

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday 21 February 1980

The **PRESIDENT (Hon. A. M. Whyte)** took the Chair at 2.15 p.m. and read prayers.

PETITION: ABORTION

A petition signed by 43 residents of South Australia praying that the Criminal Law Consolidation Act not be amended in a way which would further restrict a woman's right to choose was presented by the Hon. Anne Levy.

Petition received and read.

QUESTIONS

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

The Hon. C. J. SUMNER: I seek leave to make a brief explanation prior to directing a question to the Minister of Consumer Affairs on the matter of consumer protection covering professional groups.

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. J. SUMNER: From time to time there are calls to extend the consumer protection laws of this State, both the legislative provisions and the administrative services provided by the Department of Public and Consumer Affairs, to complaints by consumers about services provided by members of professions such as by lawyers and doctors.

There are two aspects to this matter. There is the legislative provision to extend the consumer protection laws on the one hand and, secondly, there is the administrative structure available within departments for complaints against a member of a profession to be investigated by the department if people feel that they warrant investigation. Does the Government intend to extend the consumer protection laws in this State, both legislative and administrative, to cover professional services?

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: As the Leader has said, there are two aspects to this matter, the legislative one and the administrative one. As far as legislation is concerned, I consider that the legislation is already adequate, because the Prices Act, when it speaks of goods or services, makes clear that it extends to services of any kind, and that could be extended to professions. This has been upheld by the court in relation to medical practitioners' fees, so in my view there is no need for legislation.

The question, therefore, is the administrative one. As the Leader would know, in order to help consumers in this area, it would be necessary to provide in the department professional services of persons who have the required knowledge and experience. I have set up a committee in the department to report on the possibility of this being done, the feasibility of so doing, and, of course, on the cost, because that must be taken into account. I have not fixed a report date, because I think it is necessary that the small committee have time to operate completely.

I have been aware of this matter for some time and aware that there is some merit in providing protection to consumers in a professional area regarding any complaints they may have. I may say that I think the matter of disciplinary action is different: that action is probably best conducted by bodies in the profession concerned, perhaps with the addition of some lay members on the relevant bodies. The particular matter which has come before me

and which is the subject of the question is that of giving protection to consumers of professional services.

As far as the law is concerned, there is an ability to do that already. Regarding setting up the administrative machinery which the previous Government did not do, I am investigating that now.

The Hon. C. J. SUMNER: I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the Minister of Consumer Affairs a question concerning a committee to look at the disciplinary provisions covering professions.

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. J. SUMNER: In August 1978 a committee was established within the Premier's Department to look into the legislative and administrative questions associated with the disciplinary provisions of various Acts and regulatory provisions. Included in the terms of reference were the medical, dental, legal, architectural, surveying and veterinary science professions.

The committee's task was to look at ways of rationalising the procedures that currently exist, and its membership comprised a representative from the Premier's Department, a representative from the Public Service Board, and a representative from the Department of Consumer Affairs. Following the change of Government the Policy Division of the Premier's Department was decimated and all the members from the division were transferred to the four winds: some to positions in the Engineering and Water Supply Department and the like where, I am sure, their services and abilities are being used to tremendous advantage by the Government!

The new Government wished to appoint to the Policy Division its own personnel, and political patronage appointments have destroyed the independence of the independent public servants who were part of the division. The Government has now replaced those officers with its own hand-picked political appointees. The Chairman of that committee, who was a member of the Policy Division of the Premier's Department, has no doubt found himself in some other department; I do not know quite where.

The Hon. Anne Levy: Counting megalitres!

The Hon. C. J. SUMNER: Yes, he is probably reading meters in the Engineering and Water Supply Department, like a number of others.

The PRESIDENT: Will the Leader keep his explanation to the point.

The Hon. C. J. SUMNER: As I said, the Chairman of the committee no longer works in the Policy Division and I wonder whether the Government has replaced him. Following the change of Government last year, is this committee still in existence? If it is, who are its members, and when is the committee expected to provide a report?

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: The matter obviously pertains to the Premier's Department and I will refer the honourable member's question to the Premier and bring down a reply.

MOPEDS

The Hon. D. H. LAIDLAW: I seek leave to make a brief statement before asking the Attorney-General, representing the Minister of Transport, a question about motorised bicycles or mopeds, as they are commonly known.

Leave granted.

