

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Third Assembly

Parliamentary Record

Tuesday 12 October 1982
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NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Third Assembly

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Opposition Leader	Bob Collins
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Minister for Education and Minister for Lands and Housing	James Murray Robertson
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Casuarina	Nicholas Dondas
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Sessional Committee — Parliament House

Mr Speaker
Mr Dondas
Mrs Lawrie
Mrs O'Neil
Mr Perron

PART 1

DEBATES

DEBATES

Tuesday 12 October 1982

Mr Speaker MacFarlane took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITIONS

Unification Church

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Alice Springs): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 1183 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to the Unification Church. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of Standing Orders. I move that the petition be received and read.

Motion agreed to; petition received and read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully shows that the Unification Church, commonly called the Moonies, intends to establish a branch in the Territory. Your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly do take note of their extreme concern that the damage to family life already caused by this sect will further spread throughout the Territory. Further, your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly take whatever steps are possible to prevent the establishment of this sect in the Northern Territory, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

South Korean Prisoner

Mrs O'NEIL (Fannie Bay): I present a petition from 45 citizens of the Northern Territory, who are members of Amnesty International, relating to a South Korean prisoner Kim Yong-gi. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of Standing Orders. I move that the petition be received and read.

Motion agreed to; petition received and read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory who are members of Amnesty International, respectfully sheweth that Kim Yong-gi has been adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience. Kim Yong-gi was sentenced to 2½ years imprisonment in South Korea for the non-violent expression of political opinion. Article 21 of the South Korean Constitution provides a guarantee of freedom of political expression. Noting the contacts that exist between South Korea and the Northern Territory, your petitioners request the Northern Territory government to make representation to the South Korean government to expedite the unconditional release of this prisoner of conscience, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever humbly pray.

Extension of the City Centre Mall

Mr STEELE (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 141 citizens of the Northern Territory in relation to the extension of Darwin Mall. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of Standing Orders. I move that the petition be received and read.

Motion agreed to; petition received and read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth that residents of Darwin urge the necessary authorities to implement extensions to the city centre Mall across Knuckey Street to Edmunds Street incorporating that section of Knuckey Street between Shadforth and Austin Lanes, and your humble petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

TABLED PAPERS

1982 Report of Northern Territory Remuneration Tribunal Relating to Members of the Legislative Assembly

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I table the 1982 Report of the Northern Territory Remuneration Tribunal relating to members of the Legislative Assembly. I move that the Assembly take note of the paper and seek leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

1982 Report of Northern Territory Remuneration Tribunal Relating to Judges

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I table the 1982 Report of the Northern Territory Remuneration Tribunal relating to judges. I move that the Assembly take note of the paper and seek leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

1982 Report of Northern Territory Remuneration Tribunal Relating to Magistrates

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I table the 1982 Report of the Northern Territory Remuneration Tribunal relating to magistrates. I move that the Assembly take note of the paper and seek leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Transcripts of Supreme Court Hearings on Pleas of Guilty

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, in response to inquiries from a number of members of the Legislative Assembly, I table the transcript of 2 Supreme Court hearings in relation to pleas of guilty, firstly by Andrew Richard Hill and, secondly, by Todd William Dwyer. In tabling the transcripts of those Supreme Court hearings on pleas of guilty by those 2 persons, I have no comment to make. I simply table the documents so that members of this Assembly who have queries regarding either of those matters can more easily obtain access to complete details of the way they were handled.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1982-83 (Serial 235)

Continued from 31 August 1982.

Ms D'ROZARIO (Sanderson): Mr Speaker, in presenting his fifth budget on 31 August, the honourable Treasurer stated, quite correctly I thought, that this particular budget had been prepared against a background of deteriorating

economic conditions. I think it bears looking at some of these conditions because the Territory's economy is very closely tied to the condition of the national economy because of the structure of the Territory economy. Some of the indicators of worsening economic conditions on the national scene are outlined as follows.

Inflation, which is an indicator that economists look at separately, currently stands at 10.7% compared with about 9.7% at the end of the 1981-82 financial year - a clear indication that inflation is on the rise. Unemployment in Australia has reached the levels of the depression in the 1930s, the latest estimate being that over 504 000 people are without jobs. Of course, this figure will rise at the end of the school year when some thousands of school leavers attempt to join the workforce.

