

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday 25 August 1983

The **SPEAKER (Hon. T.M. McRae)** took the Chair at 2 p.m. and read prayers.

DEATH OF Mr H.W. KING

The **Hon. J.C. BANNON (Premier and Treasurer)**: I move:

That this House expresses its regret at the recent death of Mr H.W. King, former member for Chaffey, and places on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious service; and that as a mark of respect to his memory, the sitting of the House be suspended until the ringing of the bells.

Mr Harold King was the Liberal member for Chaffey from 1956 to 1962. News has just come of his death and the normal respects to an ex-member of this place are embodied in the motion I have moved.

Mr King was born in 1906 and was a member of Parliament for six years in this Chamber. He was Government Whip from 1960 to 1962 and a member of the Joint Committee on Subordinate Legislation from 1956 to 1959. He was awarded an O.B.E. in 1972 and took an active part in many of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association functions. It was not my privilege to know Mr King except very briefly in passing.

I guess it is a sign of the changes in Parliamentary life that, in fact, in this Chamber there is no-one who was a member of this House at the time, 21 years ago, when Mr King was a member. In the last Parliament there were two members of my Party, Mr Corcoran and Mr Langley, who came into Parliament in 1962, the year that Mr King ceased to be a member of Parliament. Therefore, there is no direct link with that time, but I am told that Mr King served his electorate well, that he was popular and well respected. Prior to entering Parliament he had been very involved in local government at Berri and he was member of Rotary.

Reference has been made in discussions that have been held about Mr King and his work that particularly in the 1956 Murray River flood he was a linch pin in co-ordination of the relief work. He also ensured that Government departments, local businesses and individual people in the Riverland worked together, and he played a major role in that crisis caused by the natural disaster that affected his district. His Parliamentary representation was very much devoted to his district and to the individual problems of that region of the State.

I am told that in fact he was quite popular on all sides of politics, respected by his political opponents as well as his colleagues. Outside Parliament he published a book on *Frost in the Riverland*. He was for a period secretary of the Australian Citrus Growers Federation. Ironically, I understand, he returned to Barmera last weekend to attend the launching of a book called *The Riverlanders* for which he had written the foreword. Sadly, he was admitted to hospital on Saturday evening. The book launching was held on the Sunday by Max Fatchen in the absence of Mr King. I suggest that that book and that foreword will represent the life's work and commitment of Mr King to his district.

Mr OLSEN (Leader of the Opposition): I support the motion. Although I did not know Harry King that well, I had occasion in recent years to meet him several times and found him to be a man of integrity and compassion. That is amply borne out by the references the Premier has made this afternoon. Mr King was a man who grew to love the Riverland and represented that district and its people in

this Parliament extremely well. Before becoming a fruit-grower in the Riverland, he was employed in the banking industry. At once establishing contacts with the Riverland, he became actively involved in the interests of that region. He became Secretary of the Berri Co-operative Packing Union from 1935 to 1954 and represented the district of Chaffey in this Parliament for six years. The Premier has referred to the fact that shortly after Harry King's election to Parliament, the Murray River was in flood during 1956 and, as local member, Mr King acted to ensure the welfare of the people adversely affected by the floods. In Parliament, just after the floods, he asked more than 25 questions specifically related to relief for flood victims, and that was indicative of the man and his compassion for those of his constituents adversely affected.

Mr King took a strong interest in the citrus industry. In 1965 he was appointed General Secretary of the Australian Citrus Growers Federation and was made a director on the executive of the Australian Farmers Federation in 1973. He was awarded the O.B.E. for his contribution in that area. His interest in the citrus industry generally is reflected in his speeches in this House. He advanced the needs and interests of his constituents in the attention that he paid to them. His mindfulness and the economic importance of the Riverland is also reflected in the work he carried out, especially as it contains the Murray River, which is the lifeline of South Australia. His contribution in all but recent days bore out his belief in the importance of the Riverland to this State.

On behalf of members of the Opposition, I extend condolences to members of Mr King's family in what is a difficult time to go through when one loses a loved one. As they mourn, members of his family can look back with pride to the way Mr King served his constituents and the people of South Australia in bringing to the attention of the State and to the attention of this Parliament the significance of the Riverland.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD (Chaffey): I take this opportunity to personally extend my condolences to Mrs King and members of her family. The Premier and the Leader of the Opposition have outlined the many significant contributions made by Harry King in the interests not only of the Riverland but also of South Australia. His work in relation to the citrus industry, especially on frost control, has had a beneficial effect on the horticultural industry throughout Australia and has doubtless been worth countless millions of dollars to growers in the industry. His work in that field dates back to 1945 when citrus growers knew very little about methods of control of frost damage. As a result of the work done by Harry King, frost control measures have been devised and proven over the past 40 years and were the basis of frost control methods adopted by irrigators and horticulturists in recent years.

He did contribute in many other ways, as has been mentioned, as a councillor on the District Council of Berri. He served a considerable time as executive officer at Berri Co-operative Packing Union, and certainly during the period he was member for Chaffey, from 1956 to 1962, the major issue with which he was confronted from early in that term was the 1956 Murray River flood. Remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition clearly outline the work and effort that he put in at that time.

He is keenly remembered in the Chaffey district in the Riverland. One can go into that area at any time and even though he has been retired for a number of years it is amazing the number of people who still comment and ask after him. So, his contribution to the Riverland and to South Australia will certainly be remembered for a long

time to come and the result of the work that he did will, as I say, go on for many years.

The fact that he took ill when travelling to the Riverland to attend a function for the launching of the book *The Riverlanders*, and the fact that he was asked to write the foreword to the book are clear indications of the high regard that the people of the Riverland had for Harry King.

The Hon. JENNIFER ADAMSON (Coles): I support the motion and extend my condolences to the family of the late Harry King. I knew Mr King as a constituent and as a friend who was active in Liberal politics in my electorate and who, in fact, helped me in my election to Parliament in 1977. He retained a very active interest in organisational politics and, despite the fact that I never knew him during this term in Parliament and did not have any close knowledge of his work as member for Chaffey, I was always impressed by his almost boyish enthusiasm, despite his age, for anything political. If there was any political meeting being held in the vicinity, Harry King would always be there and would always be supported by his wife, Amy, in his retirement, in the same way as he was supported during his Parliamentary career. I offer my condolences to his family and endorse the remarks made by the other speakers.

The SPEAKER: As Speaker and on behalf of the House of Assembly I offer my condolences to the family of the late Mr Harold King. I shall endeavour to ensure, now that the House has been made aware of it, that his literary works will be acquired by the Parliamentary Library and, finally, in the normal way, I will arrange that the appropriate extracts of the various remarks shall be sent to his widow.

Motion carried by members standing in their places in silence.

[Sitting suspended from 2.14 to 2.24 p.m.]

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT: ROXBY DOWNS

The Hon. R.G. PAYNE (Minister of Mines and Energy): I seek leave to make a statement.
Leave granted.

The Hon. R.G. PAYNE: Over the coming week, South Australia's attention will be focused on the Roxby Downs project with the institution of a blockade, aimed at stopping the mining operation, by anti-nuclear groups organised on a national basis. The organisers have publicly declared that it is their intention that the blockade be non violent. The Government considers that its position on a number of matters should be made clear prior to the blockade's commencing. The Roxby Downs joint venturers are operating under an indenture ratified by this Parliament. The project is one which has been approved in terms of Labor Party policy.

Nevertheless, this Government recognises every citizen's right to peaceful demonstration as part of the democratic process, and a demonstration by people opposed to the Roxby Downs project is no exception. If demonstrators infringe the rights of other people engaged in lawful activity and in so doing contravene the law, then they must expect (and I think they do expect) to accept any legal consequences of their action. In a demonstration of this size, expected to number between 600 and 1 000 people, there are a number of risks. The organisers have already suggested in the media that they fear that some people may take violent action in an attempt to discredit what is intended to be a non-violent protest.

The possibility exists that there could be present in a group of that size people who are opposed to the project

but who do not share the group's commitment to non-violent action. There is also potential for some kind of counter demonstration or conflict with people who, whether or not associated with the project, are inconvenienced by the blockade. It is appropriate here to point out that the same standards would be applied in the case of a violent counter demonstrator as in the case of a violent demonstrator.

The issues associated with the police exercising their discretion in dealing with whatever contingencies may arise in the course of a demonstration have been thoroughly examined in a royal commission by the late Mr Justice Bright. However, it should be remembered that a similarly motivated demonstration at Honeymoon last year passed off without any major breaches of public order. The Chief Secretary, the Minister for Environment and Planning, and I, as the Ministers responsible for the police, the project area, and the project, have been briefed by the police and can assure the House that they have made the preparations which they think necessary.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT: LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDS

The SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that this day I have received from the Leader of the Opposition the following letter, dated 25 August 1983:

Dear Mr Speaker,

I desire to inform you that this day it is my intention to move: That this House at its rising adjourn until 1 p.m. tomorrow, for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgency, namely:

That in view of the information given to this House yesterday by the Hon. the Minister of Local Government, this House calls upon the Minister to give an immediate assurance to the District Councils of Mount Barker, Strathalbyn and Meadows that the allocations they will receive this financial year either through the South Australian Local Government Grants Commission or through other financial assistance to be determined by the Government, will equal the amounts already advised to those councils.

Yours sincerely,

John Olsen, Leader of the Opposition

I call upon those members who support the motion being proceeded with to stand in their places.

Opposition members having risen:

The SPEAKER: There being more than the necessary number of members, the motion may be proceeded with.

The Hon. J.D. WRIGHT (Deputy Premier): I move:

That the time allowed for debate on this motion be extended until 3.30 p.m.

Motion carried.

Mr OLSEN (Leader of the Opposition): I move.

That this House at its rising adjourn until 1 p.m. tomorrow, for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgency, namely, that in view of the information given to this House yesterday by the honourable Minister of Local Government, this House calls upon the Minister to give an immediate assurance to the District Councils of Mount Barker, Strathalbyn and Meadows that the allocations they will receive this financial year, either through the South Australian Local Government Grants Commission or through other financial assistance to be determined by the Government, will equal the amounts initially advised to those councils.

Mr Speaker, the statement made to this House yesterday by the Minister of Local Government was unprecedented in its attempt to evade Ministerial responsibility. The Minister has been cowardly in his approach to this whole matter. He has turned his back on basic responsibilities to hide his own incompetence. He has put a very senior public servant, a loyal public servant, a public servant with a deserved

reputation for integrity and efficiency, in a position where he has had to accept blame and criticism for actions for which the Minister should take the full responsibility. I make clear at the outset that the Opposition does not believe, on the information available to this House to date, that the Minister should have accepted the resignation of Dr McPhail of the Local Government Grants Commission.

Under the terms of the South Australian Local Government Grants Commission Act, 1976, Dr McPhail has not failed in his duty. I will return to that point later. But, first, I refer to the circumstances which led to the Minister's extraordinary statement yesterday.

A select committee of this House was established on 8 December last year to inquire into the local government boundaries of the District Council of Meadows. This followed agitation to have severed from the existing council area a portion distinctly rural in nature, because of rural-urban tensions between residents. As the Minister said in his statement yesterday, the result of the select committee's recommendation that portions of the Meadows District Council area be annexed to the areas of the Strathalbyn and Mount Barker District Councils had been 'the most complex boundary alteration so far undertaken'. Accordingly, the issues involved required long and careful consideration by all members of the select committee.

My colleagues who served on that select committee, the members for Light and Alexandra, were particularly concerned to ensure that, in any change to existing boundaries, the councils involved would be given the financial resources to meet any additional responsibilities in terms of staff employment. The transcript of the select committee proceedings clearly points to their concern.

My colleagues have informed me that during the committee's deliberations, both in front of witnesses and amongst the members themselves, the Minister gave the clear impression that extra funding would be forthcoming to those councils which would take on additional responsibilities as a result of any boundary alterations. The transcript of the evidence shows at page 13 that, when Dr McPhail pointed out that the Grants Commission gave councils extra funding to cover any additional responsibilities involved in amalgamations, the Minister did not interject to question that fact. At page 200, which is the more pertinent point for the Premier, the Minister said that, where amalgamation led to a stronger council, more money would be made available. That is what the Minister said.

When the Minister reported the recommendations of the select committee to this House on 19 April, he referred to the question of the liabilities of the respective councils, and said on page 865 of *Hansard*:

There are also further matters which will involve the reappointment of assets and liabilities. Negotiations on these matters will take place as soon as possible with the necessary assistance being given by the Government—

'the necessary assistance being given by the Government'—the words of the Minister. During that debate, the member for Alexandra confirmed the clear understanding of the Opposition members who served on that committee that additional Grants Commission funding would be forthcoming to the councils involved. On page 870, he said this in relation to the Meadows council:

At the end of the current financial year, during or at the end of the next financial year, and if it is still faced with the problem in later years, it can approach the Grants Commission. In fact, I am aware of a conversation that has already taken place between Meadows councillors and principal members of the staff and the Chairman of the South Australian Grants Commission, Dr Ian McPhail. That very point has been solicited and canvassed at that level. In turn, Dr McPhail has explained to councils the avenues that they should explore if they found themselves later in a difficult financial position.

The members for Henley Beach and Unley, as the Government representatives on the select committee, were well aware of the understanding of all members that extra funding would be made available. Indeed, they also sought it to cover, in particular, the job security of any employees affected by boundary changes. The member for Unley said this when the select committee reported to the House:

It must be made clear to the councils that employees placed in that position will retain all their existing benefits, privileges and rights; it could be summarised as being their conditions of employment, their status and their privileges.

Of course, to allow the District Councils of Mount Barker and Strathalbyn to take any employees from Meadows, as well as to cover additional areas, they would need additional funds. The member for Unley urged that negotiations should be undertaken immediately, and he concluded with what can now be seen as an immortal understatement. He said:

We do not want to see a situation where there is misunderstanding and perhaps industrial disharmony because of poor communication or inaccurate communication of a situation.

The Minister was well aware that the District Councils of Mount Barker and Strathalbyn were greatly concerned about the additional commitments they would have to take on as a result of these annexations. Accordingly, and wisely, and as the member for Unley had suggested, negotiations began between officers of the Local Government Department and the councils. The Minister now says that some of these negotiations were undertaken without his knowledge, but how can that be the case, given the background I have already referred to?

