuring to those people who suffered great losses in that disaster. I refer especially to the older members of the community who, in their retirement, lost worldly possessions in the storm surge. His presence was comforting to them. I thank also the Premier for his personal assurance to me in regard to that problem.

I shall document the most pressing issues facing the Gascoyne area in the wake of the cyclone and I will commence with Carnarvon. Vegetable growers and banana growers suffered crop losses of between 20 and 100 per cent. It is early in the season, but some growers have spent \$40 000 on plant seedlings and all of them have been blown away by the winds. As well as that there was considerable damage to the banana plantations, as the Minister for Agriculture said tonight, and it will be a while before we know the extent of the damage that was done because of the complex nature of damage to banana plants in high winds. The wind damages the fruit as well as the plants.

Also in the Carnarvon region we saw the loss of the *Korean Star*. A similar problem was shared by half the prawning fleet which was caught at sea. Many of the fishermen have been in contact with me and have indicated they were distressed that they were not informed by the Bureau of Meteorology of the impending storm. I have some sympathy for the bureau because it was a phenomenon that has never been experienced on this coast before. Nevertheless, many of the fishermen are somewhat distressed because not enough warning was given to the fleet at sea. I do not believe we should go on a witch hunt, but we should find out the reason for insufficient warning of the cyclone to endeavour that it does not happen again.

At the Shark Bay township of Denham the same problem was experienced by fishermen. Many of the boats were in port and as it was an onshore wind many of the boats were badly damaged and ended up on shore.

Mr Pearce: Were any boats actually fishing at the time?

Mr MASLEN: No, but some of them were at sea and the storm was registering on the radar. They indicated to Canberra that something was amiss because of a drop in the barometer, but they were told that nothing was wrong. It was a freak phenomenon and no-one is to blame. We must look at the situation constructively and endeavour to make sure that it does not happen again.

Problems were experienced with storm surge which ran up to two metres and flooded houses on the main street. Together with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services I inspected some of the houses. Because the damage was caused by storm surge the owners are not covered by insurance. If the roof of a house had been damaged the insurance would have covered it. The Government will endeavour to compensate people for the damage which is not covered by insurance.

As a result of the damage to boats, both in Camarvon and Denham, there will be loss of earnings because the people will not be able to use the damaged equipment for some time. That is another cost to be borne by the community one way or another.

The salt operation at Useless Loop suffered substantial damage and although the pans were not badly affected, the levee banks, where the salinity of the water is built up before it is pumped into the evaporation pans for salt production, were damaged to the extent of \$4 million. I believe that insurance will cover that loss, but nonetheless it is a tragedy for the people employed by the company and the company operating the plant.

Further inland the already drought ravaged countryside - it has been affected by drought for almost two and a half years - received high velocity winds of 140 to 150 kilometres an hour and the sand was driven at such a speed that it blasted the paint off fuel drums. It is not hard for members to imagine the damage suffered by unprotected trees and plants in that area. The country suffered defoliation of perennial plants and many plant roots were damaged by wind erosion. Consequently, the stock which is already in poor condition has no feed on which to survive, and it will be a matter of urgency to assist these people to move their stock to other pastures since it is uneconomical to feed stock in that area as a long term prospect.

As I mentioned earlier, some fishermen off the Gascoyne coast feel somewhat dismayed and perhaps angry; they are inclined to blame the Bureau of Meteorology for the fact that they were caught at sea. However, as I mentioned earlier, we must investigate the reason in a

very pragmatic way and try to make sure that it does not happen again. I call upon the Government to declare the area affected by cyclone Herbie on the Gascoyne coast and the neighbouring region - which was affected by sandblasting - a disaster area.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the work done by volunteers; the shire workers of Carnarvon and Denham who worked throughout the storm to make sure that people were adequately cared for, and the State Energy Commission workers who did a magnificent job particularly in the township of Denham ensuring that the power was not off for more than three hours. They almost rewired the whole town and worked in a very commendable manner. I also congratulate the citizens for the way they kept their heads, and the stronger citizens for comforting the older people who found it distressing to see their houses wrecked and flooded, and did not know what would happen next. The State Emergency Service coordinators and volunteers worked long and hard. As for those who were directly affected - the growers, fishermen and pastoralists - they have lived in the country for a long time; they knew when they moved to the area that it was a hard country and I am sure they are made of stern enough stuff to pick up the bits and pieces and rebuild their lives. With a small amount of assistance and encouragement they will be back in production for the good of the State before very long.