Consumption, as measured by the retail sales and expenditure on consumer durables indices, has been constrained despite increases in real wages. The rate of growth in investment, as measured by new fixed capital expenditure, has decreased by 1.1% on the figure for the year ending 30 June 1982, and the rate of growth of profits of non-foreign trading enterprises has also fallen by about 3.1% on the figure for the previous financial year. It goes without saying that interest rates, although they now show a heartening moderation, have been extremely high compared to the high levels of prosperity which prevailed during the period of high expansion in the last decade.

All these conditions were acknowledged by the Treasurer. He also acknowledged that the Territory had not remained untouched by conditions in the national and international economy. The opposition can only agree with him on this point. The structure of our economy is such that the Territory cannot insulate itself from the effects of the national and international economic environment.

In the private sector, the mining industry looms largest and provides us with the highest value of production in terms of growth value. That production is the highest in the private sector. Not only is it the highest producing sector in the economy but also the minerals that are produced in the Territory are nearly all disposed of in the international market. We have seen in recent times the fall in world prices which has led to a downturn in the mining sector. Of course, in the states, this downturn in the mining sector has been much spoken about but mining is a rather smaller component of the total private production sector in those states than it is in the Territory. We have been hit harder and the indicators are all too apparent; for example, the closure of the Peko copper smelter at Tennant Creek, the scaling down of operations at the Gemco plant at Groote Eylandt and the reduced expectation of revenue from mineral royalties compared to royalties which were collected in the last financial year. The revenue paper - Budget Paper No 2 - indicates this point. The actual collections in the 1981-82 were \$3.02m and the estimate of collections this year is only about \$2.8m.

Mr Speaker, the next largest production sector in the Northern Territory economy is the beef industry and it has to be said that the recession is sending that industry back to the conditions that prevailed between 1975 and 1978. Tourism is also a very large production sector in the Northern Territory. The tourist industry has not been untouched by the recession but it now appears that prospects for growth are constrained by the recessionary conditions in the national and international economy. A travel and tourism seminar held in Katherine last month was told that the travel industry was no longer able to resist the squeeze on economic growth. A combination of factors was identified as limiting prospects for growth and these factors were the squeeze on household expenditure and decreases in government and business travel. These factors were

said to reduce severely the prospects for growth in tourism. The speaker who addressed the Katherine seminar was Dr Neville Norman and his estimate of growth for the future was set at about 3% compared to the present annual average growth of 6%. Quite appropriately, this particular seminar was held in Katherine which is a major tourist destination in the Territory. It received quite a lot of media coverage at the time.

In another significant sector, Mr Speaker, the prawning industry, again depressed conditions and depressing conditions have been apparent. Of course, these are evidenced by losses incurred by Northern Research. Our 4 major private production sectors all give a picture of accelerating winding down.

When we look to the government's estimates of revenue contained in Budget Paper No 2, we see that the government's estimates of revenue also suggest a slowing down in economic activity. To take a few indicators of this expectation, I point firstly to payroll tax which comprises about 65% of Territory taxation - \$27m out of \$42.3m. In 1981-82, the Treasury estimate for growth in revenue from this source was 19% on the previous year's collection. In 1982-83, the estimate presented here is only 14% on the previous year's collection. Since payroll tax is directly related to the size of the payroll, the reduced expectation signifies a reduction in employment growth.

Mr Speaker, we come then to mineral royalties of which I have already mentioned something. It is expected that revenue from this source will be \$2.8m compared to \$3.02m collected last year. This is a reduction of about 7% in money terms. Since mineral royalties are related either to the volume of minerals mined or to the gross revenue from mineral output in the Territory at the moment, the expectation signifies a reduction in mineral activity.

We next look at motor vehicle charges, which are also an indicator of consumer demand and, when comparing the figures, we find that there is an increase of about 7%, again a reduced expectation when compared to the previous year's collections. This fairly small increase indicates a dampening of demand for consumer durables. In these circumstances of reduced economic activity in the private production sector, the public sector assumes an even more important role in the overall health of the Northern Territory economy.