If the Minister did not seek to keep himself informed on an ongoing basis, he was clearly failing in his duty, for these were important questions which had to be resolved, especially in circumstances where the councils were seeking to finalise budgets and declare rates—action they are legally obliged to complete by 31 August. The Minister said in his statement yesterday that on 27 July he was informed by Dr McPhail of advice given to the District Councils of Strathalbyn, Mount Barker and Meadows about their Grants Commission allocations for 1983-84. He was also informed by Dr McPhail that the allocations notified to the councils were much larger than the councils could normally expect to receive under the commission's existing policy. Accordingly, the Minister took the matter to the full commission which confirmed that view.

As a result, Dr McPhail tendered his resignation, and the Minister has told the councils that their likely level of funding from the commission would be substantially lower than that previously notified. According to the Minister's statements yesterday, there has been a dispute between members of the commission. That should not be a reason for Dr McPhail to resign. The Act establishing the commission clearly provides for differing views among commission members. Section 13 refers to majority decisions of the commission, where one member can differ from the other two. Section 18 of the Act empowers the commission to take into account any special needs or disabilities of a council, in determining grants. The needs of the councils involved in this matter clearly could be considered under this section.

In addition, the Act does not require the involvement of the Minister in making final decisions about grants until the commission has first forwarded its recommendations to the Minister. The Minister has only received those recommendations this week. Why, then, did he intervene in the way he has and accept the resignation of Dr McPhail on 17 August, when the Act gives him the opportunity, under section 19, to refer recommendations back to the commission with a request for reconsideration?

The circumstances I have outlined can only lead to the conclusion that the Minister has found himself in an embarrassing position because the expectations he raised during the select committee proceedings about the extra funding to be made available to the councils cannot, for one reason or another, be met. The Minister must take the responsibility for raising the expectations of the councils. His words are on the public record. He must not be allowed to evade that responsibility, as he did yesterday by saying this in answer to a question from the member for Light:

As for the allegations that I, as Chairman of the select committee, condoned, sanctioned or agreed to further allocations being made to the District Councils of Strathalbyn, Mount Barker and Meadows as a result of the select committee, I would like to ask the member for Light to produce the transcript showing that I made that statement personally.

I have already referred to that transcript and to statements in this House by the members for Alexandra and Unley which expose the Minister's shabby attempt to run away from this matter.

I have no doubt that the actions of Dr McPhail and officers of the Department of Local Government who have been involved in this matter were based on a clear understanding of the Minister's intention that these councils should have additional funding. The Minister must now meet that commitment. It was accepted in good faith by the councils concerned. They have based their budgeting for this financial year on that commitment.

It is no use the Minister saying now that he will look at the possibility of making up some of the difference between the grants now recommended by the commission and the original commitments made. I understand that a sum in excess of \$100 000 is involved as the difference between the original commitments and the grants now recommended by the commission. The full amounts must be provided to those councils. The Minister must not seek to evade that commitment by blaming a senior public servant who acted in good faith according to his understanding of his Minister's intentions and in accordance with the Act under which he works.

The Hon. J.C. BANNON (Premier and Treasurer): Such is the importance and urgency of this motion that the Leader spent about 11 minutes or so of his 15 minutes allotted time discussing it.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Premier to resume his seat. The honourable Leader of the Opposition was heard in silence, although there was not much silence from the Leader's supporters or those on his side of the House. I now ask that the Premier be heard in silence.

The Hon. J.C. BANNON: Thank you, Mr Speaker. About an hour ago I was interrupted in the middle of discussions, on a matter of extreme urgency and importance to this State namely, the question of the imposition of the excise on wine spirit involving its implications and ways in which I and the Government could work with the industry on that matter. I was interrupted to be told that an urgency motion had been notified by the Leader of the Opposition. I thought, 'Oh well, I suppose that's par for the course. We get either a no-confidence or an urgency motion once or twice a week. What would it be about?' And preoccupied as I was with that particular issue and the preparation of the submission I intend to make tomorrow to the Minister for Employment, Mr Willis, when he comes here representing the Treasurer to explain the Federal Budget, I assumed that there would be something of urgency and import for this House to discuss in this particular issue. On the contrary, I found that—

The Hon. E.R. Goldsworthy: That's a reflection on the Chair.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.C. BANNON: I will not even respond to the interjection, but I will simply say that what the Opposition deems to be a matter of importance that we have to discuss is this trivial nonsense, which was totally disposed of yesterday. Such is the Opposition's concept—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.C. BANNON:—of the importance of events in this State and the real problems that we grapple with that we have to waste our time on this nonsense. However, waste our time we will, and at least if in that process we are able to make clear that the Opposition has no base for this nonsensical motion it is moving, and if in that process the Opposition understands it, perhaps it will be able to direct its mind to the more important matters of State that ought to be concerning this House. Let us look at this flimsy 11-minute pastiche we have from the Leader of the Opposition, and in doing so look at the—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. J.C. BANNON: Mr Speaker, when the interjections come I admire the way in which the Opposition back-benchers are trying to give their Leader a bit of a boost in this area. I suggest that they listen to the evidence involved. What does this motion call on this House to do? It calls on us to adjourn to pass a motion to require the Minister to give an assurance that he will do one of two things: one, that he will get the South Australian Local Government Grants Commission to determine a sum of money which the three councils involved believed they would get because of information wrongfully released to them; or, failing that, that he gives a guarantee here and now that other financial assistance to be determined by the Government (and, no doubt, to come from that very large source of finances that the Government has) will be provided to the councils.

Let me deal with the first thing that this motion seeks to do. It seeks to require to do something which the Minister is incapable of doing in terms of the Act. He would be in breach of the Act if he attempted to do so. I would suggest that members of the Opposition and others look at the wording of the Act, particularly section 19. It makes quite clear that the Minister does not have the power to require the commission to do what this motion says. On the contrary, he can either approve the recommendations or refer the matter back to the commission. However, it is still up to the commission to determine what those grants will be, and to make the final determination in the event of disagreement between it and the Minister. Therefore, the first part of this motion requires the Minister to do an illegal act and, if in fact he had done that, members opposite would be the first to wave this Act, demanding the resignation of the Minister because he was in breach of his statutory duty. Yet, up they bob, large as life, saying that it is a matter of great urgency today and requiring the Minister to give these instructions to the Grants Commission. Let us dispose of that element of the motion first.

What about the second? The second says that the Minister shall determine or announce that other financial assistance will be provided. I would have thought that members opposite had listened to what the Minister had said yesterday when he explained to them that he did have the matter under active consideration, that he recognised the problems of the councils, and that he, as Minister, was working to overcome those problems.

There is something more grave here, and it makes the actions of the Opposition even more contemptible in relation to this issue. I am informed that the councils themselves

are satisfied with the way in which the Minister is dealing with it. In fact, the Minister has indicated—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. J.C. BANNON:—that he is attempting to find a way to alleviate their problem. I notice that some of the Leader's colleagues are laughing, and well may they do so. However, let me refer to this fact: a very senior elected member of one of the councils concerned contacted both the department and the Minister directly to say how embarrassed they were, first, about the serious breach of confidence that occurred in relation to the member for Alexandra and, secondly, the compounding of that problem by the possibility of Opposition members trying to make some sort of issue about it, particularly when they were confident of the way in which the Minister was handling the situation.

I am informed that the response given to this particular senior official when he contacted the Leader of the Opposition to convey just those sentiments was, 'That is all very well for you, but our job is to try and attack the Government on every point at any time, and that is what we will do.' That is typical of the attitude—

Mr Olsen: Rubbish!

The Hon. J.C. BANNON: The Leader knows very well that, in substance, that is what was said.

Mr Olsen: It was not.

The Hon. J.C. BANNON: I would simply say that that typifies the attitude that the Opposition has to affairs of State. Even the very people whom it is purporting to represent are embarrassed by the nonsense of this motion. Let us look at some of the points—

Mr Mathwin: What about the select committee?

The Hon. J.C. BANNON: I am coming to the select committee. Let us look at some of the points which the Leader made. He talked about the select committee and statements made, which he said clearly point to undertakings given. Let me refer to the evidence which the Leader purported to bring in support of this.

The evidence that the Leader sought to deduce was based on the transcript of proceedings of the select committee as well as certain passages from *Hansard*. He began with his 'proof' in relation to the transcript of the committee's proceedings. The first point of proof was that at page 13 the Director of Local Government, who was also Chairman of the Grants Commission, made a statement and that the Minister did not interject. Good Lord, that is certainly very compelling evidence indeed! Apparently the Minister's politeness is going to be used to help censure him. His not interjecting is to be used as evidence of the proposition that was being put. The second piece of evidence that was educed appears at page 200 of the transcript and, in fact, this matter was put before the House yesterday by the member for Light. In no way did it establish the point the member for Light was seeking to make. The crucial words of the Chairman, at paragraph 544 of the minutes of evidence, were as follows:

There is no evidence of that. I would say that where there is a strong council more money would be available.

Mr Saltmarsh, the witness giving evidence, went on to say:

Yes; would not the reverse apply . . .

A discussion then ensued. The Minister was putting a proposition and a very soundly based proposition, one in fact that not only is being supported by him as Minister of Local Government but one that was supported by his predecessor, the Hon. Murray Hill, namely, that, where these amalgamations occur, clearly some recognition must be given to the burdens it might impose, and that where there is a stronger council it could possibly anticipate more funds. So, there is no proof of the Minister's doing anything wrong in that.

Finally, we had the reference to remarks reported in *Hansard*. What were they? They were not the Minister's words, but comments made by the member for Alexandra and the member for Unley. I must admit that in regard to the member for Unley he made a very sound point about the rights of employees being protected. I am not sure why the Leader wasted his time referring to those remarks. None of that proves the point the Leader is seeking to make, because the question is not whether these councils are getting extra funds and whether they should (although they are getting extra funds and they should get them). The question is, how soon, and, to what extent? They are the crucial questions to be addressed, and they should not be distorted in any way by this nonsense that has been educed.

In relation to that matter, let me refer to the policy of the Grants Commission. The policy of the Grants Commission, as stated in its own words, is that:

Changes in grant levels arising from boundary changes will be introduced gradually over a period of three years as the annual financial statements and other data used reflect these changes.

That is the principle on which the Grants Commission is operating, and the principle that is applying in these cases. There is no dispute about what the Minister said or what the overall intentions are in that situation. We are told that a dispute between members of the commission, namely, the Chairman and the other two members, is something not relevant to this issue at all or to Dr McPhail's resignation. On the contrary, it is extremely relevant. In circumstances where the Chairman has felt a particular course of action should be followed, where information about the possibilities of that should be released to councils, and they act accordingly, and his fellow commissioners then say, 'That is not on, that is not the way it should be done', then surely that is relevant indeed. That is the situation, and Dr McPhail in those circumstances quite properly submitted his resignation and quite properly the Minister accepted it. What else would he do? What sort of criticism would he attract if he did not accept the proposition that was put to him by his Chairman?

The matter has all been laid out, fully discussed in this House yesterday and dealt with. The action of officers based on the understanding of the Minister's attitude, we are now told, is crucial; that the officers thought that the Minister might have had certain opinions and they acted on that belief, and, therefore, the Minister is implicated—what absolute nonsense. Whatever the officers thought the Minister might or might not wish (and there is no evidence of anything about that except his general belief that as a council increases its size and responsibility so should its grant increase; and the commission endorses such a view, to occur over a period of time), what is crucial in this regard is not whether that was the Minister's intention, but that the Minister's understanding must have been wrong, because the commission itself makes the decision. It, and not the Minister, is charged with the responsibility of allocating the grants.

That is quite clear. It is clear in the Act and it is clear in the way in which the Grants Commission operates. This has been a very shabby exercise indeed. The House yet again has been distracted on a course of nonsense, chasing up a particular issue that was well disposed of yesterday. The parties concerned are embarrassed by the way in which it is being raised here when work is being done. If there was a genuine productive interest in the Strathalbyn, Mount Barker and Meadows councils' Grants Commission grants, and if the member for Alexandra had come into possession of certain information about that, I would have thought his first destination would be the Minister—knowing full well the constraints imposed on the Minister by the Grants Commission Act. Not a bit of it. He chose to rise in this House and willy-nilly go on under the general principle

espoused by the Leader of the Opposition (not only privately but on television) the other day, that it is the Opposition's job to attack the Government on any point, whenever it can, on whatever issue, in whatever way it likes, and to hell with the interest of South Australians and the particular councils concerned. My Government does not take that attitude. Our Minister is working to ensure this situation is redressed. He has taken prompt and appropriate action to do so. Let us now get on with some important business of the day.

The Hon. B.C. EASTICK (Light): I say at the outset that the Opposition dissociates itself from the reflection cast upon the Chair. It is clear in Standing Orders that it is the Speaker of the day who determines whether a matter is a matter of urgency, not the Premier, who is seeking to cloud an issue which is of major embarrassment to him.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member for Light to resume his seat. I did not hear the Premier suggest that he was usurping my function. I determined that the matter was a matter of urgency. I did not discuss it with the Premier or with any other Minister. I simply declared it to be a matter of urgency.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. B.C. EASTICK: Quite rightly, Mr Speaker, and when you read the transcript tomorrow you will find that the point I have just made to the House, which was not immediately available to you whilst you were reading the newspaper, was in fact made by the Premier. We have heard this afternoon an attempt by the Premier to usurp the role of the former member for Norwood. It will not work; not even in a pair of pink short pants would he be able to rise to the occasion. He would not be within a bull's roar. Here is a situation which is a matter of great moment. It is a matter where a Minister of the Crown (who for the second time in 10 minutes has had to go to the toilet) is unable to—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. B.C. EASTICK: Where is the Minister?

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. B.C. EASTICK: I am not plumbing the depths; I am talking fact. The Premier and some of his colleagues opposite find it difficult to face the fact. Yesterday afternoon in this House there were facts given which were based on the public record. There are a number of other facts which are known to members of that former select committee, to members of staff and to witnesses that have not been alluded to. If the Premier is genuine—he asked the Opposition to be genuine—he will make the opportunity available for a judicial inquiry.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. B.C. EASTICK: Now who is backing off? He will make the opportunity available for a judicial inquiry so that the true facts—

Mr Mayes interjecting:

The Hon. B.C. EASTICK: The member for Unley is not laughing because he, along with the member for Henley Beach and other members, knows full well the true situation and the basis upon which the—

The Hon. J.C. Bannon: You pay for it.