The Hon. D. H. LAIDLAW: The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Road Safety issued a report in 1978 recommending ways to encourage the use of mopeds in Australia because of their excellent safety record compared with motor cycles in those overseas countries where they are widely used. A survey conducted

by the Ministry of Transport in the United Kingdom found that the overall accident rate for motor cycles is seven times greater than that of mopeds. Furthermore, it found that if a motor cycle rider spent one full year on a moped before moving to motor cycles, the chances of an accident were reduced by 80 per cent. The committee defined a moped as a motor cycle with a propelling engine having a piston displacement not exceeding 50cc, having a maximum speed not exceeding 60 km/h, and capable of being propelled as a bicycle.

Very few have been sold in South Australia because, presumably, they are regarded as a motor cycle. In this State an owner must obtain a class 4A driver's licence, and he must register the moped and fit number plates, but he is exempt from paying a registration fee. He must take out third party insurance, but this is reduced to \$18 per annum compared with \$52 for a small motor cycle.

In France there are over 7 000 000 mopeds, which is equivalent to 150 mopeds for every 1 000 inhabitants. In Switzerland and the Netherlands the proportion is just as high. In the United States only 25 000 were sold in 1973, but after the first energy crisis many of the States reclassified mopeds as bicycles rather than motor cycles. Sales then rose to 250 000 in 1977, and a recent forecast for this year is 600 000 a year.

Has the Minister or his departmental officers examined the recommendations of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Road Safety regarding mopeds? Because mopeds travel over 200 miles on a gallon of fuel, because they take little parking space, and because of their excellent safety record in other countries, will the Minister consider encouraging the use of mopeds, especially by commuters into the city centre?

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: I will refer the honourable member's question to the Minister of Transport and bring down a reply.

DRY LAND FARMING

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: I seek leave to make a short explanation before asking the Minister of Community Welfare, representing the Minister of Agriculture, a question about dry land farming in Iraq.

Leave granted.

The Hon. B. A. CHATTERTON: South Australia has been involved in dry land farming projects in Iraq for some time. In fact, about four years ago I believe the first discussions were held with the Iraqi Government about the possible transfer of South Australian dry land technology to that country. In 1978, the Director of Agriculture visited Iraq, and I visited that country last year. A team of Iraqi experts came to South Australia in the middle of last year also. I believe that since that time, during the latter part of 1979, the South Australian Government sent a team to Iraq to discuss further details on the possible project and that they are currently negotiating with the Iraqi Government.

Yesterday, the Minister of Agriculture in Western Australia announced that the Western Australian Government had also been negotiating with Iraq and had signed a contract worth about \$7 500 000 for the establishment of dry land farming projects in that country. Has the fact that the Western Australian Government signed a contract with Iraq precluded South Australia from also becoming involved in that country? If it does not preclude South Australia, are negotiations still proceeding with Iraq to establish projects in that country and, if so, at what stage have those negotiations reached, and when does the Minister expect them to be concluded?

The Hon. J. C. BURDETT: I will refer the honourable member's question to my colleague and bring down a reply.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION: SHOP DEVELOPMENTS

The Hon. J. R. CORNWALL: I seek leave of the Council to make a personal explanation.

Leave granted.

The Hon. J. R. CORNWALL: Mr. President, it has come to my attention that I have been seriously misrepresented in the House of Assembly by the Minister of Planning. On Tuesday, the Minister claimed, in another place, that I told a public meeting at Norwood last Friday night that the Victorian Government had introduced a moratorium on shop development. First, the Minister was not present when I addressed that meeting. The Minister spoke first.

The Hon. C. J. Sumner: He wanted to get out quickly.

The Hon. J. R. CORNWALL: He said that he had to attend some other pressing engagements that had been made some months previously; that was his story, anyway. I was good enough to allow the Minister to speak first, and then I was quite obliging in allowing him to be questioned, because I wanted him to have adequate time to explain his position to the meeting. He was then questioned at length by traders and residents' action groups present about this matter.

I can certainly understand his being upset by the meeting, because he took a dreadful mauling from the questioners. However, I have no desire to indulge in personal attacks, as the Minister has done. Indeed, I feel sorry for the Minister. He has taken such a hiding in Cabinet over so many planning and environment matters that he is no doubt emotionally upset.

The PRESIDENT: Order! It is difficult for one to ascertain what the honourable member is trying to explain.

The Hon. J. R. CORNWALL: I want to make clear again that the Minister was not present when I addressed the meeting. However, the Minister of Agriculture, who was a dedicated opponent of any form of planning, was present throughout the proceedings. Mr. Chapman had apparently been sent along to stiffen up Mr. Wotton's resistance to proposals put forward at the meeting and to make sure that he did not give any reassurance to the gathering.

