

One of the points I want to raise tonight, which has been very clear to me as an elector, and not as a representative of the people, is the lack of co-ordination and planning among departments. We know that under the system of Cabinet Government most decisions are made by the Ministers and when we come to the House it is really a sort of numbers game. We hope that what we have to say, both inside the House and in the party room, and between parties, will influence the course of legislation and policy making. However, in the main, decisions are made by the Cabinet.

In the complex society which exists today we have to recognise that Ministers rely very much on advisers and professional people and that it is necessary for there to be some sort of co-ordination between such people. The only way to achieve that co-ordination is to ensure communication between those people. However, as I said previously, some of those entrenched organisations—be they private industries or Government departments—are inclined to want to build their own empires. Quite often a decision will rest either on the strength of the Minister or on the brilliance or perseverance of his advisers, and such decision will influence the importance of the department.

I would emphasise that this is a human failing which cannot be overcome, perhaps, without some structural change within the Government. It seems there may be some form of co-ordination by way of the formation of a new department under the direction of the Premier whereby he will be able to see where his priorities lie and plan for the future.

Although I am aware that I have a different political opinion from that of the Premier I do not place very much credence on his promises which were outlined prior to the election. I have been quite astounded by the lack of activity in the hundred-odd days—very odd indeed—since the election. It seems to me that the Government, unlike the elephant which laboured mightily, has not even brought forth a mouse. I am hoping that as there are pressing problems in this State, particularly in relation to social welfare, the Government will begin to get cracking very soon. Certainly the Government will receive stimulation by way of questions from the Labor Party members in this House.

One of the biggest problems associated with co-ordination and planning, apart from empire building, is the reluctance on the part of some departments to come forward—even though they have been providing established services—because they fear that one particular section of the community is receiving more than it is worth. It is the word "worth" which causes the trouble. The problem is in regard to

compensation to people who need to have a chance of equal access to opportunity so that they may gain worth.

I come back to Aborigines as an illustration because the Aboriginal Affairs Department of the Commonwealth Government is attempting to upgrade the position of the Aborigines so that they can have equal access to opportunity. It is important that other departments do not withdraw and decide that the Aborigines are being looked after and nothing further needs to be done. That would nullify the whole intention of the course of action recommended by professional people.

I would like to conclude by asking members in this House to recognise that one of the most valuable actions which the Tonkin Government took while in office was to get rid of an enemy of this State which has plagued certain people for a long time. I hope the present Government will continue with the good job already started, which is, getting rid of the blowfish at Rottnest.

THE HON. I. G. PRATT (Lower West) [8.06 p.m.]: May I reaffirm the congratulations I have previously given to you, Mr President, personally, on your appointment in this Chamber. It is widely recognised as a fitting achievement for your years of services while carrying out your duties both in this Chamber and throughout the State. My congratulations also go to those members who have been appointed to the ministry; the Hon. Norman Baxter, the Hon. Graham MacKinnon, and at a more personal level, a very special congratulation to the Hon. Neil McNeill who has not only been appointed a Minister but is also Leader of the Government in this House. He is my co-member for the Lower West Province and his advice and experience have been extremely valuable and of great assistance to me in my campaign to become a member of this House. For that I thank him most deeply.

I also extend my congratulations to the Hon. Ron Thompson on his appointment as Leader of the Opposition; and to those members who have been elected to the House as a result of the recent elections. For those who have been returned to this place, with which they are quite familiar, this will be old hat, but for those of us who are new members the experience promises quite a bit of excitement and interest. I hope the excitement will not be dulled by the time we spend here.

I believe it is usual during the debate on the Address-in-Reply to do either, or both, of two things: to discuss some topic of interest to the member, or discuss one's electorate. I intend to be quite brief but I also intend to touch on both of these areas.

THE PRESIDENT: The honourable member may discuss anything he wishes on the Address-in-Reply debate today.

The Hon. I. G. PRATT: Firstly, I wish to raise a few points concerning government. It is my opinion that, to be effective, government must be very meaningful. It must have a high level of involvement between the elected and the electors. To my mind this means that we need our present system of Government and it must continue. I refer to the system where we have local government, State Government, and Federal Government, each carrying out its responsibility within the legal bounds set for it.

We have with us today a factor which makes it difficult for this system to function, and I refer to inflation. This trend is making the duties of both State Government and local government very difficult indeed. I have been involved in local government for many years and I am deeply interested in the welfare and well-being of local government. I believe local government to be the most meaningful form of government, because decisions are made on the spot by people who are directly responsible to the electors. Of course, the electors are also on the spot and can see what is happening, and they are able to hold somebody responsible for actions taken.

I am concerned with the effect on local government, and consequently on the people of my electorate, of certain issues, the first of which is inflation, an issue which I have already mentioned when I pointed out the problems it was causing. I now wish to go a little more deeply into this matter which the Prime Minister intimated he had beaten when he was seeking votes for the Federal election earlier this year. Inflation is hitting local government very hard; to the extent, in fact, that shire rates will have to be raised by a large percentage this year; otherwise, staff will have to be put off which, of course, is a dreadful alternative.

Some two months ago it was not uncommon, when talking to shire councillors throughout the State, to hear the figure of 30 per cent being mentioned as a possible increase in rates this year. However, if one now talks to the same councillors one hears the figures of 40 per cent, 50 per cent, and even 60 per cent being mentioned. Even the figure of 100 per cent was mentioned recently. Let us examine the effect these increases will have on local government.

Firstly, one pay increase for one section of the staff on a shire in my province has added an amount of \$50 377.60 to the expenditure for the coming year. That is just one increase in one section; there are many more. The cost of bitumen has already risen by 53 per cent this year. I am referring to hot bitumen applied at the rate of over 13 000 square metres a day.

