

- (2) The Library Committee shall consist of Mr Speaker, Dr Turnbull and Dr Edwards.
- (3) The House Committee shall consist of Mr Speaker, Mr Blaikie, Mr Marshall, Mr Cunningham and Mr D. L. Smith.
- (4) The Printing Committee shall consist of Mr Speaker, Mr Day and Mr Kobelke.

BILLS (10) - INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

1. Commission on Government Bill.
Bill introduced, on motion by Dr Lawrence (Leader of the Opposition), and read a first time.
2. Adoption Bill.
Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Ripper, and read a first time.
3. Chiropractors and Osteopaths Registration Bill.
4. Health Services (Conciliation and Review) Bill.
5. Medical Treatment Bill.
Bills introduced, on motions by Mr Taylor, and read a first time.
6. Kimberley Development Commission Bill.
Bill introduced, on motion by Dr Lawrence (Leader of the Opposition), and read a first time.
7. Commercial Tenancy (Retail Shops) Agreement Amendment Bill.
Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Hill, and read a first time.
8. Transfer of Land Amendment Bill.
Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Kobelke, and read a first time.
9. Gascoyne Development Commission Bill.
Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Leahy, and read a first time.
10. Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Amendment Bill.
Bill introduced, on motion by Mr McGinty, and read a first time.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER - OMBUDSMAN'S LETTER ON FORMAL INVESTIGATION OF JOSEPH BARTLETT DETHRIDGE, TABLING

THE SPEAKER (Mr Clarko): I have received a letter from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations, dated 21 June 1993, relating to the formal investigation of Mr Joseph Bartlett Dethridge. I table that letter.

[See paper No 149.]

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Debate resumed from 17 June.

MS WARNOCK (Perth) [5.40 pm]: Mr Speaker, it is with considerable pleasure that I rise in this House to make my maiden speech, although I would prefer it not to be 20 minutes before the dinner break. I begin by offering you, Mr Speaker, my congratulations on your elevation to your high and honourable post. I wish you well in your task, and know that we can look forward to your fair and just handling of the business of this House. My congratulations also go to my fellow debutante, the member for Morley, whose long and distinguished history in the trade union movement tells us that he will work tirelessly for his constituents. It is with special pleasure that I welcome and congratulate my colleague, the member for Armadale, who dared and won, and who put her career at risk and succeeded in making it here to the proper House, the right House, and the home - as I am reliably informed - of real politics.

I wish there were more like the member for Armadale. Indeed, throwing aside modesty, I wish there were more like us. Politics will truly represent the citizens of this State only when more women are members of this House and the other House. Women comprise 51 per cent of the population and I believe that in the best interests of all Western Australians all parties must strive for more equal representation. In many ways Western Australia has been in the lead in the matter of women's representation. When Edith Cowan entered the Western Australian Legislative Assembly in 1921 representing the seat of West Perth she was the first woman in any Parliament in our nation. However, since that time women have made very slow progress. Indeed, in the first 40 years after women obtained the Federal franchise not one woman was elected to Federal Parliament. Having led the world in granting political rights to women, Australia fell behind, and has stayed behind many other countries in giving them a proper share of power.

The previous Western Australian Labor Government was distinguished in having the most women Ministers in Australian political history. Our leader, Dr Carmen Lawrence, was the first woman Premier in our nation, and no-one could be a better role model for other women. However, we still have a long way to go. If some built-in bias exists in the selection process, it must be changed. Reform is called for. Evidence is available that affirmative action strategies in internal party processes can accelerate this much overdue reform. In Federal Government, although only eight per cent of the House of Representatives are women, 21 per cent of senators are women. That may reflect the more representative selection processes that occur for that House. Of the 841 representatives in all Australian Parliaments, only 122, or 14.5 per cent, are women. In lower Houses, where the major decisions are made, the figures are even poorer. Of 504 lower House seats in all Parliaments in all States, only 73 seats or 12.08 per cent of the total are held by women. Various cultural and historical reasons account for this, but in these enlightened and better informed times fewer and fewer excuses can be found for this gross gender imbalance. I do not claim that women are more virtuous than men in politics. I simply believe that since we comprise half of the human race the community will be advantaged when we are able to bring our special perspective to every issue.