The Hon. B.C. EASTICK: I will pay for it. Is that a threat from the Premier?

Mr Trainer: You will foot the bill for a royal commission?

The Hon. B.C. EASTICK: I do not need to say much more about the importance of a judicial inquiry when we get the clowning we are getting from members opposite at the present moment to cover their embarrassment over what is a very real problem not only to the District Councils of

Meadows, Mount Barker and Strathalbyn but to all other district councils and town councils that might find themselves in an amalgamation process, not only the ones alluded to in this motion but all other councils. It is not insignificant that the annual reports of the Grants Commission contain regular features pointing up the issues relating to amalgamations and the effect they have had or will have in the future in regard to the activities of councils. On page 7 of the 1982 report it is stated that due regard was made to the amalgamations undertaken during that year.

Quite apart from the statement made by the Premier only a minute ago in respect of section 19 of the Act, when he said that action will be taken to alter the adjustment later, he completely misunderstood the situation because he has been advised by others and not by way of direct involvement that the adjustment being referred to is an adjustment downwards, because the arrangement which exists and which is pointed out in the annual reports is that at the time of the amalgamation the amount of money that was due to councils that might have lost territory will remain at at least the level that it was previously, and that gradually over a period of time the benefit that it may have had would diminish.

There is a clear understanding in the mind of every member of the select committee that the only way in which the amalgamation associated with this motion was going to be effective was if there was a clear and unavoidable (and I use the term unavoidable) guarantee of the jobs of a large number of people who were going to be surplus to the needs of Meadows, and possibly of Mount Barker and Strathalbyn. To overcome that problem it was quite necessary to have a situation whereby within the terms of the guarantee of the select committee no job would be lost and attrition, which was somewhere in the future and would eventually assist these councils in overcoming the difficulties, would be allowed to flow. That assistance would come from the assistance which had previously been available from the Grants Commission and which could genuinely be expected on this occasion.

The answer to a question yesterday that the Minister gave not in a totally effective and satisfactory manner, as he would suggest, but in a manner which the Opposition and the people in local government and other people who observe these things saw as being insufficient and ineffective, could be augmented, I am sure, if the Minister would look at his diary and have due regard to dates other than those to which he alluded.

He came to this House yesterday and referred to 27 July as the date on which he was made aware of what was in train. He alluded to 10 August as the date on which he was offered a resignation by Dr McPhail, a person who is highly qualified and highly regarded in the local government area, and whose demise in this manner will live in the Minister of Local Government's memory for a long time, almost indelibly, or more indelibly than did the demise of Mr Jenkins from the Elizabeth council some two years ago. When this Minister, whether in his involvement in this House or elsewhere, makes a mess of things, he looks around for a scapegoat, and it was not a throw-away term that I used yesterday when I referred to Dr McPhail as being a sacrificial lamb; it was a clear indication of the way members on this side feel and how local government generally feels. We believe that he was made a sacrificial lamb as Mr Jenkins was made a sacrificial lamb on an earlier occasion.

The Minister might mutter and go on as much as he likes, but he knows it is the truth, and the people who will judge him know that it is the truth. The Minister indicated that 17 August was the day on which he had accepted the resignation. However, he did not see fit, within the terms of his responsibility, to notify the fact that there had been a resignation so that the matter could be gazetted at the

first available opportunity. Perhaps it has been done today. It will be interesting to see whether it is in the *Government Gazette* of 24 August, because it certainly was not in the *Government Gazette* of 18 August which was the first available opportunity. The Minister might also like to go back and look at his diary to refresh his memory on certain aspects of the matter by seeing what discussions he had on 2 June. There will be other dates that I am sure the Minister would be able to use in this regard.

I recognise the importance of these issues and the advice and the evidence which is available from people who do not have the right to stand up in this place, nor do they have the right to stand up publicly outside to protect themselves. An opportunity to do so will be available to them only by virtue of a judicial inquiry, as I offered to the Premier. If he is genuine, if his Government is genuine, quite clearly there is a need to put this matter at rest once and for always, and it will not be put to rest by the Premier's seeking to laugh it off, by the Premier's seeking to suggest that this is not a matter of great import to those people who unfortunately are involved in it.

It is a matter of tremendous mental stress to the people associated with the Mount Barker, Strathalbyn and Meadows councils who, by the requirements of the Local Government Act, must determine a rate before 31 August, which is Wednesday of next week, only six days away. The basis on which they can make that effective rate determination is how they are going to be able to pay for the number of people who now appear on their worksheets but who are there not because of their desire but because of the direction of the members of the select committee of this House and by the confirmation given to that recommendation by this Chamber and another Chamber. It is not a matter of their own doing; it is a matter put upon them by both Houses of this Parliament in the proper democratic way provided in the Local Government Act.

I refer again to the early comment made by the Premier, who sought to pull a red herring across the trail of this issue. No-one would deny that the work that he was undertaking in the preparation of a document for presentation to the Commonwealth was important, but I ask the Premier what is more important, when Parliament is sitting, than his commitment and the commitment of the members who sit behind him than to stand here, to listen to the facts and to act responsibly on them. I say clearly that the Premier will continue to adopt the attitude that he revealed to this House in his contribution this afternoon at his peril and at the peril of his Government. He has an incompetent Minister who is getting his Government into a great deal of difficulty because of that incompetence.

One has only to ask any local government authority that question, one only has to ask those who attended the Local Government Association annual general meeting in the Festival Theatre, where it was stated on the notice calling that meeting that the meeting would be opened by the Minister of Local Government and that there was a 20-minute time-slot for that purpose. The Minister, 52 minutes later, was still on his feet trying to crack awkward jokes, making a proper hash of things, and causing much concern to members of local government who take their job responsibly, even if the Government does not.

The SPEAKER: Are there any further speakers? If not, I call on the honourable Minister of Local Government.

The Hon. T.H. HEMMINGS (Minister of Local Government): I would never have thought that the member for Light would descend to the kind of gutter politics usually associated with other members of the Opposition, but he has obviously been instructed to engage in that type of debate in an effort to destroy this Government and to

destroy me as Minister. This morning, my daughter, who is more astute than some members opposite, said, 'Congratulations, Dad.' I said, 'Why?' She replied, 'The Opposition is asking for your resignation. You have joined the club.' That is all members opposite are doing: asking Ministers to resign, for no reason whatsoever.

The Opposition's motion, in effect, states that I must go to the Grants Commission and say that the allocation it has made to Mount Barker, Strathalbyn, and Meadows must be changed. However, the Opposition knows that I just cannot do that. Before answering some of the remarks of the Opposition members, I will read out what are my responsibilities under the Local Government Grants Commission Act. Although the Premier explained those responsibilities, and even though I explained the true situation yesterday, members opposite are still trying to drum up something this afternoon.

An honourable member: You don't know what the truth means.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I insist that the Minister be given the opportunity to answer some of the serious allegations made against him and, I might add, some of the low comments made about him. I have let the debate go.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! If any honourable member wishes to take a point of order, that is up to that honourable member. This afternoon there have been things said that I would normally have ruled out of order but, having ruled the motion a matter of urgency, I allowed the debate to flow. Now it will cut both ways.

The Hon. T.H. HEMMINGS: Section 18 (5) of the South Australian Local Government Grants Commission Act provides:

(5) The commission shall forthwith after completing its recommendations forward them to the Minister.

Section 19 provides:

19. (1) On receipt of the recommendations referred to in subsection (5) of section 18 of this Act, the Minister may—

(a) approve the recommendations;

or

(b) refer those recommendations back to the commission with a request to the commission to consider such matters and take such other steps as are specified in the direction either in relation to the whole or any part of the recommendations.

(2) A request under paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of this section shall contain a statement of the reasons for the request.

(3) The commission shall after considering the request under paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of this section reconsider its recommendations in the light of that request and make such amendments, if any, . . .

(4) The commission shall thereupon resubmit its recommendations with or without amendment to the Minister and the Minister shall thereupon approve those recommendations.

That is the situation in which I am placed as Minister. The Opposition has tried, unsuccessfully, to say that, because of evidence given to a select committee, my Director-General, who was also Chairman of the Grants Commission, went to the councils and, under my orders, offered them substantial increases. The Opposition must now wear the blame for destroying a senior public servant. In my statement—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! Order! One of the clear claims made against the Minister at one point of the debate was that he had destroyed a senior public servant, and he must have the opportunity to rebut that claim.

The Hon. T.H. HEMMINGS: I would like the Opposition to listen very carefully. In my statement yesterday, I spoke about the resignation of Dr McPhail as Chairman of the Grants Commission. When preparing that statement, I deliberately instructed my staff to make clear that Dr McPhail had paid the price by resigning. He offered his resignation and I accepted it reluctantly. The Opposition,

not I, must assume the responsibility for this. I said yesterday that Dr McPhail had accepted responsibility for the release of certain figures. Dr McPhail authorised the release of those figures to those councils, without my knowledge and without the knowledge of the Grants Commission. The matter is now out in the open. Everyone now knows, and there was I yesterday trying to protect my Director-General, whereas Opposition members are now saying that he was acting under my orders. Indeed, members opposite have destroyed the Director-General of my department.

The whole point of the urgency motion was clearly explained yesterday in my statement to the House: it was a case of three councils being misled. On the point taken by the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Light (that, as a result of amalgamation, certain councils should receive additional money), the Premier in his remarks made the point that those councils faced with additional costs as a result of the amalgamation should receive extra money. However, they were offered misleading advice when they were told that they would receive more than they actually got from the Grants Commission. How much have they received? The Opposition does not know; indeed, members opposite would not have a clue as to the amount. The average increase in the allocation this year to local government is about 8 per cent. Mount Barker will receive an increase of 17 per cent, Strathalbyn 17.6 per cent and Meadows 10 per cent.

The Hon. W.E. Chapman: Far short of your commitment.

The Hon. T.H. HEMMINGS: The member for Alexandra must be nervous at the moment, because I understand that he was telephoning senior members of Strathalbyn council last night to try to find out exactly what he had said. But they have been receiving increases. I agree that they are in no way the increases which they were led to believe would be the case. However, my department is working on trying to give them additional money. All I say to the Opposition is to let me get on with the job of finding out how we can raise that additional money, and we will give it to them.

But, as the Premier said, the Leader of the Opposition, when telephoned by a senior member of the Strathalbyn council and told, 'For goodness sake, just let the Minister stand up and make his Ministerial statement, and then let him get on with the job of providing additional finance,' said, 'We are not worried about people. We are worried about politics and we will seize on every initiative—'

The SPEAKER: Order! It is totally out of order for there to be a separate debate on the front benches between the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader. That will cease. The honourable Minister of Local Government.

The Hon. T.H. HEMMINGS: Thank you, Sir. The Leader said, 'We will seize on every initiative we can to try to discredit this Government.' The Leader of the Opposition said that to a senior member of one of the councils. Are members of the Opposition really worried about individual people in those councils? They are not worried whatsoever. All members opposite are trying to do is discredit this Government and me as Minister. The point was made by the member for Light that I am looked at by members of local government generally as an incompetent Minister. Fair enough, that is the view of the member for Light, but the person who telephoned me and complained about the member for Alexandra and the Leader of the Opposition said that he was deeply embarrassed about the position in which I was being placed and that he knew I was trying to help them out of the situation. That is the information I am receiving from local government.

We are trying to rectify the situation. The Opposition, because the Chairman of the Grants Commission has resigned (and he was also Director of my department), is

trying to cloud the issue and say that I demanded his resignation—that he is the sacrificial lamb. Members opposite know that that is not true, this side knows that it is not true, local government knows that it is not true, and the media know, that it is not true.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. T.H. HEMMINGS: Opposition members may laugh. All I can say is that, despite the hampering of the Opposition, I will still be attempting to find additional funds for Mount Barker, Strathalbyn and Meadows. I will be trying to find ways in which I can alleviate the situation, and it will be to this Government's benefit when we can do so.

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): The Premier's defence is one of the worst I have heard for a long time. His proposition to this House is that, because he is in conference (because his Federal colleagues could not keep their word and put on a wine tax), we are supposed to telephone him and say, 'Listen, John, old pal, is it convenient for us to have an urgency motion today?' How absurd can the Premier get! This is a matter of great importance to the people of this State, and particularly to those three councils. As to the Minister who has just sat down, I have said that I have heard some poor defences but I do not think I have heard a poorer defence in this House.

It is not the worst speech I have heard the Minister make, because it was my misfortune to be at the same opening as that attended by the member for Light. I do not often get embarrassed when political foes make fools of themselves but, as a member of Parliament, I tried to disappear into my seat, because it was so bad. This Minister is incompetent. Unfortunately, the Premier is not in a situation where he can choose his men: he is lumbered with them, and he is lumbered with this Minister. It must be perfectly obvious to the Minister's Caucus mates that he is hopeless and doing their cause an enormous amount of damage. Here we have a case in point. The Minister unloaded his officers. That is the ultimate cowardice for a Minister—not to take responsibility—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: We are on a sensitive nerve here. The ultimate cowardice for a Minister is not to take responsibility for his department, and to unload it on to his officers. That is quite foreign to Ministerial responsibility in the Westminster system, but that is precisely what this gutless Minister did, and he did it here on Tuesday.

Here is the Minister who chaired a select committee. We have heard extracts of that select committee evidence read to the House yesterday, and even blind Freddy would understand what that select committee was on about. That select committee evidence was quite clear—these councils were to be compensated. Was the Minister asleep? Is his memory that short? We know that there is a chronic disability in the form of short memories. But the Minister sat through the select committee hearings, he heard the evidence, it was recited again yesterday in this House, and even blind Freddy would understand that those councils were to be compensated. Here is the Minister on Tuesday unloading his senior officer. Was the Minister asleep during the select committee hearings?