Looking at the overall appropriations, it is quite obvious that the Commonwealth government allocation is the dominant feature in the Territory budget as a revenue source. The Territory itself has only a limited capacity to expand revenue. Whilst we can exercise very little control over the total size of the allocation, especially in times of depressed economic conditions, the Territory government can of course influence the combination of current and capital expenditure.

The declining economic activity and the indicators which have already been outlined at some length would seem to indicate that what is required is a boost in capital spending whether it be in the public sector or the private sector. Capital expenditure is non-discriminatory in its income-generating effects; it generates economic activity whether it is privately undertaken or undertaken within the public sector.

Looking at the budget, one would expect that, given the conditions which we are experiencing, there would have been an increase in the capital works program. However, on examination of the figures, this particular mechanism for dampening the reduction of economic activity is not apparent. The Treasurer stated in his budget speech that the total value of new capital works would reach \$204m this year. This includes the programs being undertaken by the Housing Commission, NTEC, the Palmerston Development Authority and the

Conservation Commission. In the budget speech last year, it was estimated that new works would reach \$191.7m. This is an increase in money terms of about 6.4% but, taking into account the inflationary influences over the last 12 months, a decline in real terms of about the same value has occurred.

What we have in the proposed budget is a declining capital works program to go with a declining private production sector and this is all too obvious when the trends are looked at. The Treasurer claimed in his budget speech that the rate of job growth in the Territory is 4 times the national average. Despite that claim - and certainly it has to be said that, during the construction phases of many major projects, employment generation in the Northern Territory was higher than on the national scene - unemployment estimates for the Territory show a very disturbing trend. In the last quarter alone - and I emphasise again that we have not come to the critical quarter when school leavers will be on the employment market - unemployment rose from 4.2% in July to 6.8% in September.

It was disappointing to hear the Treasurer announce that this particular budget did not propose any specific measures to create employment. Unless job opportunities are preserved - and the rate of job shrinkage in the Territory is becoming quite obvious in recent weeks - the benefits from economic development which are being pursued by this budget will be denied to many Territorians. Since the Treasurer introduced his budget in August, a further 600 jobs have disappeared. In July, the number of unemployed was estimated at 2700, giving an overall rate of 4.2% unemployed. In August, that figure had risen to 3700, giving an overall figure of 6%. In September, the figure had risen to 4300, giving an unemployment rate of 6.8%. These figures have been compiled by the Australian Bureau of Statistics by survey and the standard error in the Territory figures is quite large because of the size of the sample taken. If anything, these rates, which appear disturbing in themselves, could in fact be much higher.

Mr Speaker, I think that some firm steps will have to be taken if this trend continues. I have an expectation that this trend will continue when the figures for the December quarter are released. The proper mechanism for implementing firm steps to increase employment opportunities should be through the presentation of a mini-budget halfway through this financial year. I know that the Treasurer has very little regard for the effectiveness of mini-budgets. In his second-reading speech, he mentioned that some states had attempted mini-budgets but had not come out with the correct answers. It has to be remembered that the states were in fact pursuing revenue-raising objectives and not employment-generating objectives. I predict that, if this trend continues, members of this Assembly will see a mini-budget halfway through the financial year.

The presentation of mini-budgets is not new to the Territory and many members of the present Assembly will remember that, in February 1980, the Treasurer presented Appropriation Bill No 2 which contained some specific programs which were at the time described by the Chief Minister as job-creation schemes. I will remind members of some of the excellent schemes that were outlined in that particular Appropriation Bill of February 1980. At that time, funds were provided for a wide variety of programs which had the effect of expanding job opportunities. Some of those schemes were as follows. The sum of \$250 000 was made available to mount a clean-up campaign of land managed by the Conservation Commission and the Department of Lands. That was the scheme which was referred to by the Chief Minister specifically as being a job-creation initiative. In addition, \$115 000 was provided to improve access to recreation facilities in Darwin and Nhulunbuy; \$50 000 was provided to improve median strips in Darwin; \$300 000 was provided to upgrade roads in rural areas; \$60 000 was provided to upgrade water supplies for rural road

travellers; \$60 000 was provided to construct a playground at Alyangula School; and \$50 000 was provided for rural police and fire stations for which the honourable member for Tiwi was extremely grateful. Another project was \$120 000 for the provision of Aboriginal shelters. Mr Speaker, it is obvious that, in 1980, the government had no inhibitions about specific measures to expand employment opportunities. I am sure that no member of the Assembly would claim that any of those projects that I have listed were either white elephants or undesirable.