Similarly to all of my colleagues on this side of the House, I regard it as an honour and a privilege to be chosen by the people to represent their interests in this place. Therefore, my first thanks are to the people of Perth who have given me their support and their trust, as well as sufficient votes. I will at all times give all I have to maintaining that trust and to deserving the confidence they have placed in me. I shall strive with all my might to keep the only election promise that I made to the people of Perth; that is, to work immensely hard on my constituents' behalf. I will not let them down.

As every member in this House well knows, no-one can succeed in politics - no-one can arrive here - without having leaned heavily on the shoulders of others. In my case it was a very large team of volunteers. Scores of people of all ages and from many different ethnic and religious backgrounds worked tirelessly on my campaign for more than a year. Among them were old friends and many new friends whom I met only recently; Labor Party members and many with no political allegiance at all. They ranged from unionists and university students to professionals and business people. I thank them all for their faith and support. Most importantly, I thank those closest to me and, in particular, my husband Bill. Anyone whose life has been invaded by politics will know how completely that can overwhelm a normal household. An election campaign is a brutal, tough and wearying business and I am grateful to Bill for his unceasing and staunch support. He is a rock of Gibraltar. I am sorry that his mother, the late Mae Warnock, cannot be here today. She would have enjoyed this occasion immensely. She was a strong, bright Glaswegian, a stalwart member of the Labor Party in her time, and one who would never accept an unfair judgment without a protest. She was an inspiration to me. I must also thank my mother, Muriel Robinson, a political conservative who, despite that, always encouraged my independence. She gave me the freedom to choose, and, as it has fallen out, I chose the other side of politics. However, she never wavered; she spurred me on. She is a woman of character. I salute her.

When the Australian Labor Party did me the honour of asking me to run for the seat of Perth I accepted the challenge because, after being involved in a wide variety of issues in the Western Australian community, I felt it was time to try this hardest of all tasks - to help make

the important decisions that affect the lives of all our people. Thus, Mr Speaker, I have come to this place with a clear sense of purpose. During the next four years my goal is to work to improve the quality of life in economic, social and cultural terms, for all the people of the Perth electorate. People who do not know me very well have asked me: Why Labor? Why am I on this side of politics? Why am I, who grew up in a politically conservative family, here now, representing the Australian Labor Party? As a result of life experiences and not a little study of political history and political philosophy, in the end I came down on the side of the Australian Labor Party because of its clear principles. It became my conviction that it was the only political party that had demonstrated a sustained and effective commitment to social justice and to reform.

Graham Freudenburg, one of Australia's most celebrated speech writers and a political historian, puts it very plainly. For him, there are no half measures. He firmly believes that the Australian Labor Party remains the most authentic political expression of the Australian character. He says it represents a deep source of understanding about not only the nature of Australian politics but also the character of the Australian people. Freudenburg goes further: He says that Labor is Australia's most enduring political and social force. Labor's survival for more than 100 years is a tribute to the strength of its ideas and principles. From any reading of Australian political history, it is clear that this remarkable democracy of ours, with its capacity to remain egalitarian and to keep everyone in the boat is, to a great extent, the result of Labor Party policies either in Government or in Opposition. It has been from the Labor side of politics that came pressure for pensions and social benefits, decent wages and conditions, a fair health system, universal education and the equal status of women - the very things that all thinking Australians value most highly in this great country of ours. It was because of these dreams and ideas and, more importantly, the actions and policies that resulted from them, that I found myself enlisting as a candidate for Australia's oldest political party, the Australian Labor Party. Quite simply, as someone who is interested in progressive ideas in reform and social equity, there was no other choice. If one was appalled, as I was, by the idea of the death penalty in a supposedly civilised society, it had to be the ALP.