The member for Light quoted him: the Minister must have woken up on occasions and then dropped off when he got the answer, because it is perfectly clear that those councils were to be compensated because they had to take on extra staff. The Minister is a union man. He knows that. The one time the Labor Party does wake up is when a union matter is involved. The whole argument was about these

extra staff who had to be transferred to Mount Barker and Strathalbyn and who had to be paid. The councils want to know how they are going to be paid. The whole tenor of the select committee hearings was that they would get extra money to pay them. Here we had a disgraceful situation on Tuesday of this week when the Minister got up and unloaded his senior officer to save the Minister's own skin—the ultimate political cowardice. So much for the Minister's argument.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. E.R. GOLDSWORTHY: I reckon that he probably broke his arm. We know the way they operate. They had trouble with one of their men in the Upper House. He would not resign because his time was up, so instead of breaking his arm they expelled him. I would not be surprised if Dr McPhail has a sore arm. What about the absurdity that we forced his resignation? He resigned two weeks ago, before we raised the matter in the House this week. Here is this dopey Minister getting up in this place saying that the Opposition forced his resignation. By what convoluted mental process does he come to that conclusion? If ever we needed proof of his incompetence, we have had it here today.

I believe that these councils are being pressured by the Minister. Why is there this business about the possibility of extra money (underlined) in the Ministerial statement? They are being pressured to shut up to save the Minister embarrassment by saying that they may get some money. He has had plenty of time to decide whether they will compensate these councils. Dr McPhail offered his resignation three weeks ago, so the Minister says, and they have not made up their minds whether they can keep the promises which he made during the select committee. I believe that the Minister is putting pressure on again to save his own rotten little skin in this dirty grubby exercise for which this Government is becoming known.

The SPEAKER: Order! There being no other speakers, I will proceed with the other business of the day.

SENIOR SECONDARY ASSESSMENT BOARD OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE ERADICATION FUND ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT: MEMBER'S COMMENTS

The Hon. D.J. HOPGOOD (Minister for Environment and Planning): I seek leave to make a statement.
Leave granted.

The Hon. D.J. HOPGOOD: I thank the House for its indulgence. On 18 August the member for Alexandra was grossly abusive in relation to one of my public servants, and I believe that it is necessary that I set the matter straight.

The Hon. E.R. Goldsworthy: Is this a Ministerial statement?

The Hon. D.J. HOPGOOD: Yes.

The Hon. E.R. Goldsworthy: Well, then, let's have a copy of it.

The Hon. D.J. HOPGOOD: It is off the cuff.

The Hon. E.R. Goldsworthy: Well—

The SPEAKER: Order! Leave has been granted. The honourable Minister for Environment and Planning.

The Hon. D.J. HOPGOOD: The honourable member also challenged me to make certain information available to the House, which I am quite happy to do, of course, in order to clear this public servant's name. I am quite happy: it is part of the parlance of this place that, from time to time, criticism should be levelled against the Government in relation to general matters of administration. However, I believe that, to use the intemperate language that was used by the honourable member about this particular individual is inexcusable.

An honourable member: What was it?

The Hon. D.J. HOPGOOD: I thank the honourable member for the interjection, because I am quite happy—

The SPEAKER: I hope that the Minister will not be happy to reply to it, because I will not be happy.

The Hon. D.J. HOPGOOD: Thank you, Mr Speaker. However, it is my intention to name the public servant, because I believe that that public servant was named quite abusively by the honourable member. The honourable member referred to Mr Jack Richards (a senior public servant in my department) as follows:

Everyone knows Blocker Black Jack from the Lands Department: he blocks everything coming to his notice.

In relation to a particular authority, the honourable member said:

... Black Jack has withdrawn the authority.

That is extremely intemperate language to use, particularly about a public servant who is not in a position to defend himself in this place. The context of this matter relates to an application for a land grant in respect of perpetual lease 9364 lodged by one of the honourable member's constituents. I do not believe that the honourable member named this constituent in his remarks, so I will not name the constituent, either. Another perpetual lease is also subject to an application for a land grant. Since there are no problems associated with that application, I do not think that it is necessary to further refer to it.

This gentleman, having been named in an application on 21 October 1982 for consent to transfer the perpetual lease, prior to the actual transfer occurring applied to the former Minister of Lands (his colleague the member for Chaffey) to surrender for a land grant. The member for Chaffey, as Minister, approved the transfer of the perpetual lease the day before the State election, it would appear. That is all right: there was nothing unusual about that. However, the application for the land grant could then proceed, of course. The application came to Mr Richards' notice on 16 November, and he endorsed the minute as follows:

No objection to grant, conditionally upon all sections being amalgamated into the one section—

the area being in a series of sections. That position has been consistently held by Mr Richards throughout and is now held by the Director-General and me. The matter then went to the Lands Titles Office for registration and to the Valuer-General, and there a good deal of delay occurred: first, because it coincided with the Christmas period; and, secondly, because it was difficult to obtain a valuation because of the lack of sales of similar parcels of land which would enable a proper evaluation to be struck.

The valuation was finally struck at a particular figure (which I do not think is necessary to reveal to the House because it is not pertinent to the issue, although the information is available) in March of this year. The application

came to me for permission to freehold on 11 April. I approved that application. What had not been picked up in the meantime, of course, was Mr Richards' recommendation that, in fact, the parcels of land should be amalgamated into one before the freehold should proceed.

A letter was written to Mr Forster on 14 April, three days after my approval (things move pretty quickly in my own office), advising of the approvals to freehold and giving him three months in which to accept or refuse the offer. Of course, in the meantime the matter got back to Mr Richards' notice, who drew attention to his memorandum of 16 November which had been ignored or overlooked in the subsequent processing of the application. Mr Richards discussed this matter with the Registrar of Lands' Office, who considered that the offers could be withdrawn pending an amended offer, provided the original offer had not been accepted prior to the withdrawal. He also discussed it with the Acting Area Manager of the Department for Environment and Planning, who confirmed that it would be undesirable to have 16 small allotments suburban to the town of Para (which is the area we are discussing). The matter was then further referred to the Director-General of Lands, and Mr Richards minutes that the Director-General was in complete agreement and had no objections to the offer being withdrawn.

Mr Richards wrote to the applicant on 9 June, and that is where we come to the remarks made by the honourable member in *Hansard*, because he picks up the content of that letter and accuses Mr Richards of blocking the application. Following the posting of that letter, Mr Richards set in train discussions with the Valuer-General so that an amended valuation could be struck in receipt of the amalgamated parcel of land. On 20 June a signed and witnessed acceptance of the original offer to freehold was received by the applicant. The applicant has subsequently indicated that he did not receive the letter sent by the Department of Lands and that, in those circumstances, he believes that the only valid offer he ever received was the first, and that the subsequent correspondence withdrawing the offer is null and void.

It was at about this time (7 July) that the honourable member became involved and telephoned the Registrar of Lands' Office. He also telephoned the Director-General and subsequently brought Mr Forster to see me. In the circumstances (and I am now drastically precisising the order of events) of the matters placed before me by the honourable member and also by advice from my department as to the undesirability of the form of the original offer, I decided that the matter should be referred to the Government's legal advisers (the Crown Law Office) so that a proper opinion could be established, and that matter is pending.

I rise to my feet purely to make the point that, although there have obviously been delays in this matter, and although obviously Mr Richards' original recommendation that the amalgamation of the parcels of land should occur prior to offer should not have been missed, nonetheless I do not see that in any way Mr Richards has acted as a blocker in this matter or acted improperly.

I do not believe that he has acted contrary to the interests of the proper administration of the Lands Department in South Australia. Certainly he has done nothing which would warrant the sort of abuse that the honourable member has heaped upon him. The honourable member could have made the point that there has been an unfortunate and undue delay in this matter, possibly to the detriment of his constituent, without resorting to that sort of tactic.

The honourable member was at it again in regard to comments published in the *Victor Harbor Times* of Wednesday 24 August wherein he referred to red tape threatening local development. The honourable member talked about

the Planning Act, although as the Planning Act was introduced by the former Liberal Government, he cannot criticise that too obviously. He claimed that the blame lies with the public servants, who are putting into disrepute the Department of Environment and Planning. They are busybodies, he claimed, who cannot see the wood for the trees. The honourable member went on to say that environmentalists had succeeded in infiltrating most Government departments in South Australia.

He further stated that it was becoming fashionable within the Department of Environment and Planning to delay and disrupt the progress of development. It was reported that, 'Mr Chapman suggested a massive clean-up within the Public Service.' In raising this matter, all I ask is that in regard to debate in this House it should be in relation to people who are ultimately responsible for the administration of affairs, and in this case both of my departments are involved. By all means let the member criticise me; let him ring me up, let him bring deputations to see me, as he properly did in this instance, but let us not have these sorts of snide remarks about public servants in general and about senior and respected public servants, as was the case in this instance.

LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT BILL

The Hon. J.C. BANNON (Premier and Treasurer) obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Licensing Act, 1967. Read a first time.

The Hon. J.C. BANNON: I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Members will recall that, in announcing the 1982-83 results to the House a short while ago, I said that, because of the serious Budget situation confronting the Government, we had no alternative but to implement a number of taxation measures. I mentioned five of them briefly. This Bill relates to one of those measures.

Liquor licences issued by the Licensing Court relate to a licence year which runs from 1 April to 31 March and attracts a fee based on the gross value of purchases of liquor in the preceding financial year. Most liquor licences have currently been renewed and will run until the end of March 1984. It is proposed that licences renewed thereafter be based on 12 per cent of gross value of purchases in the preceding financial year (in the first instance, 1982-83). The full-year revenue gain of this measure should be of the order of \$7 000 000 but, because the increased rate will not become payable until April 1984, the revenue gain in 1983-84 is estimated to be around \$2 000 000.

A technical aspect of the legislation in this area relates to the licence fee based on liquor sales by wholesalers, vignerons, etc., to unlicensed persons. This fee has traditionally been based on 80 per cent of the 'standard rate' (that is, the rate fixed for wholesale purchase by retailers) applied to such sales. In order to maintain that relatively, the current rate of 7.2 per cent applying to such sales would need to be increased to 9.6 per cent. The fee with respect to the value of sales of low-alcohol liquor will remain at the lower rate of 2 per cent.

The impact of these measures on prices of alcoholic drinks should not be felt until early 1984. At that time, the price of a bottle of beer could be expected to rise by around 3 cents, while bottles of spirits could rise by 20 to 30 cents, depending on quality.

Clause 1 is formal. Clause 2 provides for the amendments to come into effect on a day to be fixed by proclamation. Clause 3 amends section 37 of the principal Act. The percentage licence fee payable in respect of liquor generally is raised from 9 per cent to 12 per cent. The reduced fee

payable by holders of wholesale storekeeper's licences, brewer's Australian ale licences, distiller's storekeeper's licences and vigneron's licences is raised from 7.2 per cent to 9.6 per cent.

Mr OLSEN secured the adjournment of the debate.

STAMP DUTIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL

The Hon. J.C. BANNON (Premier and Treasurer) obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Stamp Duties Act, 1923. Read a first time.

The Hon. J.C. BANNON: I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Members will recall that, in announcing the 1982-83 results to the House a short while ago, I said that, because of the serious Budget situation confronting the Government, the Government had no alternative but to implement a number of taxation measures. I mentioned five of them briefly. This Bill relates to one of those measures.

The Stamp Duties Act currently imposes duty on annual licences taken out by persons or companies carrying on insurance business in South Australia. The annual licences are normally issued and become dutiable every January and the duty is based on a specified percentage of insurance premiums received in the immediately preceding calendar year. With respect to all insurance premiums (other than for third party motor vehicle insurance or life insurance), the current rate is 6 per cent.

Although all other States levy some form of duty on general insurance, the bases vary from State to State and straightforward comparisons with most States are difficult to make. The most recent report of the Grants Commission indicated that South Australia's taxing effort, relative to the other States, was below average in this area. It is proposed that the current duty on annual licences of 6 per cent be raised to 8 per cent. On annual household insurance policies currently costing \$100 this measure would add about \$1.90; and for those costing \$150 this measure would add about \$2.80. This Bill should provide a full year gain of around \$6 000 000 to Consolidated Revenue and this amount should be achievable in 1983-84, with all the duty falling due in January 1984. Clauses 1 and 2 are formal. Clause 3 provides that the percentage fee payable upon turnover for an annual licence relating to insurance business is to be increased from 6 per cent to 8 per cent. This amendment does not affect the percentage fee payable in respect of life insurance policies or in respect of third party motor vehicle policies.

Mr OLSEN secured the adjournment of the debate.

At 3.47 p.m. the bells having been rung:

The SPEAKER: Call on the business of the day.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Adjourned debate on motion for adoption.
(Continued from 24 August. Page 496.)

Mr MEIER (Goyder): It has come to the attention of this House that a former member, Mr Harold King, O.B.E., has passed on. I, too, extend my sympathy to his family and friends. From what I have heard today it is obvious that he was a very respected member of this House. Last evening I was addressing myself primarily to matters concerning the rural sector. I referred in the first instance to the drought

situation that had occurred and to the way the rural sector had suffered as a result of that. Unfortunately, when those in the rural sector seemed to be coming out of that depression, the State and Federal Governments were imposing extra taxes. Although they apply to everyone throughout the State, nevertheless, those in the rural sector probably suffered more than the average person. The rural sector suffered in the first place because it is so dependent on transport and therefore on the price of petrol. Petrol has now reached 50c a litre, in other words \$2.25 a gallon.

Mr Mathwin: It is now a rich man's pastime.

Mr MEIER: As the member for Glenelg states, it is a rich man's pastime to drive a vehicle. It is a shame when the poor man is being hit harder and harder all the time by taxes.

Mr Mathwin: In that case they shouldn't have increased them.

Mr MEIER: Promises made in this House do not seem to mean very much. I referred to the U.F. & S. annual general conference, how the Federal Government has also broken promises, and how reference was made to the income equalisation deposit scheme. This scheme allowed farmers to overcome the problems in a drought situation, which is now not available to them. I also referred to communications being affected in country areas because of the Telecom dispute in respect of satellites. I hope that organisation will not stand in the way of automatic exchanges going ahead in isolated areas.

I refer now to an article in today's *Stock Journal* which has come out since I spoke last evening headlined, 'Hawke's farm promises go in Budget'. It is clear in the Federal Budget that the farmers and rural producers are affected, as we are all well aware. However, I bring it to the attention of the House. The *Stock Journal* refers to 'pre-election backdowns' which I thought was very courteous of it instead of saying 'broken promises'. That journal states:

The pre-election backdowns included promises on stepped-up funds for wool promotion and a full-scale start to a national soil conservation programme.