However, Mr. Chapman has either misrepresented or misunderstood what I said. He does not seem to know the difference between metropolitan Melbourne and the State of Victoria. What I told the meeting was that the Victorian Government retained some measure of rational control over retail developments in the metropolitan area through the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. However, last year they became alarmed by the action of some councils outside the metropolitan area and adjacent to provincial cities.

I cited the case of the Shire of Marong, which had given approval, without the Government's knowledge, for a large regional shopping centre adjacent to Bendigo. This has the potential to be as big as the entire central business district of Bendigo, a city with a population of about 55 000 people.

When that developer tried to do the same thing in the Shire of Shepparton, adjacent to the City Council area, the Minister of Planning applied an interim development order to stop the application from proceeding. At the same time, the Secretary to the Ministry of Planning wrote

to 254 municipalities throughout Victoria warning them that, if they attempted to proceed unilaterally, interim development orders would be applied to them.

I never suggested that the Victorian procedures were satisfactory. Indeed, planning procedures in Victoria are piecemeal and, like so many other things, are subject to unfortunate political pressures. However, the point which I made at the meeting and which I have consistently made is that, even with its dedication to the market forces philosophy, the Victorian Government acknowledges the necessity for some centralised rational retail planning controls.

HILLS FIRE

The Hon. N. K. FOSTER: I seek leave to make a statement before asking the Attorney-General a question regarding the holding of Royal Commissions.

Leave granted.

The Hon. N. K. FOSTER: First, I should like to express my very great regret regarding the bush fires that occurred in the Adelaide Hills area yesterday, and to extend my sympathy to all those who suffered fearful consequences of an emotional kind and material losses. The newspapers are appealing for funds, and Mr. Tonkin is willing to give \$100 000, which, I might add, would not meet anything like the loss incurred in the smallest fire-affected area. I realise the limitations of the State Government in relation to relief measures.

Although the newspapers are saying that it was a bad day (which of course it was), it was, in the circumstances, a lucky day in some respects because it must be conceded by everyone, even members of this Council, that it must have involved a great deal of luck and good fortune, as well as a tremendous amount of work done by those fighting the fire, that there was no loss of life. Indeed, one reads in the press that teenage schoolchildren were in a building over which the fire swept, and that certainly could have involved a loss of lives. It seems to me (and I have referred to this previously) that fire control in an area so close to the city that has become so heavily populated in the past few years has been left wanting. I should like to deal more thoroughly with that aspect if the Council will allow me latitude in relation to the leave that I have been granted to explain my question.

It must be evident to everyone that the Adelaide Hills is no place for a refuse burning dump, particularly in the months from September until May of any year. It is up to us to accept the responsibility for that matter and to ensure that appropriate reports on the situation are made available to the community and to members in this place. We should not have to rely on newspaper reports to discover that the fire commenced at a dump in the Adelaide Hills. I do not care who owns the dump or who leases it. I do not care what political affiliations the people concerned may have, and I am not suggesting that they belong to any particular Party. As the Adelaide Hills area becomes much more closely settled and is subject to such high bushfire danger, we can take a lesson from the Californian situation, the geography of the Adelaide Hills being very similar to that of the hills near Los Angeles.

If this Government is prepared to appoint a Royal Commission and even fetch a person back from overseas (I refer to the previous Commissioner of Police), and if it is to conduct an inquiry into the Norwood by-election, matters that can be dealt with easily, the Attorney-General should ensure that the matter to which I now refer is considered for the benefit of all South Australians, especially those in the designated areas. I ask that he request the Premier to set up a Royal Commission into the

cause of the disastrous fire in the Adelaide Hills yesterday and ascertain whether or not the cause was a fire left to burn in a council or privately-owned area, and whether the burning of that fire took place during a fire ban period and infringed upon local council by-laws as a result. I should also like to know who owns the dump and which local council or adjoining councils use it.

Also, will a South Australian judge preside at the Royal Commission? I emphasise that the person concerned should come from this State, as we have full confidence in this State's Judiciary, contrary to the view of others who it was reported last week thought a judge should be brought in from overseas to head a Royal Commission. The public should be invited to give evidence, and the Royal Commission should look into all aspects of compensation for damage caused to leasehold property and to the property of uninsured people, as well as ascertaining insurance companies' attitudes to any claims made as a result of the fire. Finally, I ask that the matter be treated as one of extreme urgency.