I come to the point of the Treasurer's statement that this budget did not contain any particular schemes for employment generation. The Treasurer also referred to people who, in times of recession, touted theories for artificially lifting employment. The schemes that I have just outlined, which were provided for in the mini-budget of 1980, could not by any means be described as undesirable. All of them had the effect in the short term of producing employment, however localised that employment might have been, and, in the long term, the enduring value of those projects was that they increased the community's stock of infrastructure.

I believe that a major consideration of any responsible government should be to maintain employment at the maximum sustainable level and to protect its workforce from expected decreases in employment opportunities if it has the tools to do so. I agree that the particular circumstances that we are experiencing in the national economic environment make it extremely hard for state and territory governments to come up with initiatives which will enable employment to be maintained. But I believe that some tools are available to us and that a more aggressive approach to employment generation should have been pursued.

On looking at this budget, I have come to the view that the overall direction of the budget is correct. There may be some instances in individual allocations with which particular members would take issue but, nevertheless, the overall thrust of the budget seems to be correct in the economic environment in which the Territory finds itself. However, there are tools to moderate the influence of rising unemployment and I think that these should have been used.

Mr Speaker, in my view, employment growth can be achieved by accelerating expenditure on capital projects for which commitments have already been given or on projects which will definitely be required within the foreseeable future. We have seen from time to time Territory government commitments to projects being deferred. There is a project in my own electorate which is of specific interest to me and which, I have been informed by the Minister for Education, has been deferred. I refer to the construction of Sanderson High School. Nevertheless, there are commitments already available from the federal government for certain very high value projects. Some that come to mind readily are the Alice Springs to Darwin rail link, the construction of a civil terminal at Darwin Airport, the Australian Bi-centennial Road Development Program and the new air defence facilities at Darwin and Tindal.

Mr Speaker, these are very high-value projects. The Alice Springs to Darwin rail link is expected to cost about \$450m. We have as yet no costing for the construction of the civil terminal. We already have a commitment to the Australian Bi-centennial Road Development Program and only last week I was provided with the expected allocations to the Northern Territory. In this financial year, \$4.6m will be set aside and it is proposed that \$11.1m will be made available in the next financial year. Again, we have no cost on the defence facilities at Darwin and Tindal but, nonetheless, a firm commitment from the federal government has been forthcoming. It is my view that the reduction

in employment opportunities could be overcome by vigorous representations of the Northern Territory government to the federal government to accelerate the construction of these projects. The construction of these facilities should be accelerated so that capital injections, which are necessary to maintain employment, are available when the Territory employment situation is most vulnerable.

Mr Speaker, I note that the Territory has made representations to the federal government to bring forward the completion of the Alice Springs to Darwin rail link from 1990, which was the date proposed by the federal government, to 1988. In addition, the Bi-centennial Road Development Program is also supposed to culminate in 1988. I do not see anything magical about the date of 1988 in cyclical terms and this of course is the date when the road and rail construction programs are to be completed. In my view, an objective of maintaining employment growth ought to be pursued in preference to the niceties of the commemoration of the bi-centennial. I am sure that people all around Australia would still show the spirit of the bi-centennial year whether the projects are completed then or beforehand. The point I am making is that they should be accelerated in order to dampen the effects of unemployment in the Territory economy.

Mr Speaker, the reduction of the proposed time-scale for these projects, because of their high value, could have significant effects not only on employment in the public sector but also on consumer spending and production in the private sector. Again, because of their high value, the effects would filter through to the private production sector and we could see a recovery in the economy which would ensure its continuing health. I put this view to the Territory government because it has frequent consultations with the federal government. The point must be emphasised that these are not new commitments; these are commitments which have already been given. They should be pursued with a view to having the construction accelerated.