I move now to problems affecting the remote areas of this State. Since the beginning of this parliamentary session much of the debate has pivoted around the alleged mismanagement of "Western Australia Incorporated". I point out to members of the House that when travelling throughout the electorate of Gascoyne and the neighbouring electorate of Murchison-Eyre, one is aware of the perception that some impropriety has taken place although it may not be strictly illegal. I share this feeling that impropriety has taken place. In fairness to the people of the area and their belief that something is amiss, I give some examples: The Rothwells bale out, the Holmes a Court bale out, the SGIC involvement in various affairs, the collapse of the Teachers Credit Society and the subsequent saga of the incompetent directors of that society, and the notorious Martin-Brush affair. People in that area can now watch the television at night, they read the newspapers and they listen to the radio.

Mr Pearce: Did they get the report that Brush and Martin were found innocent.

Mr Lightfoot: They were found not guilty, the Minister should be more accurate.

Mr MASLEN: They are aware that Brush and Martin were found not guilty of the offence with which they were charged. Perhaps the charge laid was not the correct one. Many hardworking men and women are on pay as you earn incomes in the work force and many people are trying to run small businesses; how do these people relate to such failures as the TCS and the Martin-Brush affair? These honest, hardworking people are aware that these failures were caused by those two most unfortunate human traits - greed and incompetence. I am aware of an individual who did not agree with the account he received from a monstrosity such as Telecom. He is a pensioner living in Cue whose telephone has been cut off, even though he is on strong medication, because he disagreed with the account sent to him. How does this retired man of 77 years of age react to his telephone service being cut off when people who have apparently mishandled or misappropriated millions of dollars of other people's money are walking the streets? In another case an amount of \$250 was paid into an account in 1984-85 by a man and his wife. The chartered accountant who was employed to submit their taxation return did not pick up that amount. That couple has now been hit with a \$1 000 fine or back payment to the Taxation Department because of an innocent mistake. That mistake was made by a professional person employed to settle their return. How do such a couple become reconciled to the fact that they have been penalised for a genuine mistake, when a director of Teachers Credit Society has apparently not been penalised? As the director of a company I am very much aware of the responsibilities of directorship and I am also aware of the penalties incurred if people betray that trust and responsibility. How do the small people in the work force - I dare say it applies also to people in the cities - who are trying to make a decent life for themselves and their families, reconcile themselves to the failures of the high flyers and the constant baling out when they are subject to the full force of the law for relatively minor offences? Members of this House cannot really blame any members of our society who, when they see the sorts of things that are happening, consider any connection between law and justice is strictly coincidental. I mention these matters because this is something that has taken up a considerable amount of time during this debate.

I now turn to the bread and butter problems facing the people of this State, and especially those people in my electorate. This includes such things as disincentives caused by the Taxation Commissioner's intransigent requirements. I said earlier that there is a lack of funds allocated for the development and maintenance of the country road system that services the wealth producing areas of the State. There are pressures placed on many communities. I know that this happens in the city and suburbs as much as it does in the country, although I dare say it is more aggravated in the country. However, there are pressures put on communities by what I consider to be obstruction by Government departments. I will be a little specific about this. I do not blame this Government for this because I have been in business for a long time and these things seem to happen regardless of which Government is in power. However, it is something that some Government must tidy up.

I will be specific and mention such departments as the State Planning Commission, the Environmental Protection Authority, the Department of Land Administration and the like. It is not always the fault of Government, as I have said before, but in some cases the department lacks a positive direction from the Government of the day. I believe there is an urgent need to amend the Acts that cause problems for local authorities, especially those in country towns. They are the Acts that affect the administration of community needs; for example, the mining tenement lease requirements as opposed to local government town planning requirements. Local government's responsibility to provide communications and health facilities to its citizens is aggravated by the refusal of both State and Federal Governments to communicate and cooperate with shires which, after all, are the ones which end up carrying the can.