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: The Government is concerned about the damage which has been caused as a result of yesterday's fire and has already taken steps to ensure that the emergencies caused as a result of the fire are dealt with promptly. I am sure that the Council would want to know that a number of initiatives were taken yesterday at the height of the emergency by Government departments and agencies as well as voluntary organisations to both fight the fire and deal with the people who suffered as a result of these fires. The Premier made a statement this afternoon in the House of Assembly which detailed fully what steps were taken by all of those people to deal with the emergency.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Why wasn't it possible to make the same statement here?

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: The statement was made by the Premier in the House of Assembly.

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: We as a Government are concerned about the disaster and have expressed our concern to those people who have suffered as a result of it. Ministers and members of the Public Service have been active at the sites of fires, and at all locations where people are being cared for, to express that support. As the honourable member has indicated, the Government has made an initial donation of \$100 000 to start the Lord Mayor's Bushfire Relief Appeal. The honourable member has suggested that the newspaper claims that the fire started in a rubbish dump. At this stage that is speculation.

The Hon. N. K. Foster: That is why we want a Royal Commission.

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: Just a moment. The speculation has not been substantiated by any factual evidence. The inquiry to establish the location and cause of the fire is still being conducted, and it is expected that it will take several days to complete. It is not necessary, in my view, to call for a Royal Commission to determine the cause or location of the cause of the fire. We are concerned to see that people who have suffered are cared for and that emergency situations are dealt with quickly. We are anxious to establish the cause of the fire and to ensure that if it was through neglect those who are responsible for it should be accountable. We are also concerned to ensure that the risks of such a fire are minimised in the future. People do become complacent about fires, particularly in the Adelaide Hills area, and as a result of that complacency things often occur, such as building within heavily forested areas which ought to be examined. People do not really recognise this as being

dangerous until a disastrous fire occurs. They are the sort of things the Government will be looking at in the future. They are the sorts of things our attention should be directed to rather than wasting the resources of the public on a Royal Commission, which can achieve no useful purpose.

The Hon. N. K. FOSTER: I ask a supplementary question because the matter was so cruelly and atrociously dealt with by the Minister in this Council. We are getting sick and tired of the way he answers questions or fails to answer them. It is a matter of the responsibility of the Government towards people who are in most unfortunate circumstances. I put this to you bluntly, seeing you have answered for the Premier. I asked in my question that you request the Premier and Cabinet and you have said in this place that you are opposed to it. What sort of an Attorney are you for this State—quite useless and fragile.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Members interjecting:

The Hon. N. K. FOSTER: How the hell do you know?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. N. K. FOSTER: He may have been better than you.

The PRESIDENT: Order! When I ask a member to sit down or to take notice, I expect him to do so. What is more, if you are not satisfied, I will continue with it. You will refrain from carrying on in such a manner and you will resume your seat when called on to do so. If you wish to ask a question, ask it now.

The Hon. N. K. FOSTER: I will ask it but I did not infringe by using that type of language for a person who deserves it.

The PRESIDENT: Will you ask the question?

The Hon. N. K. FOSTER: My question is: is he, as Attorney, a person who gets about \$60 000 a year from the public, prepared to accept the responsibility by way of special consideration and, if need be, special legislation, to ensure that uninsured people in the area are given the same benefits as other people in the community who suffer loss from a natural disaster, as this was?

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: I will answer that part of the question which is supplementary to the first and on which the honourable member was called. I indicate that I do not believe that this is an appropriate occasion for a Royal Commission.

The Hon. K. L. MILNE: I seek leave, not really for a question but to support the Hon. Mr. Foster.

The PRESIDENT: By question?

The Hon. K. L. MILNE: Well, I will ask a question.

The PRESIDENT: Do you wish to make a personal statement?

The Hon. K. L. MILNE: Yes, to make a personal statement and then ask a question.

The PRESIDENT: I am confused now. Do you seek leave to explain prior to asking a question?

The Hon. K. L. MILNE: I seek leave to make a statement prior to asking a question.

The Hon. M. B. Cameron: On what subject?

The Hon. J. E. Dunford: On salaries.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Mr. Milne had better get the confusion sorted out. You ask leave to make an explanation prior to asking a question of whom?

The Hon. K. L. MILNE: The Attorney-General. The subject of my question is the recent catastrophic fire in the Hills.

Leave granted.