There is one revenue issue which I would like to take up with respect to the budget. I feel that, in times of tight monetary conditions and conditions when the Territory government's capacity to raise revenue is limited, the Treasurer should not have given a concession to the Alice Springs Casino operator in respect of casino taxes which would have been due had this particular proposal not appeared in this year's budget. The Treasurer stated in his budget speech that the budget contained a proposal to reduce from 15% to 5% the taxes which would be payable by the Alice Springs Casino. I recall that the Northern Territory News wrote this up as being a 10% reduction for the casino when, in fact, it is a 66% reduction from this source to the Territory government. The casino's tax payments are not altogether insignificant as a component of Territory taxation. I recall reading a statement attributed to the Chief Minister in the press that the mining boom has not occurred in the Territory and indeed the Territory collects more from consumer operations than it does from mining royalties. Given that that should be the case, I think the Treasurer has a responsibility to the Territory to collect the right amount of taxes from the Alice Springs Casino.

The reason given by the Treasurer for this concession to the casino is that activities of the company have been reviewed and regard has been given to significant operating losses which had been incurred by the Alice Springs Hotel Casino. I believe that the construction costs of the complex were nearly twice as much as the original estimate. We see this occurring in many sectors of the economy and I do not see that this reason was good enough to advance in respect of consumer taxes. If this becomes the reason for giving tax concessions, we might well find other firms in the private production sector coming up with these sorts of reasons to obtain concessions from all manner of Territory taxes which are payable, including payroll tax. I think that, whilst the

conditions of rising costs of infrastructure might not have been able to have been abated by the company itself, it was not a good enough reason to give such a massive concession to that particular operator.

Mr Speaker, the other reason why the casino taxes should not have been reduced is that the effect is fairly limited. The tax is very selective; it is imposed only on casino operators. The only people it affects are the operators and the people who patronise the casino. I believe that these selected taxes on particular types of industry ought to be pursued rather than general imposts on the community. Here we see a relatively painless form of revenue as far as the Territory public is concerned and we have forgone the opportunity of collecting that because of certain operational losses by the company and the fact that it could not maintain its construction budget. Revenue to the Territory government remains extremely limited. The Chief Minister has compared the amount of casino taxes to mineral royalties. We know that the mining industry is the largest production sector in the Territory and is going through a downturn. On the other hand, the casino industry is experiencing an upturn. It seems rather silly, when taxes are related to earnings in the industry, that the casino should have been given this reduction.

Mr Speaker, I refer to an interesting report prepared by the Ibis company, which members would know is a business investment and consulting company. The name of the company correctly is Ibis Corporate Services Pty Ltd. A report presented last month indicates that expenditure on gambling is in inverse relationship to recession in the economy, which is to say that, when conditions of recession are evident, expenditure on gambling goes up. There are figures dating back to 1957. I gather that this particular company has been monitoring expenditure on gambling for the last 10 years. We find in relation to many goods that discretionary spending increases despite recession in the general economic environment. Here in the Territory, we have a source of income from a particular industry which is experiencing an upsurge and we have given that particular industry a concession with respect to its liability for taxation.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that the honourable member be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Ms D'ROZARIO (Sanderson): Mr Speaker, I thank the members of the Assembly.

The matter of the gambling industry is of current interest not only from the point of view of its ability to raise revenue for the Territory but also because there is some local interest in the Alice Springs area in a restructuring of the industry. It is quite clear that there is fierce competition in that particular locality for the discretionary gambling dollar and I believe that last week the racing club there made a representation to the government that the casino was, in fact, taking money from the traditional sources of gambling. I do not know whether this is true or not. I believe the racing club would know most about its own affairs and would be able to look at the turnover of bookmakers' holdings in order to come to that view. I do not know whether people who bet on horse racing have stopped doing that and attend at the casino instead. Nevertheless, if that is so, then the Territory stands to lose in another way and that is through the fall-off in turnover held by bookmakers. So not only do we see a concession to the casino industry as far as the gambling sector is concerned, it appears also that there will be reduced takings in turnover tax because of the reasons mentioned just now.

Mr Speaker, it is difficult to propose in a budget that taxes and charges be increased. Certainly, the budget has been well received from the point of view that no increases in state-type taxes have been introduced. However, once decisions have been taken about particular industries, the taxation of which is fairly painless as far as the general taxpayer is concerned, then those principles should not be departed from because of conditions within a particular company. When other firms find out that they too can obtain concessions on their tax liabilities because of recurring operating losses and failure to keep within capital budgets, they too might approach the Treasurer for concessions on their taxes.