If, as I was, one was angered by the lack of equal opportunity of women, it had to be the Australian Labor Party. If, as I was, one was troubled by archaic laws on rape, abortion and homosexuality, it had to be the ALP. If, as I was, one was disgusted by the death of young Australians, sent by ballot to die in Vietnam, it had to be the ALP. If, as I do, one supported some just form of land rights for the Aboriginal people, it had to be the ALP. Being on the Labor side of politics means, of course, a strong belief in the role of governments - if there is to be a just and equitable society.

Former Conservative British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and her soul mate, Ronald Reagan, represent the antithesis of that point of view. Thatcher's free-market philosophy ignored the common good, the reality of community and glorified individualism. She was in love with the market, that market which, in theory, allocates resources efficiently, but does not concern itself with a just distribution of income, or of human values. One cannot call a society just if there develops an ever-increasing gap between the haves and the have-nots. The human and social havoc caused by Thatcher's morally reprehensible conservative policies did untold damage to the social fabric of the United Kingdom and, ironically, it failed economically. Orthodox economics is devoid of social responsibility but, as the people's representatives, we cannot afford to ignore the effect of our decisions on the community.

Hidden costs must be considered when managing the assets of our people. It is not all about money: It must be about the social costs and it must be about the distress of families whose wage earners are thrown out of work in some single-minded drive for efficiency at any cost. Above all, it must be about putting people first. I submit that, in difficult times, Government has a moral responsibility to intervene on behalf of those who need help. No Australian Government should too savagely apply the ice-cold compress of economic rationalism. In a compassionate society the devil-take-the-hindmost philosophies which reduce people to statistics must be resisted.

In advancing the case for Government intervention, I note that the more enlightened of the opposite Liberal persuasion also support it. In a recent interview on SBS, the Deputy Leader of the Federal Liberal Party, Dr Michael Wooldridge, admitted that the public debate had

been too much focused on economics in recent years. He said, "I think there are a number of things that are deeply ingrained in the Australian psyche - and one of these is the notion of the fair go." The fair go is indeed deeply ingrained in the Australian psyche, Mr Speaker, and policy makers and politicians in this place will forget that at their peril.

Government should always be concerned when there are grave signs of rising discord and division, and fear and anger in a community. When clear, cold signals that people come a very poor second are handed down by those who pride themselves on making the so-called hard decisions, then such a Government should be wary. Australians, generally, and Western Australians, particularly, will not cop being treated like pawns.

Tolerance, like compassion, is another virtue we must take care to embrace in our society. In our racially diverse community - Mr Speaker, Perth, the area that I represent, is particularly multiracial - we cannot afford to ignore the forces of evil like the Australian Nationalist Movement and others who plaster racist graffiti on synagogues and Asian restaurants. We must use the law to ensure that such people cannot disrupt and poison the lives of others merely because they are different. In Western Australia in the 1980s the Labor Government enacted laws - controversial at the time - which made it illegal to vilify people because of their race. I happen to believe that enshrined in our law should be the right of groups to take action when they are slandered and maligned, just as individuals can. It is not good enough to misuse the freedom of speech argument to deny the right to mount such class actions.