The Hon. K. L. MILNE: I want to support what the Hon. Mr. Foster has said and, believe it or not, go further than that. I live near that area and was in the area of Longwood and Bradbury this morning, taking food and

medical supplies to a family that had been badly hurt in the fire. They saved their house, but only just. The devastation in that area is unbelievable. Over the years I have fought fires in the Hills, the foothills, and at Victor Harbor, but I have never seen anything like this. It was going to happen sooner or later. The amount of \$100 000 being given to the Lord Mayor's fund is peanuts. It is not adequate and is a misunderstanding of what the situation is. In fairness, I say that perhaps the Government has not had time, but I would suggest starting with \$1 000 000. This is a matter of national natural disaster. Mr. Jacobi, a member of another place, has been trying to persuade the Federal Government to bring in a national natural disaster scheme, and I was helping him. He put a very good case, and it was rejected. They keep on relying on insurance companies and on people insuring, but that will not do. I support the suggestion that a Royal Commission be set up and that, if the Federal Government will not set up a national natural disaster scheme, we set up our own State scheme.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Or a Select Committee.

The Hon. K. L. MILNE: If people do not think what I have suggested is appropriate, a Select Committee of this Council would be appropriate and a very good thing. Regardless of whether it is a flood in Queensland, a cyclone in Darwin, or a fire in South Australia, people who are insured do not get the help that uninsured people get. It is no good trying to persuade people to insure, because they do not. They forget, and they take the risk. It is a shocking disaster that the Federal Government will not face the music and say that everyone must contribute. Whether it is a case of an enormous hail storm in the North or a drought in an area, if we believe that people should live in those areas we should all pay a little each year. It could be dealt with on our tax return, a few cents, to cope with things so that people can get a fresh start. People in that area, just one area, have lost house, car, furniture, and everything else. We cannot debate this matter as though it is funny. We must take it further and say that we are willing to help, not voluntarily and not as charity, but by seeing that the State is looking after the position. I ask the Attorney-General to accede to the request made by the Hon. Mr. Foster about a Royal Commission, and I ask that the Government consider establishing a State natural disaster scheme.

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: People are losing sight of the fact that I have indicated already that there is recognition of the emergency and recognition that there is a disaster, and that the contribution that the Government has made to the Lord Mayor's Bushfire Relief Appeal is in the nature of an initial immediate and urgent contribution. I am curious to know what members on the other side, including the Hon. Mr. Milne, believe will be achieved by a Royal Commission. It cannot establish any facts that we do not know now. It cannot provide any answers that we cannot find out by other means. There is provision under the Coroner's Act for inquests and coronial inquiries.

The Hon. N. K. Foster: You haven't ordered one.

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: It is not in my province to order one.

The Hon. N. K. Foster: What is your province?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. N. K. Foster: What are you being paid for?

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: There is provision in the Coroner's Act for an inquest if the Coroner believes one is necessary, but a coronial inquiry is not ordinarily held unless there is likely to be evidence that a criminal offence has been committed.

The Hon. N. K. FOSTER: I rise on a point of order. The Attorney-General is too much. Is he not aware of the

coronial inquiry instituted by a senior Minister in the House of Assembly last year?

Members interjecting:

The Hon. M. B. Cameron: What is the point of order?

The Hon. N. K. FOSTER: He says it is not within his province. That is the point of order.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am sorry that you have to go on in such an irrational manner.

The Hon. N. K. Foster: Why don't you shut them up?

The PRESIDENT: It is not like that. I warn you that on the next occasion I will name you.

The Hon. N. K. FOSTER: Mr. President, I would like to say this: if you warn me, fair enough, but if you would listen to the blokes on your side, who goaded me; if you want me out—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I have no option but to name the Hon. Mr. Foster.

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: I move—

The Hon. N. K. Foster: You need not go through all that clap trap. If that is what you want, that is what you can have. I will gladly give it to you. I would not sit here with the mental attitude that you have.

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: Your having named the honourable member, Mr. President, it is my responsibility as Leader of the Council to move that such honourable member be suspended. Therefore, I move:

That the honourable member be suspended from the service of the Council under Standing Order 210.

The PRESIDENT: Is that motion seconded?

Several honourable members: Yes.

The Council divided on the motion:

Ayes (10)—The Hons. J. C. Burdett, M. B. Cameron, J. A. Carnie, L. H. Davis, M. B. Dawkins, R. C. DeGaris, K. T. Griffin (teller), D. H. Laidlaw, K. L. Milne, and R. J. Ritson.

Noes (9)—The Hons. Frank Blevins, G. L. Bruce, B. A. Chatterton, J. R. Cornwall, J. E. Dunford, N. K. Foster, Anne Levy, C. J. Sumner (teller), and Barbara Wiese.

Pair—Aye—The Hon. C. M. Hill. No—The Hon. C. W. Creedon.

Majority of 1 for the Ayes.

Motion thus carried.

The PRESIDENT: As the motion has been carried, the honourable member is suspended from the rest of today's sitting and I ask him to withdraw from the Chamber.