This is not a trend to be encouraged. There are sectors of industry, such as small businesses, to which we have given concessions on payroll tax and even in some cases concessions on certain categories of transactions relating to stamp duty. Nevertheless, here we have an industry which was introduced to the Territory with the express purpose of generating employment and increasing tourism. Apparently it has done these things but is not prepared to meet the other part of the commitment which was to pay 15% of its gross revenue in taxes. As far as Territory taxation is concerned, I think that particular concession should not have been made.

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, in listening to the curious logic of the honourable member for Sanderson, it occurred to me that she was putting to us the following proposition. In opposing the Treasurer's decision to increase from \$100 000 flat per annum to a 5% per annum tax on takings at the Alice Springs Casino, she said that gambling is up. I might say that she conveniently ignored the well-known fact that, in not raising the tax from \$100 000 flat last year to 15% this year but simply raising it to 5%, the Treasurer extracted from the casino company an undertaking to double the accommodation of the hotel. The construction of that additional accommodation is to commence within 12 months. That means jobs and that is something that the honourable member for Sanderson is not terribly interested in despite what she says. She is interested in playing with unemployment figures but she is not interested in creating jobs. Most of her actions in this Assembly have been to attempt to destroy initiatives of this government that would lead towards the creation of additional jobs. That is exactly what is happening in Alice Springs with the boost to the construction industry that the construction of those additional units of accommodation will mean. As well, there will be a boost to the tourist industry and additional people will stay at and gamble in the casino. In due course, the government will receive a dividend on the small concession that it has made this year at a time when the casino in Alice Springs is experiencing severe financial problems that could cause it to lay off additional staff if the concession were not granted.

Let me come back to the so-called logical proposition that the honourable member for Sanderson was attempting to put forward. In opposing the tax relief, she said that gambling was up but, in supporting the claim by the racing industry that the casino is taking money away from it, she said, by implication, that gambling is down. If gambling is up in casinos, it is up on race tracks as well. We cannot have it both ways when we are speaking in the broad generalisations of the honourable member for Sanderson who wants gambling to be up in casinos but down on race tracks.

We heard from the member for Sanderson a 'doom, doom, doom' speech about Territory prospects for the ensuing 12 months. I do not pretend that the prospects of the Territory are brilliant but I believe that they are bright. Territory industries have been affected by conditions worldwide and none of us would deny that. All of us should be doing our level best to see that worldwide conditions have a minimal impact on the situation in the Territory. It was

pleasing to gain the grudging concession from the member for Sanderson that the general thrust of the budget was good but that occupied about 6 words of her diatribe which ran over the normal time and concentrated on nitpicking criticism and dissection of irrelevant figures from around the world that have little real impact in this situation.

Mr Speaker, if we are to attempt to attract industry to this Territory and thereby to create jobs, I would suggest to the opposition that it cease to do its best to discourage the investment of private funds in the Territory in league with our rather grubby and grotty press that embarks on campaigns against any particular organisation on which it thinks it can pick up a few sensational lines. I refer particularly to the rather shabby treatment that our local paper dealt out to a constituent of mine - I will not name the lady and she is indeed a lady. Whilst her husband was overseas on a visit recently there were some rather alarming reports circulated in the local press that caused severe distress to my constituent. It is that sort of thing, Mr Speaker, that this opposition is so ready to go along with: this grotty, grubby, slimy reporting that occurs on the local scene that will undo every positive move that the government is attempting to make to improve the situation in the Territory by attracting private investment. If there were any people in the ranks of the opposition who were really interested in making a contribution to the Territory at this time, they would see that it is in the interests of everyone in the Territory to see that we do our best to present a united face to attract money from outside this Territory.

Although the honourable member for Sanderson talked of mini-budgets and job-creation schemes, the fact is that the budget in front of us disposes of every cent available to the government and the Treasurer. The member for Sanderson said, 'Let's speed up capital works projects that will both maintain and create jobs'. In fact, there are identical projects to those that the honourable member for Sanderson referred to such as urban beautification and all sorts of public works. The member for Sanderson said that we should accelerate some of these schemes but she did not of course - and oppositions normally don't - mention where that additional money would come from. Does it come from new taxes or does it come from laying off numbers of public servants. Those are the only 2 areas open to the government to obtain additional funds.