In real terms the \$28 000 000 promised for wool promotion is now only \$20 000 000. The promised \$4 000 000 for the soil conservation programme is now only \$1 000 000. That again supports the arguments I put forward last evening. Last night I also dealt with the water problem specifically at Moorowie. It was interesting to note in the *Country Times* released in Adelaide today, headlined, 'S.Y.P. landholders seek public meeting with Minister', a report as follows:

Landholders in the hundreds of Moorowie and Minlacowie on Southern Yorke Peninsula have invited the Minister of Water Resources (Hon. J.W. Slater) to attend a public meeting to discuss provision of reticulated water in the area.

These people are very concerned about their future, as I mentioned last night. It concerns not only Moorowie but the Watervale district and many other areas in the Adelaide Plains, and I mentioned specifically the Bolivar effluent scheme. I hope the Government might look at ways of raising money so that rural areas can be promoted, because so much industry is disappearing from this State. I believe the one industry that will keep going is the rural industry, but it needs an injection of funds.

I referred to trees in the rural environment and to the symposium held at the Roseworthy Agricultural College earlier this year. I stated that although there had been clearance controls introduced for natural vegetation in an attempt to preserve part of our environment, it came at a time when unemployment was high and those controls simply promoted more unemployment. I understand the purpose of the controls but the hardship caused is too great for the economic situation at this present time. It is much more important that we look at reforestation generally through-

out the State, especially as it is down to 5 per cent of the natural wooded area in the agricultural lands. There is no doubt that trees have an important part to play in the rural environment, first, with respect to soil water. Without trees there is a tendency for layers of salt to develop in the subsoil which will in turn lead to greater salinity in creeks, salting up of lagoons and salting up of top soil. People who have been into rural areas will have seen many examples of where areas of land have become useless because of the salt build-up. Trees will help to re-establish land and cut down on that undesirable effect. Secondly, soil nutrients: the grasslands do little to catch the soil nutrients. They are washed down into the soil. With added trees in rural areas those nutrients can be caught by the roots and returned to the top soil through the leaves eventually falling on to the ground.

There have been devastating floods this year, and I am not saying that massive reforestation would have eliminated the floods altogether, but it would have cut them down to some extent and prevented some of the soil erosion that is so widespread in South Australia. Wind speed is certainly limited with respect to rows of trees, and the dust bowls we have heard so much about this year due to drought conditions in our northern parts could be minimised with a massive reforestation programme. Likewise, it seems that the New England die-back which has occurred in much of Southern Australia due to the scarab beetle could be controlled if trees were grown in clumps rather than having individual trees, which are so evident in much of our rural environment. For these reasons I can only fully support some reforestation in our country areas.

It is pleasing to have heard about a group within the area of Adelaide that is endeavouring to cultivate tree seedlings for the specific purpose of allowing farmers and other rural producers to buy them at a very low cost to plant on their properties. I hope we will hear more about that in the future. It is also pleasing to see this liaison between city and country where often it is hard to break down barriers. This propagation of trees could be one way of developing a fairly close relationship between the rural and urban areas. I believe that the promotion of the rural areas in this State is very important. Neglect will lead to more decay; positive attention will restore confidence to the rural areas, and to South Australia generally.

Mr PETERSON (Semaphore): I rise to support the motion. I will not take much time as I understand the House is running out of time. A matter has come to my notice over the past few years which I would like to raise, concerning not only my electorate but Australia generally, and that is the ageing of the population and the strain being placed on the social welfare system and the community generally. Looking at the figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics I believe that there is a fairly obvious progression of ages through the years. The *Advertiser* of 10 August headlined, 'Social welfare explosion to confront South Australia', reports as follows:

Australia is on the verge of an explosion of need for social welfare care in which South Australia would suffer more than other States.

Further down it states:

... about 9.75 per cent of the Australian population was aged 65 or over. In the States, the proportion of people aged 65 or over ranged from 8.7 per cent in Western Australia to 10.5 per cent in South Australia... However, the Australian Bureau of Statistics was predicting that by the year 2021 the elderly population in South Australia will rise to 20.2 per cent with the national average at 15.8 per cent.

With that as a base for my inquiries I looked for some information that related more specifically to my district. I was able to find a copy of a report entitled, 'An Exploratory Report on the Ageing Population of the Western Region of

Adelaide', by Mike Duigan, who was then the regional secretary. I would like to compliment him on the report which provides much relevant information about the western region of Adelaide.

The report covers the areas of Woodville, Thebarton, Henley and Grange, Hindmarsh, Port Adelaide, Glenelg and West Torrens. The report relates specifically to those areas and I think all members who represent those areas should get a copy of this report and read it carefully. It shows that the number of aged people living in those areas is increasing and it highlights the problems that are facing the people who provide welfare services. The unemployed, young people and elderly people all face problems, but there is a significant difference relating to the problems. If you are young, you will get older and so hopefully opportunities will increase. If you are unemployed there is always a possibility of obtaining employment. However, once you are retired and old there is no incentive; you just have to find a way to survive. It probably sounds simplistic but it is true. As this group of people in our society becomes larger so its problems will become more serious. In a paper given to the Uniting Church Conference in 1981 by G. Hugo, he said:

Over the past few years in South Australia, each year has seen approximately 11 500 people celebrate their 60th birthday and 7 500 people over 60 died. This represents an overall net gain of 4 000 persons each year to the older population of this State.

There is another fairly clear expression of the same figures given by Adam Graycar when he uses a comparison between 1 July 1980 and 30 June 1981. He said that during that time 305 people turned 65 every day and 200 died every day for a net gain of 105 people every day. In relation specifically to the western region and the council areas included in that region he gives the comparison of the people over 65 on a yearly basis as being: in 1954, there were 15 638 persons over 65; in 1971 there were 22 111; in 1981 there were 28 961; and the estimated for 1991 is 33 572. There has been an average growth rate in the elderly population of the western suburbs of nearly 5 per cent for the past 34 years compared with an average growth in the population of the State of about 3 per cent. Another feature of the western suburbs is that the population seemed to have peaked around 1971 and, in fact, the population seems to have declined, but the proportion of elderly citizens is increasing all the time.

Another significant feature of the aged groups in the western region is that the ages tend to converge; the group below 14 decreases while the group over 65 increases. It is significant that the graph contained in the report shows that in most of the areas there is a break-even point. Woodville is the only area where this does not occur; it seems to have beaten that convergence of age groups and the two age groups do not converge at all. In Thebarton it is expected that in 1988 the number of under 14-year-olds will be numerically less than the over 65s. The same situation in Henley Beach and Grange will be reached in about 1989. In Hindmarsh it is expected to be in about 1983 or 1984. In the council area of Port Adelaide it is expected to be in about 1988 and in West Torrens the crossover point is expected to be 1984. However, in the Glenelg area the crossover point was reached in 1968. The population in all those areas is getting older. In relation to the demand made upon the social welfare system the report states:

The elderly are largely supported through Government expenditure and the size of the tax base becomes important.

It also makes the observation that:

It is possible to observe in the western region the tax base appears to be shrinking whilst the obligation to provide services is increasing.

The increasing demands upon the State purse and the need to cater for elderly people is reflected in the rate support

given to councils for pensioner concessions (not necessarily aged pensioners, but mainly the aged). In 1982-83 the Port Adelaide council received \$353 435 to compensate for rate relief to pensioners. Henley and Grange received \$130 442; Woodville received \$662 131 and the total rate relief from the State to the councils for pensioner rebates in 1982-83 was \$7 472 886.

The report of the Department of Community Welfare for 1981-82 illustrates the concessions that were made by that department. I would like to thank the officers of the Department for Community Welfare for the assistance given in arriving at these figures. In 1981-82 there were 74 250 pensioners and 13 170 other people receiving help with their council and water rates, which was a 6 per cent increase on the numbers in the previous year when 69 790 pensioners received assistance. The cost of even maintaining this section within the Department of Community Welfare was nearly \$15 000 000. That is the cost involved in the provision of these services. In the emergency financial assistance area 7 296 pensioners received assistance and in the central western area 1 590 pensioners received assistance. In the central western region, the aged in the community received grants totalling \$28 057 and the community welfare grants throughout the State totalled \$121 820.

I am happy to see that a grant has been made to the Flinders University to enable research to be conducted on the problems of social isolation and community services for the aged. As it is stated that the grant has been made for the financial year 1982-83, I assume that research will be concluded by the end of this year and I shall be happy to read the report published as a result of that research when it is completed.

In respect of departmental grants and concessions, aged pensioners take a major part (38.4 per cent or \$18 600 000). There are but few options in this area. The life expectancy for men in this State is 70.6 years, whereas for women it is 77 years. Another significant factor is that the group of women over 70 years of age in the western suburbs in 1991 will represent the biggest single age sex category, so problems must arise in future in respect of the high cost of welfare for this group. Although not denigrating the aged, I point out that the problem will continue to grow and it must be approached positively. An exploratory report on 'The Ageing of the Population in the Western Region of Adelaide' has the following conclusion:

The western region as one of the older established residential areas of Adelaide will bear a substantial portion of the impact of an ageing population. Not only will it have to adapt to a substantial number of people being over 60 (and the increased dependency that implies on State funds *via* the pensioner rate rebate scheme) but also to the fact that there are less and less replacements at the younger end of the age pyramid. This will lead to an awareness of the need to create policies for the aged as well as programmes to attract a new population to the region in order to maintain a viable social and economic mix of people and activities.

I fully support that statement. On the other side of the equation, we must consider the difficulties that will be created for councils in the district. In this respect I refer especially to the annual cost of the provision of services, and I believe that this problem should be investigated at Commonwealth, State and local government levels.

I turn now to an economic problem that is causing considerable concern in my district. Imperial Chemical Industries of Australia and New Zealand produces soda ash at its Osborne plant, most of its product going to A.C.I. International, which produces bottles, packaging materials, and other glass products. Now, soda ash is being imported and recently a 20 000-tonne load was brought in to Victoria from overseas. About 600 people are employed by I.C.I. in South Australia, most of them in my district, and they are worried because there does not seem to be any action being

taken to solve the problem which has been present for some time because of these imports. As I.C.I. is a major customer of the Electricity Trust, a major user of our railways, and a firm in which the Department of Marine and Harbors has a strong interest, I ask the Government to investigate this matter in an effort to enable I.C.I. to continue to provide employment opportunities in this State.

Another large industrial concern in my district is Adelaide Brighton Cement Holdings Limited, concerning which the following report appeared in the *Advertiser* on Friday July 29:

A contraction of the Californian market, compounded in the second half by a provisional anti-dumping order against Australian and Japanese cement, has resulted in suspension of shipments.

So, it seems that what is good for the American producer is not so good for the Australian producer. I ask the Government to consider this matter, too, in the interests of the people of South Australia.

The Hon. G.J. CRAFTER (Minister of Community Welfare): I move:

That the time for moving the adjournment of the House be extended beyond 5 p.m.

Motion carried.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN (Alexandra): I support the motion. On this occasion I extend sympathy to the widow and family of the late John Coumbe. Reference to his passing has been made by several previous speakers in this debate, and I share the views expressed by them as to Mr Coumbe's contribution to this Parliament and to the community at large. Not only was he a Liberal colleague of ours in this place: in his retirement he continued to apply himself vigorously in the interests of the community. Mr Coumbe was a responsible and reliable member of the Liberal Party who applied himself in this place with all the vigour he could muster on behalf of his constituents. As a member, he performed extremely well and commanded respect not only from his constituents and members of the community at large but also from members on both sides of the House.

I also express sympathy to members of the family and colleagues of the late Sir Charles Bright, who has passed away since last session's Address in Reply debate. I did not know the honourable gentleman well, but I gather from his colleagues in the legal profession who were very close to him that he was a respected member of that fraternity who made an enormous contribution in the judicial role he played in latter years and to the legal profession in this State.

During this debate the remarks of members may range at will, and on this occasion I have several matters that deserve mention. Not the least of these in importance is the impact on the rural community that has occurred in part as a result of natural occurrences beyond our control and also as a result of the remarks and actions of unthinking and inconsiderate members of the Parliament.

I refer in particular to the members of the Federal Parliament who are currently in Government and who are responsible for the Budget that was recently handed down. It is clear from reading the Budget papers made available to members of this House following Mr Keating's announcement on Tuesday night that little consideration was given to the plight of primary industry in South Australia. Where matters associated with those industries were referred to, it was not good news for us, for the most part.

The Federal Treasurer has backed down on two key pre-election commitments that his Government made and has engaged in further devastation of the industry in a number of respects. The pre-election backdown included promises of stepped-up funds for wool promotion and a full-scale

start to a national soil conservation programme. These two areas are extremely important to the current and future welfare of the rural sector. We had previously, in the year 1982-83, enjoyed a contribution from the Commonwealth to wool promotion of approximately \$20 000 000. It was anticipated, based on the commitments made by the Federal A.L.P. prior to the last election, that the wool industry in Australia would receive approximately a further \$8 000 000 for that purpose.

The \$8 000 000 anticipated, indeed consistent with what we understood to be a clear pre-election commitment, has not been forthcoming, and there are no signs on the horizon that it will be in the current Budget period. Neither was the commitment to the soil conservation programme upheld. It is with great disappointment that we learned the attitude of the Hawke Government, via the Treasurer's statement, that soil conservation in its view apparently is not an important area in which funds are to be directed. I have purposely refrained from suggesting that funds were or should be spent in that area, but rather have referred to the subject as the need for funds to be invested in that area, because funds applied in that and like directions are indeed an investment in Australia in the interests of us all.

Too often Governments talk about proposed utilisation of public funds with the implication that it is money spent, if not wasted, in certain identified directions. In cases of the kind that I cited, it is truly an investment of public moneys for the purposes of recovering devastated areas and areas that are potentially subject to devastation by soil drift. If we are to survive we are now and will continue to be dependent on production from the rural sector in order to do so.

There is no way in the world, by our geographic location, that Australia can survive, develop and expand its place in the world from manufacturing or other like secondary activities. We are primarily a producing country, and I say that meaning that we are a primary producing country. Since the very early settlement of this place we have been dependent upon primary production for our own survival and more latterly for our survival with an economic place in the international scene as a producer of primary products for export. However, in the follow-up to the tough May mini-Budget which hit farm tax and depreciation rates, the main rural cuts were received for export inspection charges, a new 20 per cent sales tax on oils and lubricants, and 1.5c to 2c a litre rise in fuel excise. The greatest impact of this will be in the meat and livestock export trades.