The Hon. N. K. Foster withdrew from the Chamber.

URANIUM

The Hon. BARBARA WIESE: I seek leave to make a short statement before asking the Attorney-General, representing the Minister of Mines and Energy, a question concerning uranium waste disposal.

Leave granted.

The Hon. BARBARA WIESE: On 16 October 1979 I asked the Minister whether he had read a report in *Newsweek* stating that United States scientists had rejected vitrification as a suitable nuclear waste disposal method. On 21 December 1979 I received a written reply from the Minister stating that this claim was at some variance with other scientific evidence which, of course, was why I asked the question in the first place.

The Minister also said that this matter would be examined further if I could produce the technical evidence to support it. The Minister's response is contemptuous and irresponsible. The Department of Mines and Energy is supposed to be the expert on the nuclear fuel cycle in this State. It should not be necessary for an Opposition backbencher to supply technical evidence on a matter as

important as this. I have alerted the Minister to the fact that this evidence exists and, I might say, it is evidence which has been referred to and supported by President Carter within the past two weeks. It is now the responsibility of the Minister to ensure that he is fully informed on this matter by utilising the resources available to him in his department.

First, will the Minister direct his officers to obtain and evaluate the technical and scientific evidence available in the United States that refutes the Government's claim that the vitrification process for waste disposal is safe? Secondly, can he explain to this Parliament why the Government has previously failed to examine this United States evidence which, clearly, the United States Government has considered to be of such importance that its own policy has been based upon it?

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: I will refer the honourable member's question to the Minister of Mines and Energy and bring down a reply.

HANDICAPPED EMPLOYEES

The Hon. J. E. DUNFORD: I seek leave to make a short statement before asking the Attorney-General, representing the Premier, a question about pay-roll tax exemptions for employers employing handicapped people.

Leave granted.

The Hon. J. E. DUNFORD: I have a copy of the Liberal Party policy speech, and I believe that part of the policy has been carried out. The policy speech, headed "Treasury and Economic Development, Tax Cuts—New Initiatives", states:

Salaries of any additional full-time employees under 20 will be exempt from pay-roll tax. Special pay-roll tax exemption of \$36 000 will apply to all firms increasing total employment by hiring two persons under 20. Total cost of above promises, \$20 000 000 in a full year.

I commend the Liberal Government, which I have never done before, because anything that can alleviate unemployment is to be applauded and because unemployment presents such a serious situation.

I am concerned that the SURS scheme has been done away with. The important matter to which I am now referring has been overlooked for many years. Physically handicapped people have the sympathy of the community, but they have not received employment. The situation in relation to the physically handicapped is a little bit like racism; nobody believes that it is present in society but it is.

Employers might sympathise with the physically handicapped, but it seems that they will not interview them. This problem is deeply ingrained in our society. I believe that many of the physically handicapped people who are presently employed have proved to be very effective employees. In fact, I believe that once they are so employed they feel that they form a useful part of the community, but physically handicapped people receiving social services believe they are receiving charity.

We are ignoring the plight of the physically handicapped, and that is not good enough. I do not want the Attorney-General to answer this question as he did the Hon. Mr. Foster's question, but I want him to take it right to the Premier. Will the Premier extend the special pay-roll tax exemption of \$36 000 to all firms that increase their total employment by hiring two physically handicapped people, irrespective of their age? Will he also give further pay-roll tax exemptions for any additional full-time physically handicapped employees, irrespective of age? Therefore, my proposition extends beyond the age of 20

years. If the Premier will not extend this provision, as outlined in his policy speech, I am prepared to accept the same provision that applies to non-physically handicapped persons; that is, persons under 20 years of age, and all additional employees.

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: I will refer the honourable member's question to the Premier and bring down a reply.

ROAD BLOCKS

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the Minister representing the Minister of Transport a question about road blocks in the Burnside council area.

Leave granted.

The Hon. R. C. DeGARIS: At the last meeting of the Burnside City Council, a unanimous resolution was passed requesting the removal of all road blocks in the Burnside City Council area. Honourable members may recall the circumstances surrounding the erection of road blocks in that area, when a motion for disallowance was before this Council, and an undertaking was given (when the Council rose) that the regulations would be withdrawn and new regulations would be drafted. That was never done; the undertaking given was never carried out.

A resolution has now been passed by the Burnside council asking for the removal of all road blocks. What action does the Minister of Transport propose to take, now that that resolution has passed the Burnside council?

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: I will refer the honourable member's question to the Minister of Transport and bring down a reply.