Quite apart from the ugliness of racism, there is a practical cost to it. Dr Eric Tan, a respected surgeon and community leader, made an important point in a speech he gave at last year's City Challenge conference. He said that a few years ago when the ANM was conducting its vile, racist campaign we, as a community, remained silent and did too little, too late. As a result of this, there grew a perception that Western Australians were racist. In his view, because of our inaction this State lost a great deal of goodwill and possibly untold dollars in Asian investment. Since our economic hopes for the future lie increasingly in the Asian region, it makes sense for us to resolve that this must never be allowed to happen again. We, in this House, must lead by example. We must show people that we mean to give moral leadership in this area and to represent the interests of all Western Australians. Racism is an evil and it must be countered by whatever lawful means we can devise. Western Australia must seek to become a State free of this scourge.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to my electorate, the city seat of Perth. Perth has existed as a parliamentary seat since 1890, except for a brief period between 1950 and 1962, when it was abolished. I have the honour to be the first woman to hold the seat. Stan "Popsie" Heal, the great West Perth and State footballer, was probably the best-remembered incumbent, though the list includes a Premier, a senator, a Perth Lord Mayor, a detective, an Agent General, a member of the House of Commons and a judge of the Arbitration Court. Around 22 000 people live in the electorate of Perth. Socially, economically and ethnically diverse, it is home to people from more than 100 countries.

Perth is no ordinary electorate. For a start, it is the seat of Government in that it contains Parliament House, Government House and the Supreme Court. I am well aware that the State's most important decisions, on all matters, have always been taken here, in what is now my electorate.

Perth is also the electorate that employs the State's biggest work force. The greatest assets of the community, in terms of the value of the land and the public facilities, fall within its boundaries. It is the hub of the State's transport and communications systems and the place where we find the major cultural, civic, social, religious and economic facilities of the Western Australian community. It is little wonder that I am excited by, even somewhat in awe of, the task of representing it. I count myself extremely fortunate, and not a little proud, to be its representative in this place.

I have lived in the electorate of Perth for 30 years. Brought up near the old goldfields mining town of Kookynie, I came to the city as a young journalist in 1963 and went to live right in its centre. I moved into a street where my grandparents had lived in the 1940s, and into a city that had about 16 000 inner city residents. A functioning brewery was in the street and the city's thriving markets were nearby. Within a few blocks there were half-a-dozen fine inner city hotels.

In St George's Terrace, there were restaurants, coffee shops, blocks of flats and many beautiful buildings, most now sadly gone. Now that city - and here I refer to the inner city, or central business district - has fewer than 2 000 residents, an attrition rate that is as sad as it is commercially disastrous. That is something I intend to be involved in changing.

The entire seat of Perth includes far more than the underpopulated inner city. Twenty-six square kilometres in area, it stretches from Riverside Drive in the south to Dog Swamp in the north; from busy Charles Street in the west, to the charming riverside street, Joel Terrace, in East Perth. It contains the suburbs of Inglewood, Menora, Coolbinia, Mt Lawley, North Perth, Highgate, West Perth and East Perth. As well as a plethora of Government offices, in Perth one finds the Northbridge restaurant and entertainment belt, refuges for the homeless, light industry, six private and seven Government schools, sporting facilities such as the historic Perth Football ground, the WACA, Gloucester Park, the King's Park Tennis Club, and the Mt Lawley Golf Club. There are museums, art galleries, a concert hall and some of the State's most significant heritage assets such as the old East Perth Cemetery, the Treasury building, the Town Hall and the old Observatory. I cannot imagine a more interesting or vibrant electorate or one so challenging as Perth.

Sitting suspended from 5.59 to 7.30 pm

Ms WARNOCK: Having in a previous occupation been accustomed to being interrupted by the Wyong races, I am pleased to begin my speech again after the suspension. Before the dinner bell rang I had begun to look at the qualities which distinguish the electorate of Perth. I cannot imagine a more interesting and vibrant electorate, nor one so challenging as Perth. The issues that concern the residents of Perth in 1993 are, of course, as diverse as the city itself. We have the problem of neighbourhood crime in Mt Lawley, Inglewood and Highgate. We need to ensure the refurbishment of the old inner city schools in Mt Lawley, Inglewood and North Perth. We are concerned about the control of traffic throughout the electorate. There is the problem of car caused pollution, and no electorate is more affected by this than mine. In Northbridge both residents and traders are concerned about the parking problems and about the activities of late night revellers and the presence of the young homeless.