Export meat inspection charges have been shared by the Commonwealth and by the industry since their introduction. In more recent years the meat-producing industry has been clearly warned that it will be subjected to an increasing rate of contribution towards the actual charges incurred. That warning, whilst noted by the industry, applies equally to those who are involved in the costs. There is a clear responsibility on the Government to ensure that the costs of meat inspection are pruned to a minimum. However, the policy adopted by the Labor Government and reflected in the recent Budget is that the costs incurred shall be met now, and the result of that and the effect on the primary producer is dramatic.

Export meat inspection charges will treble on 1 October this year for adult cattle to \$5.40 per head (previously \$1.80), and for sheep 54c a head (previously 18c). This will take the total slaughter levy from \$7.38 to \$10.98 a head for export cattle and from 35.63c to 71.63c for export sheep. Added to that is a further burden on our live sheep export by way of inspection fee, introduced in January this year. It will almost double to 9c a head for the first 20 000 and 4c a head for the remainder in each consignment of live sheep.

The areas I have cited are examples of the burdens applicable now to the rural community, not the least of which of course is the fuel levy, which, according to the initial announcement, was to apply to petrol and, therefore, road users, and not to the farming community. The levy will now apply to the farming community; indeed, it will apply to distillate, an essential commodity in the farming sector and whilst there is a rebate arrangement whereby a farmer may collect some return from the Government as a result of an application identifying his account sales and fuel usage for the previous period, the rebate component is not subject to review or adjustment as a result of the most recent Federal Government loading that has gone on to distillate at the rate of nearly 2c a litre.

So, what was earlier understood to be a exemption as far as off-road and on-farm usage of essential fuels are concerned is not an exemption at all, but yet another burden. It is a matter, I suppose, of how long the rural community in Australia, and particularly in South Australia, can continually wear the burdens that are being thrust upon us by thoughtless administrators from the level to which I have referred, when at the same time our products from these rural holdings are, in the main, attracting little or no more gross return to the primary producers now than they did some 10 years ago.

In the 1973-74 lamb season, for example, in a top market in Australia, Homebush, the price paid at the August market was 84.9c per kilogram equivalent. Of course, at that stage it was calculated and reported on a per pound basis. The situation regarding lambs at a recent market this year reflects a price range paid in the market place of between 70c and 90c. So, here we are in August 1983 with sucker lambs returning a gross figure per kilogram of weight almost identical to or indeed within the same range as that received some 10 years ago, in 1973.

Accordingly, one can refer to a number of other cost factors associated with farming, not the least of which of course is that of superphosphate. Ten years ago, indeed on 1 July 1973, we paid \$19.55 after the subsidy of \$11.81 per tonne on superphosphate at the factory door. On 1 July 1983, some 10 years later, we paid \$114.75 net after a \$12 per tonne subsidy on that product.

I think that the one or two examples that I have cited in respect to the essential items required on the farm demonstrate quite clearly that we are on a collision course in the rural industry. It is a disaster course for those who are dependent upon and locked into that primary producing practice. Our costs are escalating out of control, and our returns for the primary products (by the methods of marketing we have in this country) in no way reflect the cost factors, nor are they able to do so.

One could go on at some length about the plight of the rural community. I do not want to cry 'poor' or 'devastation' at this time: I simply take the opportunity during this debate to signal that, unless Governments take stock of their attitude towards the rural community in this country, we will continue to have a drift of reliable and responsible people from the rural sector back to the metropolitan area and a neglect resulting within the rural community on which (as I have said) we have, we do, and will continue to depend.

One of the subjects raised in this Parliament this week (that of the incompetence of the Minister of Local Government) is a matter that has disturbed me for some time: not merely for some days or some weeks, but indeed for some months. His appointment to the portfolio disturbed me at the outset because, until the Minister of Local Government was appointed in that capacity in this place, he had not demonstrated, as a member of the Parliament, that he had the capacity to perform as a Minister. Indeed, the records will show that, over the period from his initial election to

this Parliament until the appointment of the member for Napier as a Minister, he was unable to control himself as a person. He displayed an arrogance, a capacity for incompetence, a lack of control of his activities, and certainly his tongue, on numerous occasions in this Parliament.

It was a great surprise to me, notwithstanding his holding of the shadow portfolio of local government and housing prior to the election, that after the election he was in fact vested with the responsibilities that go with that Ministry. Since becoming Minister, he has continued to display the sort of arrogance and irresponsibility, an attitude to the job, to the people with whom he is working, the people for whom he is working, and the members of this institution that indicate that he should not hold that office. The incident that surfaced in Parliament this week is only the most recent incident and, as my colleagues have already done during this week—

The Hon. G.J. CRAFTER: I rise on a point of order, Sir. I refer to Standing Order 154 and, no doubt, other sections of the Standing Orders as well. The honourable member is making reflections of a most personal nature on a member of this Parliament. I seek the protection of the Chair for that honourable member and, indeed, for other honourable members.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: That part of the Standing Orders that the honourable Minister has raised reads, in part:

... and all imputations of improper motives, and all personal reflections on members shall be considered highly disorderly.

Although it is not my intention to rule the member out of order, or ask him or order him to retract, I point out to the honourable member that in fact what he is now saying is a personal reflection, and I would ask him to withdraw those sorts of remark.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am the first to apologise to you and to this House if an infringement of Standing Orders has occurred. I have not talked about the personal attributes of the member for Napier. Indeed, it would be far from my intention to do so: it is not my business, I suggest, with respect. To refer to the member in his capacity as a member of parliament serving in his District of Napier would be an infringement. He was duly elected and may serve his people well socially, locally and, as an individual he may be a person with the highest respect and regard in relation to his performance and behaviour. My reference is in relation to this place.

The Hon. G.J. CRAFTER: I rise on a point of order. I sought a ruling from the Chair. I understand that you, Mr Deputy Speaker, gave a ruling. You sought a withdrawal of those personal allegations made by the member for Alexandra. The honourable member has chosen to ignore your request of him, and I seek redress of that situation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I draw to the attention of the House once again the part of the Standing Orders that the honourable Minister has raised. I have read it, and I shall read it again:

... and all imputations of improper motives, and all personal reflections on members shall be considered highly disorderly.

I have no power to instruct the honourable member to withdraw the statements he made. However, I point out that the Standing Orders clearly provide that the type of accusations made by the member for Alexandra could be regarded as disorderly. I can only ask the honourable member, in his own right, whether he would like to withdraw on the basis of the decision I have made.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: With respect, Mr Deputy Speaker, had I drifted in any way into the area which you have suggested demands withdrawal, then I would withdraw. However, to date I have not and I have no intention of doing so.

The Hon. G.J. CRAFTER: I rise on a point of order.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I want to clarify the point that I endeavoured to make, and perhaps I am not making it clear to the member for Alexandra. I have not demanded a withdrawal: I have asked him to withdraw. To clarify it a little further, I am seeking advice regarding the position. I take it from the honourable member's remark that he does not wish to withdraw.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: With respect, Sir, for God's sake, what do you want me to withdraw? I have not reflected on the member as a member of the community: I have reflected on his competence as a Minister of the Crown and as a member of this Parliament, and I have demonstrated that by reference to his performance.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is now reflecting on the Chair, and that is quite different from that which the Chair is suggesting to the honourable member. I would ask that the honourable member be very careful when he speaks further and avoid any reflection on the Chair. The honourable member for Alexandra.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I believe that the remarks I have made and will continue to make about the performance of the member for Napier, in his capacity as Minister of Local Government, have been sustained and upheld throughout his career in that capacity and have been more than justified by his performance in the House this week (and we have heard a fair amount about his performance in the House this week). What I am saying today, Sir (and I believe that, clearly, Standing Orders allow me to say so), is that the Minister should no longer hold that office. He is an embarrassment in the local government portfolio; I believe that he is an embarrassment to his Party, although, apparently, members of that Party are not prepared to admit it at this time, and he is also clearly an embarrassment to this institution and to every member of it. Every time the Minister gets on his feet and performs in the way that he has done this week and on other occasions, it is clearly an embarrassment to all those present. When that Minister has been on the platform and carrying on in the only way he appears capable of doing, my colleagues and I, as well as others, have been embarrassed.

The Hon. E.R. Goldsworthy: He's been so crook, I have been embarrassed.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I never thought I would live to see the day when my colleague the member for Kavel would concede that he had been embarrassed.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader is out of order if he interjects.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: With respect, Mr Speaker, during an Address in Reply debate almost anything goes.

Mr Whitten: You didn't think that yesterday when you took a point of order against me.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I welcome the interjection from the member for Price.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Chair does not welcome the interjection.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: If the honourable member has something to say, I will be happy if he says it, and I will be pleased to respond. On this more serious subject, the Minister of Local Government has this week demonstrated a lack of responsibility and a reluctance to accept his job and the hits on the chin that go with it. His performance has set a precedent and a pattern that I would hope is not followed by any Minister in the future. His standing up in this House last Tuesday and telling me in answer to a straight and legitimate question that officers of his department had strayed from their duties without his knowledge or that of the Grants Commission (as is recorded

in *Hansard*) showed the Minister up for what I am saying he is, and that is a coward in office.

The Minister did not name the officers, of course, who had allegedly strayed, but yesterday he named in this place the senior officer of his department, a respectable and reputable officer of the Department of Local Government, as being the person from whom he had accepted a resignation from the job as Chairman of the Grants Commission. The Minister then had the gall to suggest in this place today that, as a result of questions raised by the Opposition and actions taken on behalf of the Opposition in defence of the councils in question, it was our fault that that officer had resigned and that acceptance of that resignation had occurred. Yet, by his own statements, clearly recorded in *Hansard* yesterday, the Minister told us in a Ministerial statement that he had had the offer of a resignation from his officer in his hand on 10 August and that after some deliberation he had accepted that resignation on 17 August. In fact, that was four whole days before the first question on this subject was asked in this Parliament.

The last time that the subject had been raised in this Parliament before then was when he, as Minister of Local Government, had reported on the activities and recommendations of the select committee set up to investigate matters associated with the councils in question, including those recipient councils of Strathalbyn and Mount Barker. It was at the time when other members of the select committee, including the members for Light, Unley and Henley Beach, as well as me, as member for Alexandra, made some remarks in Parliament. It was not incidental, but important to this whole issue, that back during the early months of this year, as a result of the select committee meetings dating back to December 1982, last year, we raised on behalf of the councils in question the subject of funding, which is what the whole argument this week has been about. The Minister of Local Government has demonstrated that he cannot handle his job generally and that he has grossly bungled this issue.

I now want to make some specific references to this matter and draw to the attention of the House the fact that during the early weeks of sittings of the select committee a deliberate and positive attempt was made by my colleague the member for Light, as well as by members of the Government (namely, the members for Unley and Henley Beach, and certainly by me, too, on behalf of the councils that were subject to the pending annexation), to set out to establish both on the record and off the record during committee discussions that those councils would be supported by adequate finance were they to be called upon to receive areas of land from the Meadows council as it originally stood and, accordingly, accept the responsibility that went with that land and its future management and servicing.

Our collective efforts (and I point out that there were no politics involved in that particular select committee activity, and rightly so) were to obtain from the Minister an undertaking not only that appropriate funding would be made available to the recipient councils, if such land were transferred to those councils as a result of the findings of the committee, but that the source of those funds was to be identified. At the time when those questions were directed to the Minister in his capacity of Chairman of the select committee, on several occasions and without hesitation, he gave the undertaking to the committee at large, and to those in particular who were asking the questions, that appropriate funding would be made available.

Reference was made about this subject to his Director-General, and I suggest it is quite appropriate that that should have been done. His Director-General happened to be Chairman of the Grants Commission, and there would be no person better equipped, in my view, to affirm or negate the undertakings that the Minister gave. If at any stage Dr

McPhail, the officer involved, had felt that the Grants Commission funding could not be committed in the direction that the Minister had outlined, then he need not at the time have created an embarrassing situation which, as one member suggested, might have been the case this week. He had the next day or days to raise the subject.

As I indicated earlier in this address, it was on a number of occasions and on separate days before those witnesses were coming before the committee, and in the absence of witnesses before the committee this all important subject was discussed also. Therefore, there was a ton of time for one or both of those persons to identify that the undertakings could not be upheld (if that was considered to be the case).

No-one will convince me that the experienced, long-term serving officer in the person of Dr McPhail was unaware of his duties. As has been stated by members on this side of the House today, the guidelines laid down for the administration of Grants Commission funding make it quite clear that the commission has the power to grant moneys to councils in need. In each of the Grants Commission's annual reports, its functions are laid down for anyone to see. I now refer to the 1982 annual report for this purpose. Under paragraph 1.2, reference is made to the remaining funds. The report is as follows:

... the remaining funds are to be allocated amongst the local authorities, having regard to their respective financial needs, on the recommendation of the Grants Commission.

That gives the licence and the opportunity for the Grants Commission to meet the needs of councils, given identified circumstances. It was made quite clear and it has never been argued to my knowledge that the needs did not exist. Having received those undertakings from the Minister, having received the supporting remarks of the Chairman at the time, having concluded the job as members of that select committee, having come into this Parliament and listened to the Chairman (in the person of the Minister) deliver the recommendations contained in the report to this Parliament, having debated the issue and, indeed, supported it as we did, having seen the passage of that report through both Houses of this Parliament, and then having seen the Minister's attempt at proclamation the first time, which fell apart because of some Crown Law order, and then having his revised version ultimately proclaimed, at no stage during those months, dating way back to the early months of this year was there, nor should there have been, any doubt about either the capacity of the Government to pay or the Government's obligation to honour such payment.

Yet, in recent weeks, there have been clear signals (and I know that the Minister will not like this) hovering around and emerging from his department about the kerfuffle going on there. Then ultimately, not initially, it is learnt from out in the field that there is some embarrassment, that certain persons in the local government arena have been told things in confidence and had undertakings extracted from them not to dare say anything to the public generally or, in the two cases of Mount Barker and Strathalbyn, not even to tell their other colleagues on the council.

The Hon. B.C. Eastick: But that's blackmail.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: It has been described as blackmail by the member for Light; it has been described as all sorts of things. So, the saga has gone on. This week the Minister stood up in this House and drew all the red herrings that one could poke a stick at across the path of this exercise in order to protect himself. That is the cruel and improper aspect associated with this whole subject.