HILLS FIRE

The Hon. R. J. RITSON: Can the Attorney-General indicate the relative cost to the community and the relative effectiveness of:

- (a) an ordinary departmental inquiry into the Hills fires;
- (b) an inquest; and
- (c) a Royal Commission.

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: The comparative costs are not readily available, but I will obtain them and bring down a reply for the honourable member.

GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS

The Hon. C. J. SUMNER: I seek leave to make a brief statement prior to asking the Attorney-General a question about Government statements.

Leave granted.

The PRESIDENT: You have a minute to ask your question, before the expiration of Question Time.

The Hon. C. J. SUMNER: I can tell the time, too, Mr. President. I understand that in the past it has been the practice that, when there is a matter of general public concern upon which the Government makes a statement, that statement is made by the Premier in another place, and that the Leader of the Government makes a similar statement in this Chamber, so that the whole Parliament can be advised about the Government's approach. I am not saying that that applies to every Ministerial statement that may be the responsibility of a particular Minister, but with a matter of general Government importance, general public importance that concerns the Government as a whole, all of the community and all of Parliament, then

(and I believe that the Hon. Mr. DeGaris will back me up) it has been the practice for statements of that kind to be delivered by the Premier in another place and by the Leader of the Government in this Council. In fact, it seems to me—and I am surprised that the Hon. Mr. DeGaris has not complained about the fact that a statement was given—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Call on the Orders of the Day.

The Hon. C. J. SUMNER: Mr. President—

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. C. J. SUMNER: Mr. President, I rise on a point of order. It has been past practice for a person who is standing and asking his question, when 3.15 p.m. arrives, to be allowed to ask his question. Mr. President, if you do not intend to allow me to finish my question you are departing from previous practice.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Standing Order 69, to which the honourable member refers, reads as follows:

At the expiration of one hour from the meeting of the Council, the Orders of the Day, if not sooner dealt with, shall be called on by the Clerk, without any question being put: Provided that, if a division or a ballot shall have then been ordered, such ballot or division shall be first concluded.

The Hon. Mr. Sumner knows quite well that he has a right to ask for an extension of time, and he reminded me that he was extremely conscious of the time when he began his question. Therefore, I have no option but to call on Orders of the Day.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT: HILLS FIRE

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN (Attorney-General): I move:

That Orders of the Day be postponed to enable me to make a Ministerial statement.

Motion carried.

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: I seek leave to make a statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. K. T. GRIFFIN: The Premier has made a Ministerial statement in another place, and I intend to read that statement to this Council, but in so doing I indicate that it is, not unreservedly the position that when a statement by a Minister is presented in another place, it will also be presented in this chamber. In making this Ministerial statement I point out that the Leader of the Opposition in another place has warmly congratulated the Government on the Premier's statement and has joined in the sentiments expressed by the Premier.

I must report to the Council the extent of damage caused by the tragic fire in the Adelaide Hills, and detail the relief operations that have been and will continue to be undertaken in aid of the victims. Even at this stage the full extent of damage is unknown. The latest reports from the scene indicate that about 20 000 acres were burnt out. In the north-eastern section of the fire, 25 houses, 75 sheds and 25 vehicles were destroyed. This, however, does not include the area of greatest damage, in the region of Longwood, and emergency personnel are still determining the full extent of damage in this sector.

I am certain I speak for all members of the Council, and all South Australians, in expressing our heartfelt thanks for the splendid efforts of every person who rallied to help. Special mention must be made of the aid provided by the following: the C.F.S., local government employees in affected areas, police personnel, voluntary workers,

including St. John Ambulance Brigade, Red Cross, Salvation Army, Central Methodist Mission, St. Vincent de Paul Society, R.S.P.C.A., community service clubs such as Lions and the Country Women's Association, South Australian Fire Brigade, West Beach Airport fire service, the Army, medical staff, especially the retrieval team and the Burns Unit of the Royal Adelaide Hospital, Telecom, Government departments, including the Departments for Community Welfare, Agriculture, Lands, and others, and the Electricity Trust of South Australia.

Red Cross involvement in the disaster was the registration of people suffering in the area. Red Cross manned three registration centres, at Heathfield, Strathalbyn and Mt. Barker. People are still looking. With Telecom's assistance, Red Cross has now doubled the telephone lines in Red Cross, so that 14 lines are now available. Red Cross will keep going until it can satisfy people's requests. It kept going until 3.30 this morning, and those involved were back on the job at 7 a.m.