I will now refer specifically to the policies of the State and Federal Governments as they pertain to Aboriginal communities. There seem to be different groups that go out and spend heaps of money, supposedly to assist these people, yet they cannot communicate with the local shires, which have responsibility for supplying communities with health and access facilities. It just goes on. It is like a little world of its own, especially around Jigalong and Wiluna.

There are also problems in our community, which were mentioned tonight by a previous speaker and which face our children in relation to educational requirements. For example, in places such as Gascoyne Junction and Meekatharra schoolroom accommodation is taxed to the limit. In Meekatharra there are almost no toilet facilities at the school - they are grossly inadequate. Throughout the remote electorates in particular there is also the problem of the discipline of children in schools. We all know that corporal punishment is gone - and what a draconian method of getting kids to smarten up it was. I was fortunate enough to be sent to a boarding school for the 11 years of my education where what I learned was thrashed in through my backside. However, I do not think that it did any harm.

The rapid increase in mining activity throughout the goldfields has led to a corresponding demand for housing, land and services which has put pressure on Governments to supply infrastructure, schools, health facilities, power, water and communications, to name the most pressing. Planning for and provision of these requirements is certainly lagging behind demand. There is also a need to look at the franchises that have been granted to various transport operators who are carting produce or required goods into areas, particularly the ones granted before the upsurge in activity, and also at the airline services in these areas. There needs to be an inquiry into airline services because they are becoming inadequate. They were okay when there was room for only one operator to make a quid and he had to be given a franchise. However, we now badly need competition, particularly in Meekatharra and Mt Magnet. It is almost impossible to get a flight in or out of Meekatharra without waiting for three weeks.

There are also very real problems in the outer areas in relation to police manning levels. Mt Newman and Marble Bar should be investigated to ensure the adequacy of service is maintained. It is also necessary to ensure that adequate housing is provided for police officers stationed in remote areas so as to avoid the situation that currently exists at Wiluna. There is also the question of allowances for travel, and of camping allowances offered to police officers in remote areas. They seem to be in the same bracket whether in Karratha or Wiluna and I think the people who have been to those places would realise that conditions at Wiluna are far more disadvantageous for those patrolling the area than they are at Karratha.

I have covered most of the actual problems that people face in more remote areas. However, I reiterate that the expenditure, especially of the Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs, should be investigated because there seem to be many different groups from different departments spending money. I do not see any benefit in that particular expenditure, mainly because I know many of these people, have good friends among them, and am told that the money is not being spent, or is not getting through to them and being of benefit to them. I do not blame any particular Government department for that because this has been going on for a long time. However, I ask that the current Government and future Governments consider communicating with these people and the people who live near to them, or with them, in order to ensure that the money or assistance goes to them and not to the bureaucracies that are getting fat on that money.

I will highlight the most pressing problems facing remote areas. They are: Communications, because Telecom seems to be overloaded wherever one goes, but I believe that is being remedied; and the cost of services to develop remote areas - water, sewerage and serviced lands, because what is available is prohibitive in cost, and there is not much available, anyway. There is also the matter of the very real conflict of interest between bureaucratic ideology and interpretation of Acts which tend to work at loggerheads - for example, the Local Government Act and the Mining Act.

Mr Troy: To what extent does the member think country telephone services are subsidised?

Mr MASLEN: I do not know whether the Minister wants to make two wrongs make a right.

Mr Troy: Is the member suggesting that country telephones be handed to the private sector?

Mr MASLEN: I have not made any suggestion whatever. The Minister must have been asleep.

Mr Troy: What are you suggesting?

Mr MASLEN: I have just made a statement that the Telecom system is overloaded. That is a statement of fact.

Mr Troy: Most country clients would be interested in your party's position on that.

Mr MASLEN: I am not speaking on that; I just made a statement of fact, but I am quite prepared to go through the figures with the Minister at some other time.

Mr Reg Tubby: We would be interested to know if that situation is going to improve.

Mr MASLEN: I have already mentioned the problem of the conflict of interest in land use between mining and local government, and the need for more airline seats in and out of places like Meekatharra and Mt Magnet. To reiterate, this is a very pressing need. There is a pressing need for improved police manning levels and accommodation. Last, but not least, there is the major problem of the need for funding for local government to allow an expansion and an improvement in the road system for the welfare of the State.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr House.

House adjourned at 10.21 pm