In the meantime (as I have said before, and indeed colleagues support me in saying this and have said it themselves on this side of the House), a straight, reputable officer has lost his position as a result of the Minister's incompetence. Understandably, that officer and his departmental colleagues

will stand publicly, go to the media and make statements that they support their Minister. That is expected of a loyal public officer, and I had no doubts at the beginning that people of the calibre of Ian McPhail, Bob Lewis and others in the Department of Local Government would have not only applied that loyalty but also stood by that loyalty to their Minister, as indeed they would be expected to, whichever Party was in Government.

However, that does not alter the fact that behind the scenes there are matters associated with this subject that have not yet surfaced and, one way or another, they will, or at least should, surface in the interests of local government generally in this State and in the interests of carrying out future amalgamations or boundary adjustments where they are considered desirable. It is absolutely paramount in my view that all the facts associated with this subject are brought to the surface. I hope that, by one method or another available to this House, there is an inquiry of an independent kind that actually researches the points associated with this subject from go to whoa. It is not just for the protection of the officer who has so loyally stood by his Minister and thrown his hat in the ring, not just for the purpose of the short-term interests of the Department of Local Government, but in the interests of local government generally, that this subject be clarified. Clearly, because of the telephone calls and by the calling back and forth between the parties involved, the embarrassment that has been caused to certain local governments in this State (Strathalbyn and Mount Barker in particular), the delay in those respective councils in adopting their budgets and rates for the financial year which we are already well into, and the overall debacle which has surrounded this unsavoury subject, the matter ought to be researched, clarified and publicly identified as a result.

If the Minister is to go, then Party politically I suppose there will be some rejoicing, and I would be sharing in that, obviously. But, it is really not the point at issue at this time. A greater threat to the welfare of local government is hingeing on this issue than has surfaced so far, either in the media or at any other level. I am very disturbed to think that we have a person as incompetent as the Minister of Local Government carrying out the affairs and the administration of local government in this State when indeed it deserves a better deal. The two councils in question obviously require the money that is needed to service their original districts and the area that they have recently inherited from Meadows.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: As I understand it from information that has been cited here, Mount Barker council, for example, has already framed and fixed its budget. That council has framed its budget on the basis of revenue that it understood to be available to it from rate revenue, grants and other sources including the committed and specified allocation from the Grants Commission. It is wrong in principle and in fact that any South Australian council, whether metropolitan or country, should be placed in such an untenable position as the Mount Barker and the Strathalbyn councils have been placed in.

I do not know whether the Strathalbyn council has framed its budget, but I am aware that an undertaking was given to that council that it would receive about \$50 000 more than would ordinarily be expected by the council of its original geographical shape. That figure can be easily substantiated as the council expected to receive \$220 000, made up of last year's allocation of \$153 000, as reported in the 1982 report, plus amounts for the inflation factor and, I assume, the depreciation of the dollar, bringing last year's figure automatically up to about \$170 000 which, with the \$50 000 committed by the Minister (or, as he puts it, by an

unauthorised officer), makes the overall total expected by the Strathalbyn council \$220 000.

It is not suggested, nor should it be, that this additional contribution to the council from the Grants Commission fund is a handout: it is simply a payment for costs incurred by the previous occupier of Meadows rural area and will automatically be incurred by the recipient council as a result of the annexation that has taken place. It is part of the liability that goes with the paddock it has inherited, and one would be unfair and unrealistic if one did not accept that, if a responsibility in the form of an additional area to be serviced is adopted by a council, that council should concurrently receive the appropriate funding to enable that additional land and its ratepayers to be serviced.

In my view (and it is the view of my colleagues as expressed by members of the select committee from both sides of the House: I hope that members opposite who were on that committee will be men enough and have guts enough to stand up and support that recommendation now), there was no question about those funds going with the land annexation in question to the two councils.

Opposition members believe, contrary to the views expressed earlier today by the Minister, in his own defence, and by the Premier, that it is the responsibility of Parliament to insist that the councils receive the amounts committed to them. We certainly have the support of the Australian Workers Union in this respect, ironic as that may sound, in its efforts to protect the welfare of the employees of the Meadows council. We have no argument with that. Indeed, the report of the select committee indicates that there is no argument about the appropriate funding to go with the annexation. We also have the support of the Municipal Officers Association and of the two councils, as well as the support of members from this side and from the Government side who were members of the select committee. Indeed, from the quotation we heard today from the remarks of the member for Unley as a member of the select committee, it is obvious that we have his support for making this money available. The only hiccup at this stage appears to be between the Minister of Local Government and the Premier, as Treasurer. Did Cabinet put the kibosh on the Minister or did the Premier, in his capacity as Treasurer, do so? We do not know.

I think it is important, as I said earlier, that this whole issue be clarified, so that there is no risk of a situation like this occurring in the future with any other council subject to pending amalgamation or boundary adjustment. An investigation of the kind I and my colleague have signalled should be pursued and the whole matter clarified. I am not in a position to prejudge the outcome but I am a supporter of that happening.

So much for the Minister of Local Government. He deserves a hell of a lot more but I think the chickens will come home to roost. Certainly his rapport and respect or lack of it among the rural council members of this State has been made quite clear. If he is too blind to see it or too unappreciative of their attitude to recognise it, I suppose he will find out when the axe ultimately falls. But, he is incompetent; he must go and, as the age-old saying goes, 'When you've got to go you've got to go.' He is an embarrassment to the Government and this institution.

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Minister is out of order. I call the honourable member for Mount Gambier.

The Hon. H. ALLISON (Mount Gambier): I would like to make a brief comment and pay my respects to the late Hon. John Coumbe, a friend, an acquaintance, a Party colleague in this House and one who served the Parliament

very well over a long period. John was a personal friend and one of the few members of this House who served as Minister of Education. He was a fine mentor, adviser and friend when I acceded to the Ministry, although he had already left this House. John Coumbe was a fine gentlemanly member of Parliament of whom members on both sides of the House spoke very highly. He also served after he left this House as a member of the Council of the South Australian Institute of Technology.

I would also like to pay respect to another valuable servant of the State, the Hon. Justice Charles Bright, who was chairman of a number of commissions for this House, not the least of which was the Health Commission Committee of Inquiry. He was also closely involved with a number of members of Cabinet in the former Government as Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Health Services to the Handicapped in South Australia. He was a very fine man, a member of the Judiciary of South Australia, one of our leading figures and one whose efforts will certainly be respected for many years to come and whose services will now be missed. We did, of course, today pay respect to a former member of this House, the member for Chaffey, the Hon. Harold King.

I would, first, comment on the recent Federal Budget. It seemed to have been received initially as a relatively gentle piece of legislation. I notice, however, that within 24 hours Mr Eric Risstrom, who is head of the Australian Taxpayers Association, had done a complete about turn. In his initial comments on the eve of the Budget and after the Budget had been brought down his analysis was that it would be well received amongst the general populace. However, less than 24 hours afterwards he sought to go public again, this time completely reversing his earlier assessment.

Mr Groom: The Liberal Party leaned on him.

The Hon. H. ALLISON: The honourable member says that the Liberal Party leaned on him. He is completely erroneous in making such a claim. Mr Risstrom stated that his personal computer had been operating less than effectively at the time.

Mr Groom: Come on!

The Hon. H. ALLISON: It was Mr Risstrom's claim, not mine. When he had time to analyse not only the Budget but also the mini Budget that was brought down (as is customary these days) some several months earlier, and when he paired the two together and collated the evidence on a reasonably operating computer, he then discovered that the average taxpayer in Australia would be paying 56 per cent more tax during the current fiscal year than he would have paid last year.

Mr Groom interjecting:

The Hon. H. ALLISON: I do not know whether the honourable member has had an opportunity to deliver his Address in Reply speech, but if he has not I suggest that he stand on his feet.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Chair suggests that the member for Hartley has spoken in the Address in Reply debate and that he is out of order at the present moment.

The Hon. H. ALLISON: Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Federal Budget obviously is a fine example of how the Labor Party at the Federal level, in Victoria, South Australia, and possibly Queensland at the forthcoming elections, has bought or will try to buy office. The Federal Government came to power, as did the Bannon Government, on a series of what have proved very quickly to be broken promises.

Mr Trainer: It sounds like you are tipping a win in Queensland.

The Hon. H. ALLISON: No. If the honourable member listened instead of speculating, more in hope than in anticipation, he would realise that I said 'has bought or will try

to buy power'. I strongly suggest that any attempts in Queensland would be an example of the Labor Party trying to buy power.

Mr Plunkett: Do you reckon that Bjelke is going to sell out?

The Hon. H. ALLISON: No, I think the Labor Party in Queensland will be kicking against a strong wind when election day comes along.

Mr Plunkett: The Liberals haven't got much hope, anyway.

The Hon. H. ALLISON: I would not agree with that, either. I believe that the forthcoming election in Queensland will be the making and not the breaking of the Liberal Party.

Mr Trainer: He can't even say it without smiling.

The Hon. H. ALLISON: I am smiling in anticipation. Honourable members will remember the smile on the face of the tiger.

Mr Trainer: That is nothing compared with the smile on the face of the member for Flinders.

The Hon. H. ALLISON: He is a solitary member in this place, and I do not know whether it is a smile of regret. As I was saying, before I was so rudely interrupted, the Federal Labor Party and several State Labor Parties have in fact purchased power with a whole series of promises which have proved completely false. The Federal Government came to power on a promise of not only no tax increases but also less taxation for 98 per cent of the population—quite a remarkable promise! Instead, 99 per cent to 100 per cent of the population will be paying considerably more tax. Mr Risstrom's figure of a 56 per cent increase for the average Australian is quite devastating.

Mr Trainer: Apparently he has put out another press release and gone back to his original position.

The Hon. H. ALLISON: The honourable member had better announce that in his Address in Reply contribution. My statement was fresh off the press a little while ago. Apart from that, the people for whom I feel most in light of the Federal Budget are the pensioners. They have been paying tax for the whole of their lives and possibly looking forward to a comfortable retirement. They may have a few dollars to invest—although many people have been forced to retire prematurely at 55 years of age in my electorate in the South-East because of a number of stand-downs from Government and non-government mills and other organisations.

These people, who may have been forced to retire prematurely, have received a nominal hand-out, and many of them have not been superannuated. They would have been able to place in the bank only a few thousand dollars to last them for five years to 10 years before they could qualify for the age pension. At the moment, they have to subsist on unemployment benefits, still having to go and look for work, although they had agreed to retire prematurely.

That does not cut any ice with the Federal Government, which says that a man does not retire until he is 65 and a woman until she is 60. These people have a few thousand dollars in the bank, and I think that the Federal Government's intention of means testing pensioners' assets (both real estate and income), and then deducting money from the full pension, is quite despicable. These people are not in the great majority who are well to do, and I believe that they deserve all the assistance that they can get to enable them to retire reasonably happily in their middle to old age.

Pensioners who try to make some provision for retirement by putting a few thousand dollars in the bank are being punished for thriftiness. Those who are spendthrifts and get rid of their money quickly or who do not have any money to invest at all will all be left with no incentive at all to try to save a few dollars. It is very hard on pensioners, and I hope that the national outcry (which is rising very quickly)

against such an iniquitous form of taxation will have some effect upon the Federal Treasury and the Prime Minister, and induce them to relax that very stringent tax.

Another thing that surprised me greatly was that here we have a Labor Government with the interests of the working class truly at heart (or so we are led to believe). Where is the next savage impost, apart from the one on the age pensioners? It came on beer, cigarettes and petrol. The statistics Australia wide reveal that working-class people (who comprise, of course, the greatest proportion of our population) are the ones who smoke most and who tend to drink a little more than the rest of the population. Of course, all of them are dependent on the family car in some way or another (either to get to work or for weekend recreation), and this group has been hit very severely by that increase on cigarettes, petrol and beer. The Government which claims to be looking after and representing the working-class people is in fact letting them down quite badly.

However, what is it doing with regard to collecting tax which was previously unpaid or, at least, which the Government claims was unpaid? It set an arbitrary figure of \$10 000 and, if anyone has work done which costs more than \$10 000 for which cash is being paid (say, an extension to a house), the person who has the work done is required to declare the amount to the Commissioner of Taxation. Then the person who is paid that money will be caught up with, according to the Government, because there is a strong chance that he will not have declared those earnings. What sort of impost is that? How successful is it likely to be? I suggest that, as any payment under \$10 000 does not have to be declared, there is a great likelihood that people who do work for householders will split the contract, have two \$5 000 contracts and separate them by a week or two, and then quite legitimately escape the penalty. They would not have to be reported by the householder, and it is quite possible that the tax could be evaded in a very simple way.

I do not think that the Federal Government has thought through that tax measure at all. General statistics indicate that, in the United States of America, for example, literally billions of dollars is being evaded in relation to income tax by people who would be collecting sums far less than \$10 000. The greatest proportion of tax evasion is in the area of payments of far less than \$10 000.

I see no reason to doubt that that situation would pertain in Australia. What we are really looking at is tokenism, although the Prime Minister (Mr Hawke) severely criticised the former Liberal Government for its inability to control people who were avoiding payment of income tax. I do not see that the measures introduced by the present Labor Government will be at all successful. They are evading the major areas of income tax evasion. As Mr Risstrom has pointed out, one of the problems with the present Budget is that it has to be coupled with the mini Budget brought down earlier this year, when the housing loan rebate was withdrawn. That action resulted in people repaying an average mortgage of \$30 000 losing a substantial housing mortgage rebate.

Not only was the hospital medical rebate removed in that mini Budget but, in the recently introduced Budget, all Australians will have to pay 1 per cent of their income, so that is a double impost—one loses in the mini Budget and in the recently announced Budget. It is little wonder that Mr Risstrom, in recalculating his joint estimates for the mini Budget and the August Budget, came up with a figure of a 56 per cent additional tax payment for the average Australian—a savage increase, and one to be deplored. This Federal Government has come to power on totally false premises and promises. That 56 per cent is the most massive increase for many a long year and is hitting people far harder than any Treasurer has for a long time. So much for promises!

On a more parochial note, I was recently approached by builders in the South-East of South Australia who are extremely worried about the down-turn in building generally and who are just as aware as I am that unemployment in the South-East is probably as acute now as it has been since the 1930s. I say that it is acute because in April of last year the number of unemployed in the South-East was about 1 300: The figure for April 1983 is 2 200 to 2 300. That is an increase in 12 months of roughly 1 000 unemployed people in the South-East. That is a massive increase in an area with a relatively small proportion of South Australia's population.