It cannot be emphasised too strongly that the selfless, courageous and spontaneous response of everyone involved, all of whom rose to the urgency and extreme danger of the situation without thought of personal misfortune, prevented a calamity of even greater dimensions. It is a miracle that more people were not injured, and I pray that the search being undertaken today for trapped victims will fail to yield one fatality.

The latest reports to hand indicate that the St. John Ambulance Brigade treated 154 walking patients and six stretcher patients, two of whom were seriously burnt. In addition to these numbers, St. John personnel treated a large number of fire fighters for eye irritation and minor burns. The medical retrieval team from Royal Adelaide Hospital went to Stirling District Hospital, and injuries treated on the spot were followed up with normal outpatient services.

Regarding the Department of Community Welfare, an emergency centre was established yesterday at Heathfield High School and will remain open for as long as necessary. It is staffed by 10 departmental officers, with two others located at the Stirling district office. Accommodation, clothing and other welfare services, including the provision of emergency financial relief, are being handled at these centres.

An information referral point is being established in the Stirling council chambers (telephone 339 5400). Five lines are available at present, and another five lines will be installed as soon as possible. It is proposed that representatives of police, St. John, Salvation Army, C.F.S., State Emergency Services, R.S.P.C.A., Department of Community Welfare, Red Cross, and the Australian Insurance Institute will be co-ordinated locally through this information referral point.

Two Department of Community Welfare officers are co-ordinating two crisis care units from the Stirling Police Station (telephone 339 2422). Accommodation overnight was provided for 14 people at Woorabinda. All others requiring accommodation stayed with friends or relatives. Early this morning additional D.C.W. staff were dispatched to Woorabinda. Furthermore, the schools of Strathalbyn and Mt. Barker, as well as Heathfield, to which I have referred already, stayed open through the night and accommodated relief teams from Red Cross, Salvation Army and the police.

As just one example of the splendid response displayed by everyone involved, I might mention that Mr. Jim Johns, Headmaster of the tiny Scott Creek school, provided his 10 students with food and bedding in the relative safety of his own home. The precise extent of

welfare services required today and in the following weeks is uncertain. However, ample staff and facilities are being provided, with particular emphasis being placed upon the establishment of grief counselling and assistance as the full impact of the tragedy becomes clear.

Officers of the Department of Lands are compiling an inventory of land owned by State Government departments and authorities which will be suitable for short-term and long-term use for the agistment of stock of owners whose land has been rendered useless for grazing by the fire. This information is being supplied to the State Disaster Relief Committee to enable it to provide relief in appropriate circumstances.

The aerial survey aircraft of the Survey Division, Department of Lands, is standing by to aerially photograph in colour the areas from Heathfield to Hahndorf and at Deep Creek for the use of authorities responsible for action following the fires. The flights will be undertaken as soon as the present cloud cover over the areas has lifted. Existing maps and aerial photographs have already been supplied to those authorities.

The Department of Agriculture is ready to provide financial assistance under the Primary Producers Emergency Assistance Act, as well as emergency stock treatment services, loss assessment services and fodder relief. Complete co-operation has been received from the Commonwealth Government, under the terms of the Commonwealth-States Natural Disasters Relief Agreement.

As has been explained in another place earlier this week, this scheme provides for matching contributions for damage up to \$3 000 000, with Commonwealth-State contributions in the ratio of three to one for disasters in which damage exceeds this amount. The State Disaster Relief Committee, formed at the time of the November storm, will meet at 3 p.m. today to co-ordinate all relief operations.

Once again, I cannot praise too highly the immediate response of the community. The people of South Australia have clearly expressed their immediate concern and will now have an opportunity of demonstrating this in a tangible way. Several organisations, but notably the Lions Club of Stirling, are conducting appeals for clothing and household goods. Also, the Lord Mayor has established a fund known as the Lord Mayor's Bushfire Appeal, 1980, which will pool all financial donations for the fire victims. The Government has contributed \$100 000 to the fund, which will be officially launched in the council chambers tomorrow at 10 a.m. The Premier has indicated that he commends that appeal (as I do also) to all South Australians.

PITJANTJATJARA LAND RIGHTS BILL

The Hon. C. J. SUMNER (Leader of the Opposition): I seek leave to move this motion in an amended form. I have advised the Leader of the Government of the amended form and I understand that you, Sir, have notice of it.

Leave granted.

The Hon. C. J. SUMNER obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to vest in all those groups of people known as Anangu Pitjantjatjaraku title to those parcels of land known as Pitjantjatjara lands upon and subject to the provisions of this Act and for other purposes. Read a first time.

ADJOURNMENT

At 3.31 p.m. the Council adjourned until Tuesday 26 February at 2.15 p.m.