In general, anyone who has an interest in Northbridge is opposed to the proposed - and long debated - northern bypass. This problem has been around for 30 years under a succession of Governments and it must be solved with sensitivity. During my campaign I made it a personal and public commitment to fight against any road solution that had a deleterious effect on the vitally important and unique character of Northbridge and the residential areas to the immediate north of the city. Apart from any other considerations, it is time we released whatever parts of the resumed land that may not be required for traffic purposes. So much of it could be far more constructively used for inner city residential development and other productive purposes.

As well as the problems, there are reasons for optimism in the City of Perth. I am pleased that Homeswest residential developments in Wellington Street, Perth, Colin Street, West Perth and East Perth will go ahead. Homeswest has set new high standards of architecture in the public sector and its contribution to the quality of city life has been outstanding. I urge the Government to encourage further Homeswest activities in the inner city.

There is the imaginative plan for the redevelopment of East Perth - an initiative of the Labor Government. The Perth City Council has given the go ahead to the much needed refurbishment of the Beatty Park aquatic centre in North Perth. In spite of the withdrawal of Government support, this project is going forward thanks to the active involvement of the residents and the councillors who have determined that Beatty Park is a worthwhile asset for all city residents.

I certainly support the council and the Federal Government in their determination to restore and revive Russell Square in Northbridge, the King Street heritage precinct and the Western Australian Rowing Club boat shed on Riverside Drive. I am much in favour of the idea of giving over the historic Swan Barracks in Northbridge for use as a cultural facility. Shoppers, retailers and residents alike are looking forward to the imaginative upgrading of the Mt Lawley shopping precinct, a joint project of the Perth and Stirling City Councils.

One of the reasons that representing the Perth electorate is so challenging and so interesting

is that it contains within its boundaries the State's capital city precinct. The issues of the capital city part of my electorate are different in scale and complexity from the more domestic concerns. However, the success of our capital impinges very directly on the lives of Perth electors, especially in terms of jobs. Jobs are the fundamental issue that concerns all of us who live in the Perth electorate. Nothing is presently as important as this. All members of this House will agree that improving productivity is vital for the future success of our State; but, as productive assets go, the City of Perth is presently a very poor performer with empty office buildings, empty streets, poor retail sales and vacant land. In no way does our capital city perform well in economic terms. In no way does it realise its productive potential.

Throughout the western world more and more Governments are realising that investment in the asset of a capital city can be the engine room of economic recovery and job growth. In my view the development of Perth as a fully functioning capital city is one certain way by which we can create jobs and wealth for the whole community. I urge the new Government to follow the lead of the Lawrence Government in recognising the need to make the economic importance of Perth a key part of its investment strategy, and in making a priority of both public and private investment in our capital. Good cities do not just happen. Their development has to be an act of collective will. There has to be a complete understanding of the unique role of a capital city; there have to be policies, visions and plans and, above all, there must be a political commitment. The Lawrence Government began the process of making Perth fully productive not only in serving the State, but also by recognising its strategic role as a city of economic and cultural significance in the Indian Ocean and South Asian regions. Labor's creative initiatives were based on the concept that each investment in the capital was an investment in job creation and wealth creation.

Mr Speaker, there are three major priorities for our capital city. The first is the return of inner city residents. Various short-sighted policies have driven most of the population from areas in, and close to, the city. It is obvious with the present vacancy rate that few, if any, office buildings will be put up in the central business district for the next seven to 10 years, at least. For the present then, the opportunity for private sector development must lie principally with the building up of housing stock. With its inner city housing task force study the previous Government identified this issue and the opportunities that accrue from it. It immediately began to introduce incentives, such as land tax reductions for the private sector, and it had planned for more - reductions in headworks charges and water rates, together with a determination to sweep away the petty regulations that make recycling inner city buildings near impossible. I urge the new Government to go forward with those incentives to encourage the private sector to invest in close to city residential accommodation.