I was especially concerned that a number of the previous Government's initiatives were threatened by this Government when it came to office. One project which has been deferred indefinitely and which might have created considerable additional employment for the South-East is the Finger Point sewage disposal scheme. Another scheme that was threatened was the Kingston Area School. A commitment of more than \$5 000 000 for that school was given by the Liberal Minister of Education last year. One of the first things the present Government did on coming to office was shelve that project until public outcry from Kingston people and the possible threat of their taking action against the Government for breach of contract persuaded it to change its mind and reinstate that scheme. However, already several months of contract work has been lost to the South-East.

The builders who came to see me not long ago pointed out that the South Australian Housing Trust is continuing with its praiseworthy projects and is building houses in Mount Gambier and other districts. However, they had heard that a project on Jubilee Highway, at Mount Gambier West, could cause Mount Gambier builders and suppliers to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars of potential business if alleged proposals by the South Australian Housing Trust were to go ahead. I realise that the South Australian Housing Trust is a statutory authority. The relevant Minister is in the House at the moment and I am pleased about that. I hope that he will take my expressions of concern to the General Manager of the Housing Trust.

This concern is one that I have expressed repeatedly: that, as far as possible, we in the South-East would like to see materials from the South-East used in construction programmes. We do, after all, have a massive timber salvage operation under way which the State and Federal Governments are fully behind, the Federal Government having loaned the South Australian Woods and Forest Department \$11 000 000 to conduct this project. Given that we have a massive salvage problem, I hope that the trust does everything it can to ensure that South-East labour and timber are used—labour because we have among the highest unemployment rate anywhere in South Australia, with those 2 300 people out of work, and materials because we have the timber industry salvaging timber as rapidly as it can. The expression of concern that came from builders in Mount Gambier was that the new estate off Jubilee Highway, adjacent to a recently completed site, is being developed without any local builders or suppliers being asked to tender for the work.

On occasions the Housing Trust, instead of putting out work for tender, simply nominates a company or a builder to undertake the work. It is a plan with which we agreed when the Liberal Party was in Government. I do not object to it, although I believe that the trust should consider very carefully the situation in Mount Gambier. I believe that it is planned that the trusts should build 20 single house units and 10 double housing units on the site in question, all of them being timber-framed and clad with a concrete sheeting. To the best of my knowledge, it was originally intended that 22 brick veneer maisonettes were to be constructed on

that site. Brickwork was to be performed locally. Now the builders believe that, if the new proposals are carried out, it will mean that all the roof trusses and the wall frames will be made and assembled in Adelaide. It is quite possible that internal fittings, and even paint for the walls, could be bought in Adelaide with the work being carried out in Adelaide. They would then be transported to the South-East for construction and erection on site.

I believe that the Government would be well aware that for a few extra dollars (or it may be for fewer dollars, as I am not sure which way the contract prices would go) it would be far better if local problems were attacked and, in regard to employment prospects, people who are currently unemployed in the South-East (as well as building suppliers there) should be allowed to contribute towards the construction of those homes. The spokesman for the South Australian Housing Trust in Mount Gambier has already stated that the proposals have not yet been firmed up: therefore, I would ask the Minister once again if he will contact the General Manager of the Housing Trust before those proposals are finalised, to make sure that everything possible is done to give those people who are unemployed in the South-East and the South-Eastern builders a chance to compete.

Another issue about which I must express concern is the amount of aerosol and petrol sniffing that is occurring in South Australia. Undoubtedly, petrol sniffing is prevalent in our Aboriginal reserves. Recently, evidence was given to the select committee that is investigating the Maralinga land rights Bill (of which I am a member) from persons who were extremely concerned about this problem. However, it would be grossly unfair to single out Aboriginal reserves and to give the impression that they are the only areas in South Australia where problems exist. Many parts of South Australia have long had drug problems, as well as problems associated with alcohol, tobacco and excessive doses of caffeine from coffee, for example. Vincents and Bex powders allegedly create liver and kidney problems because of the inability of the body to get rid of those powders. I believe that many women in the Royal Sydney Women's Hospital are terminally ill due to taking prescriptions of that sort.

A whole host of other soft and hard drugs have been well and truly publicised in various official and semi-official reports that have been tabled in this House. A parent in Mount Gambier recently contacted me and others in Adelaide about this matter. It is obvious that the parents of children in South Australian schools are concerned that youngsters are sniffing aeroplane glue and aerosol cannisters, along with a number of other things that are easily obtained without prescription, and by simply purchasing them at a corner shop. Children can take these substances to school and sniff them from plastic bags, cans or tubes.

I do not know how prevalent that practice is. This topic was aired in the House when my Party was in Government and also when we were in Opposition prior to that. The parent from Mount Gambier, whom I referred to a moment ago, made a constructive suggestion. She said that she had seen a segment on the Mike Walsh Show during the previous week, which dealt with deaths that had been caused by children sniffing aerosol cans. She pointed out that this activity was occurring in schools known to her and she felt that the Minister of Education could make a good quality film, similar to the one that she had seen on the Mike Walsh Show. She believed that such a film could be made readily available through the Education Department, the South Australian Film Corporation, or any other avenue. Along with that, she believed that posters, pamphlets and printed material could be circulated throughout our schools to make teachers and students aware of the great danger in adopting the practice of glue sniffing.

I simply suggest to the Minister of Education that he asks officers of his department to contact the Mike Walsh Show and find out whether the film shown on that programme is readily available. Obviously, it has had quite an impact on the parents who saw it. The Minister, along with the Minister of Health, could then examine the possibility of widely circulating the film and associated information amongst our schoolchildren. Children should be warned of these dangers, because premature death among our young people is a loss that this State simply cannot sustain. We are already experiencing almost zero population growth: we need to keep our youngsters in a fit state of health and not have them sick and dying at an early age. In saying that, I am not critical of the Minister. I know that officers of his department have been aware of problems in specific schools for quite some time and have been addressing it. I simply put the suggestion forward as one more positive avenue of help.

I now refer to another parochial topic, that is, the Review of the Classification of Non-Acceptable Shack Sites, as it relates to the South-East. That report, commissioned by the former Government, was brought down in March 1983. It deals with shack sites across South Australia and makes many recommendations. An area that I was critically involved in, in the South-East, was the area around Donovan's Landing, on the Glenelg River. There is an unusual conglomeration of shack sites in that area, because they are not all on dry land, and tend to have piers and beams on the river bank. That section of the river is quite beautiful, but the bank is also quite precipitous and for many years shacks have been built out over the water. Some people have shack leases, but I believe they are renewed on an annual basis. Not many shackowners in that area seem to have pieces of paper stating what sort of lease they have.

These people have been making representations to me for several years. Towards the latter end of the previous Government's term of office the previous Minister of Lands (Hon. P.B. Arnold) promised these people that they would have leases no worse and no less favourable than the leases enjoyed by other people in other non-acceptable shack site areas in South Australia. That promise was made by the then Minister in writing from the Department of Lands office. The people in the South-East who have shacks along the Donovan River have so far received no official confirmation from the present Minister that that promise will be honoured. It would be a travesty of justice if these people were to be treated differently from any other shack owners in South Australia, and I say that with some feeling. I know what can happen, because I was compelled to demolish my shack on the river at Mannum in 1975 shortly after an amnesty had been announced by the then Minister of Lands. Unusual things can happen after promises have been made.

I simply ask the Premier to review the situation at Donovans and ensure as quickly as possible that those people are given a lease that is no less favourable than the lease that is enjoyed by other people who have shacks in non-acceptable shack sites in South Australia. I would not normally spend such a lengthy period on what might seem a relatively trivial matter, but the point has to be made that the review of shack sites does not contain any reference at all to the Donovans Landing area. Those people believe that, since they are not even considered in that review, there is every chance that their shacks are already scheduled for demolition and that they will be unable to enjoy holidays at Donovans in the near future. I hope that that is not true and that the review committee was, at the time, unaware of the existence of those Donovans Landing sites, unusual as they are.

Another issue that has concerned me as shadow Minister of Community Welfare is a matter raised by the group that calls itself 'Parents who care'. When I was first made aware

of the existence of this small group in South Australia, I expressed some surprise at the title that the group had chosen, because I said at that time that surely every parent in South Australia cares. However, this group stated that it had chosen that title because it felt that its members had special reason to care: they were parents whose children had been removed from them for a variety of reasons by officers of the Department for Community Welfare. Those people had banded together across South Australia. They have held three meetings earlier this year, and I referred to that fact in a question that I addressed to the Minister of Community Welfare. The meetings were attended by 200 or so parents, and that is a considerable number.

I asked the Minister whether he would institute an inquiry into the practices of some officers of his department (and I am not suggesting that the vast majority of officers are involved, incidentally) who may not be abiding by either the letter or the intention of the law. The letter of the law quite clearly states that one aim of the legislation that deals with children in trouble is that the maintenance of the family unit and the unity of the family should be of prime importance to officers who are assessing problems. A number of officers are allegedly not consulting parents adequately, not only before children are taken away but after children have been removed from parental care. These children are then held in secrecy, and the information to which parents are entitled under the Act has been withheld.

One can expect that the Director-General of the department would be defensive and a little evasive (as he appeared to be on a television programme that was conducted on this subject). The Director-General was a little defensive of his officers, because I believe that he was loyal to them. However, it was unfortunate that the Minister completely declined to undertake any sort of inquiry into the alleged practices. He assured me in his answer that I was worrying unduly, that he had taken a number of recent initiatives to ensure that the law was being upheld and that parents' rights were being protected.

He implied that it was a very small number of people who were involved and that I was unduly concerned. Quite unsolicited, I received very quickly after having asked that question a petition from people across South Australia, and already 775 people have signed that petition, which I lodged in this House a couple of weeks ago, to ask the Minister to hold an independent inquiry into the Department for Community Welfare's attitude towards juveniles, particularly runaways. The parents expressed disturbance that through lack of proper supervision and counselling by officers of the Department for Community Welfare these juveniles are becoming involved in and enticed into prostitution, drugs and criminal offences, and they say that they believe that such an inquiry would disclose discrepancies in our community welfare system.

I do not think that any Government department can afford to hide ostrich-like if there are problems to be uncovered. Parents believe that there are difficulties that should be examined and then corrected, and I support them. I ask the Minister once again whether he will take heed of the increasingly large body of people in South Australia who are concerned—it is not just a couple of hundred who attended a meeting—and take heed not only of this petition but of the next ones, as I have been informed that others are on the way. There are many more requests in South Australia for an examination into the *modus operandi* of some officers in the Department for Community Welfare.

The question of the Finger Point sewerage scheme to which I referred briefly a few minutes ago is not something which has only recently been cooked up by the people of the South-East. It is not something that is ephemeral and to be treated lightly. It is now some 13 or 14 years since I

was a member of the Mount Gambier City Council and joined with my council colleagues to express concern at that time at the fact that the South-East was one of the few areas remaining in Australia which discharged large quantities of raw, untreated effluent into the sea, adjacent to what are among Australia's best fishing grounds for lobster and abalone. They are multi-million dollar fishing grounds.

Mr Whitten: What about Tasmania? There is not one coast in Tasmania that does not discharge raw sewage.

The Hon. H. ALLISON: Did the honourable member say that raw sewage was not being discharged?

Mr Whitten: I did not. I said that Tasmania discharges raw sewage, according to the reports that we have had, and south of Eden and throughout all of Victoria as well.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mount Gambier is making the speech.

Mr Whitten: He needs some assistance.

The Hon. H. ALLISON: I am pleased to receive assistance from the honourable member because it is very pleasing to note that at least one member of the Government is better informed than his colleague in the Upper House, who referred in his Address in Reply speech to the Mount Gambier sewerage scheme and said that it was of no great consequence or threat. His point of view is diametrically opposed to that of the tens of thousands of people in the South-East who have been petitioning the Government—not only the present Government but also the previous one.

I simply have to remind members on the other side of the House that I had similar opposition to completing this sewerage scheme when I raised it with my Party colleagues some three or four years ago. But, as a result of close perusal of an Engineering and Water Supply Department report (which is readily available), it is concluded that the potential threats to the South Australian fishing industry, to the health of the increasing population of Port MacDonnell, to the tourist industry generally—which all of us are trying to foster and improve in South Australia—to the general well-being of the community in the South-East, are real. There are, in fact, deposits on the seabed, and not only one kilometre away from the outfall pipe at Finger Point but also over a wider area than that.

Those deposit are dangerous to shellfish and human life. There are faecal coliforms and *Escherichia coli* present. They are the first two indicators that a whole range of other organisms, which are dangerous to human life, could exist in the same waters. They are the first tests which the Department of Health generally conducts to ascertain whether there are other organisms present which would endanger human life. The fact that the E. & W.S. report highlighted these was sufficient for my colleagues to make the responsible decision to implement the scheme. It was not just an idle promise that the former Liberal Government made. It committed \$200 000 in its forward planning for the 1981-82 financial year, and \$500 000 was committed for the 1982-83 financial year, which has just concluded, and that \$500 000 was confiscated by the Labor Government, used for other purposes, and that scheme itself has been shelved.

Again, I express great concern and this concern has been reinforced by South Australian fish processors who have made representations to me to suggest that it would be better if very little was said on the issue. They have known about the problems for several years but do not wish to endanger the international fish market. If that is not an ostrich act to beat all ostrich acts, what is? Surely it is far better to tackle the problem rather than to have some disaster as a result of contaminated Australian shellfish being consumed overseas and resulting in a death. My colleagues were happy to initiate the scheme with a promised completion in 1985-86. However, it has been set back at least 10 years, as was originally stated by the former Labor

Premier some five or six years ago. South Australia is now worse off than it was because the problem has been highlighted, and once again it has been shelved by the present Government—a most irresponsible action.

Reinstatement of the Finger Point scheme would be very sensible because, as I said earlier, the South-East has a much higher unemployment rate than most areas of South Australia: 2 300 unemployed at the moment. It would provide work and at the same time safeguard health, the tourist industry, the general well-being of people in the South-East,

and that most precious asset, the fishing industry. I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

At 5.47 p.m. the House adjourned until Tuesday 30 August at 2 p.m.