The interest rate on loans has risen to the extent that some loans taken out in the past month have been at a rate of over

10 per cent. These costs have to be passed on to the ratepayers in order that the shires can carry on. The reserves of the ratepayers have already been depleted by inflation, and by the increased proportion of taxation, which has been taken by the Commonwealth Government.

The second item I wish to touch on in this sphere is that of road funds. The attitude of the present Commonwealth Government will mean that rates will have to be increased further if realistic works programmes are to be carried out by shire councils to maintain employment. In the shire to which I have already referred, the figure allowed last year for what is commonly known as free choice moneys—Commonwealth moneys, as members are aware, are in various categories—spent on local roads and maintenance was \$150 249. The amount of money available this year, under the new scheme, has been reduced to \$81 428. Not only has there been this drastic cut, but under the new scheme that amount of money has to be matched, which means the shire has to raise the difference to bring the total up to \$150 000. That action has to be taken in order to get road work done to the value of \$150 000, and this does not mean the same amount of work will be done this year as was done last year; it will be slashed because of inflation. In actual fact, to make total use of the grant of \$81 428 allowed in that particular category the shire will have to raise an extra \$112 142. So it is seen that once again the people will have to pay as is the case in almost every area of endeavour affected by the present policies of the Commonwealth Government. In many cases people will be called upon to pay beyond their means.

The effect of this inflation together with other increased costs could mean that some of the small one-family farms close to the metropolitan area will go out of business; they will not survive.

I turn now to consideration of my own province. In so doing I am reminded of an experience I had some years ago when I joined a club involved with public speaking. We were visited by another club and I was rostered to speak on a certain subject. The previous speaker spoke on the same subject and when I stood up to speak I realised that everything I had to say had already been said and I now find myself in a somewhat similar position tonight. Many of the points I wished to raise have already been mentioned by my colleague, the Hon. Gordon Masters, when he spoke yesterday.

This is natural, for we represent very similar provinces. Our backgrounds of community services are somewhat similar, and from his speech it is obvious that we identify very similar problems. In particular we identify the problem of indiscriminate development by the State Housing Commission and the social problems that

this causes. It was mentioned by an earlier speaker that no sooner do we have a State Housing Commission suburb established under the present situation than it is declared a depressed area. In part of my province we have a situation where State houses are still being built and the area has been already recognised by the Commonwealth Government as a depressed area. A kindergarten was promised by the Commonwealth Government but it is not clear now whether or not the money will be forthcoming to pay for it.

What we should aim for, and what I am sure the present Government will aim for, is an integrated community where people who need welfare housing are mixed in with those who do not. In this way people living in State houses become an integral part of the community. The children mix and share the community facilities, the wealth, and perhaps the working ability of the people. The rest of the community can be of assistance to the people accommodated in State housing.

While the Hon. Gordon Masters' province includes the northern half of what has come to be known as the peripheral shires, mine includes the southern band and the areas immediately to the south of this. The Lower West Province is geographically a well-defined area stretching from Kelmescott in the north to Waroona in the south. It includes the section of the Darling scarp and nestles between that and the Indian Ocean.

It is an area of diverse activity, including large areas of urban development, major industrial undertakings, dairy farming, fruitgrowing, market gardening, forest management, and the timber industry. It is a significant area of poultry production and fishing. More and more horse training establishments are being developed in the area, and in fact, almost every small type of farming activity can be found within the Lower West Province.

Probably the most significant fact to the rest of the State about the Lower West Province is that it is the major source of water supply for the metropolitan area with a succession of dams and future dam sites extending south along the scarp. All the major centres of population within this province lie within the path of the future urban corridors, although in many cases it will take years for urban development to reach these centres. It is important, however, that we plan carefully in order to preserve the present way of life when this happens. The continuation of farming activities must be encouraged, and the Government of the day must give rural industries the support and encouragement that they need to survive.

Adequate transport systems must be devised and new industrial areas positioned to provide employment for the people who will live in the urban corridors. The lessons so obviously apparent in the present urban

expansion must be learnt and planning must be orientated to what the people want to do rather than what planners think people should want to do.

In the years to come this province will be an area in which things will really happen. I foresee it as a challenging and exciting era and I look forward with pleasure to representing the Lower West Province in this House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. D. W. Cooley.

SUPPLY BILL

Second Reading

THE HON. N. McNEILL (Lower West—Minister for Justice) (8.20 p.m.): I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

This measure seeks the grant of supply to Her Majesty of \$350 million.

The Revenue Budget and the Loan Estimates for 1974-75 are now in course of preparation and will be presented with respective Appropriation Bills, later in the session.

In the meantime, it is necessary of course, to carry on the services of the State and the Bill now before members is to authorise the provisions of funds for this purpose.

An issue of \$315 million is sought from the Consolidated Revenue Fund and \$30 million from moneys to the credit of the General Loan Fund. Provision is also made in the Bill for an issue of \$5 million to enable the Treasurer to make such temporary advances as may be necessary.

The proposed issue from the Consolidated Revenue Fund is greater by \$65 million than the corresponding provision in the Supply Act of 1973. The amounts to be drawn from the General Loan Fund and the Public Account are the same as were provided last year.

The increased issue from the Consolidated Revenue Fund is required to meet the expanded cost of Government services resulting from the current high rate of inflation.

The magnitude of the additional sum sought to enable the services of the State to be financed for a period no greater than is customary, is a clear indication of the impact that inflation is having on the State's finances.

Whatever may have been the genesis of the current inflationary spiral, there can be no doubt that it is now feeding on wage and salary increases that are far in excess of the economy's capacity to absorb them. There can be no escaping the simple fact that if industry, commerce and Government are required to meet wage increases of the magnitude that have now become commonplace, they have no alternative but to increase prices.