The second priority is city management. Perth has long been burdened by a city management system that simply does not work and cannot work. The present and curious structure of the Perth City Council - an accident of history - has failed us. The Mant report, commissioned by the Labor Government, clearly showed the fundamental economic weaknesses in the present system. There is no way that Perth can realise its potential as a true capital city unless a major change is made. The previous Government began questioning the structure of our city council in terms of its capacity to fund city improvements. I urge the new Government to continue to pursue this line of inquiry.

The third priority is planning. The Government must become directly active in the planning of the capital. The present system, with half the responsibility devolving on the city and the other half on the Department of Planning and Urban Development, has proved to be a conspicuous failure. There must be a capital city planning authority. Without such a body - which must be given the single objective of coordinated long term planning, and must be carried out by dedicated planning specialists - there cannot be a visionary plan for Perth. No successful city has ever been achieved without one. We need such bold changes if we are to release Perth's potential to create jobs and wealth for our people.

I have a goal for Perth and for the people who live in it. It is one I have had ever since I began to live here.

My objective, as we approach the third millennium, is that we all recognise that Perth has the potential to be one of the most successful, most liveable and civilised cities in the world. We

have an extraordinary opportunity. Our city is the capital of a State that is greatly endowed by nature's gifts. We are democratic, we have a superb climate, and our people are vigorous, well educated and talented. Our artists are in the forefront of creative talent in this nation. For all the people of our region, Perth is the nearest window to our complex western culture and to our unique indigenous culture. We should make it our collective ambition to see that our capital city contributes, in a positive way, to the lives of its citizens and to all the people of Western Australia. Right now, in the public domain, there are enough creative ideas about our city to ensure that we can realise this potential. I urge the new Government to keep the impetus going. It should not talk itself into the belief that the economic sky is falling to the extent that it is frightened to have high ambitions for our capital city. Let us see some action.

Mr Speaker, it is the obligation and task of a responsible Opposition to support Government policies and actions when warranted; to criticise and expose the Government's failings when warranted; and to ensure the Government is accountable to the people of Western Australia. We can promise the members opposite a watchful and active Opposition - they can count on us for that!

In accepting that some criticisms of the previous Government are justified, it is equally important to remember that many important social gains were made during the last decade. We established the Office of Seniors; the Seniors' Card; the Equal Opportunity Commission; the Office of Women's Interests; the Women's Advisory Council; and community policing. The list goes on and such gains must neither be forgotten nor set aside. As a result of 10 years of Labor Government reforms, Western Australia has become a better and fairer place, and a more just and egalitarian society.

This Opposition, of which I am proud to be part, will not stand idly by and see people coming a poor second to ideology. There must be no retreat and no backsliding on important social reforms. Those of us who have spent many years of our lives working for the rights of working people, women, minorities and the environment will be watching and working to defend the rights already won. Also, we will be working to expand them if we can. For example, some want to see adoption policy settled; some want to see legislation affecting de facto relationships passed; some are concerned to see proper attention to the rights of the mentally ill; and some want to see the rights of homosexuals expanded - for example, to have an age of consent uniform with that for heterosexuals. Those of us who support a woman's right to choose abortion will continue to pursue this issue confident that majority support for choice has been longstanding.

We will not stand idly by and see such nonsense as secession treated seriously. Such shabby talk separates us in the worst possible way from the mainstream of Australian life. We must think bigger than that, Mr Speaker. Western Australia is a proud, powerfully contributing and unique part of Australia. Our great State must not be portrayed as though it were some grasping, small minded settlement anchored off the coast of the country. Rather than secede from Australia, we should lead Australia, not only economically, but also with enlightened and visionary ideas.

In conclusion, having spent the majority of my working life as a journalist interacting with people of every kind, I am well accustomed to being in a profession that is held in low regard. Although I make no comment on whether my former journalistic colleagues are properly held in such low esteem - please do not think that fear of appearing on page 2 of *The West Australian* plays any part in my uncharacteristic discretion - it is a great pity that the profession of parliamentarian is apparently so much despised. I will make it a part of my business here to play a role in trying to reverse that general conviction. I have long held the view that politicians are immensely hard working and genuinely want to serve their community. It is an honourable thing to represent the people in this place.

Former Labor Premier John Tonkin gave me some good advice recently. He said that it is best in public life to admit your mistakes, and to move on. I trust that I shall make no more mistakes than most. Mr Tonkin also said he believed that it was the duty of a parliamentarian to render useful service and to look after the interests of those unable to protect themselves; that will be my guiding principle.

I come to this place with a sense of purpose. My goals for the next four years are: First, to work to improve the quality of life for the people of Perth in economic, social and cultural terms; second, to work for the success of our capital city; third, to endeavour to represent

every person in my electorate, not just those who voted for me; fourth, to promote the values of a cohesive and harmonious society; and fifth, to ensure, as much as I am able from the Opposition benches, that no backsliding on important social reforms occurs.

I conclude by thanking members for their patience and courtesy in hearing me out, and by thanking again all those electors who put their confidence in me, and all those staunch supporters who gave so much of their time to bring me to this place. I promise that while I am their member for Perth, they will have my total commitment.

Amendment to Motion

Ms WARNOCK: I move -

That the following words be added to the motion -

But we regret to advise Your Excellency that this House does not support the Government's announced intention of encouraging exploration and mining activity in the Ningaloo Marine Park and other places of high conservation value, and further views with concern the Government's mismanagement of the environment since taking office.

[Applause.]

MR MCGINTY (Fremantle) [7.45 pm]: It is with a sense of considerable sadness that I second this motion. In the last four and a half months what has occurred with regard to environmental protection in this State is nothing short of a disgrace. We have seen from the Minister for the Environment an unprincipled attack on our environmental system; we have seen savage attacks on individuals by the Minister which, with respect, are unbecoming of the office he holds; we have seen a looseness with the truth which does no credit to the Minister responsible for protecting our environment; and we have seen events unprecedented in the history of this State. We have never seen a Minister responsible for the environment do so much to destroy the environmental protection system in this State, and, at the same time, destroy public confidence in that system.

Point of Order

Mr MINSON: I distinctly heard the amendment moved to the Address-in-Reply. I ask you, Mr Speaker, to direct the member to speak to that amendment rather than completely ignoring it.

The SPEAKER: I thank the Minister for his comments. However, the member has just completed the first minute of his speech and it is appropriate that he has time to develop his argument. If he has strayed from the amendment - I am not sure that he has - he will be directed to return to the matter of the amendment.

Debate Resumed

Mr MCGINTY: I draw the Minister's attention to the amendment before the Chair. At its conclusion it reads as follows, "and further views with concern the Government's mismanagement of the environment since taking office." With great respect to the Minister, that is exactly the point I am addressing.

The Minister for the Environment has had a hopeless start with this portfolios. He has been quoted in the Press as saying that he confided in some of his friends that over the past 10 years issues have been driven in Western Australia by "greens, blacks and people in wheelchairs". The Minister is responsible for protecting the environment, promoting Aboriginal interests and catering to the needs of people with disabilities, yet he puts these people down in a way that is quite unbecoming to the Minister.

The Minister has a responsibility to be an advocate for those groups and issues in our community. It is a responsibility he has sadly neglected. The issue which sparked most controversy in our community was the press release issued by the Minister for the Environment on 23 April. In essence, it dropped two bombshells. The first was that, notwithstanding the Minister's earlier comment that he saw no reason to split the roles of the Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Environmental Protection Authority, he announced that the Government was proceeding to do just that. That is objectionable. One needs to look at the reasons and justification for that split. It is of interest that the independent review of the Environmental Protection Act which was conducted in the course