Mr Speaker, we have trimmed administrative expenses down to the lowest possible level in every case and I do not doubt that there will be complaints in some areas through the course of the year at the level of administrative expenses available in some departments. Nonetheless, we recognise the importance of putting everything we can into capital works projects because even the honourable member for Sanderson agrees they are all good for job creation. Even if we accept, which I do not, the honourable member for Sanderson's statement that the capital works figure this year is down, that can only be attributed to the fact that there is less disposable income available to this government. Since administrative expenses have been reduced as far as possible, that can be attributed to only one thing: quite substantial and perhaps excessive wage increases in the course of the past 12 months which have distorted the ratio that might have previously existed between the capital works program and the recurrent expenditure. I might say that every government in Australia, particularly a government that is dedicated to keeping taxes and charges of all kinds as low as possible, has a constant struggle to attempt to maintain the funds that are needed for capital works projects because they are continually being eaten into by additional wage payments. Unfortunately, productivity is not increasing in line with additional wage payments. That is the major fault with the economy of this country: productivity has not increased, is not increasing and is, in fact, declining. It is for that reason that we see this amount of unemployment in this country today.

The honourable member for Sanderson attempted to distort the figures and said there are 600 lost jobs according to those ABS figures. They are not lost jobs; it is increased unemployment. She did not quote the job creation figures. We know the dry season phenomenon. Those figures will continue on into the next quarter as people come to this part of the world looking for jobs, and never more so than at the moment because they know that things are happening in this Territory. Even though the opposition tries to stymie everything and tries to kill projects before they get off the ground, things are happening despite it and despite the press. People from down south come here in an attempt to find work and that adds to the unemployment figures and to our accommodation problem.

My word, Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that the Northern Territory is on a reasonably safe and sound footing at present. We have a number of large projects that we are pursuing and that we hope to involve private enterprise funding in. I appeal to you, Sir, and to all honourable members not to let petty political bickering spoil what could be substantial projects that will tide the Territory over what is a lean time right around this world. We see the example now is West Germany. Twelve months ago who would have said that country would be in the situation that it is in today? Yet so bad is the economic situation there that the Chancellor lost office only last week or the week before.

The honourable member for Sanderson referred to a few capital works projects in which this government has been very diligent and, in fact, instrumental in at least one case, in sponsoring, and that of course is the Alice Springs to Darwin rail link. I was able to speak to the Chairman of the Australian National Railways and some of his officials and co-commissioners this morning. From those discussions, it appears that I will need to spend an extra day in Canberra next week to see a number of federal ministers, including the Prime Minister, with a view to urging upon them the desirability of accepting the proposal that is to be put before them shortly by the Australian National Railways - I think during November. I shall be advising them that funding for the commencement of construction of this rail link will be required during 1983 and again urging in the strongest terms that the funding be found, especially in the national interests at the present time. In my opinion, this rail link is worth far more to Australia's defence than any aircraft carrier that could be found, and indeed it will be substantially less costly. Also, I will see, and have a number of discussions with, the Ministers for Aviation, Transport and Defence. It is over 3 months since the Commonwealth reviewed its earlier decisions in relation to Darwin RAAF base, Tindal and the new civil terminal for Darwin. I hope that firm and final decisions in these areas, that will be very beneficial to Territorians and indeed to people in your electorate, Mr Speaker, will be made in the course of the next 4 weeks. I will be speaking to those ministers again whilst I am in the south from Friday until Monday. I appreciate as much as anyone the need for these projects to be commenced and for funds to be allocated. Mr Speaker, honourable members can rely on this government in that area to sponsor and push forward federal government projects that are needed in the Territory.

In respect of my own portfolio areas, the Department of the Chief Minister vote is down on last year due to the fact that construction at Jabiru is not proceeding at the previously quite high rate. It is hoped that, with the signing of contracts by Pancontinental in respect of its Jabiluka project, further construction at Jabiru will take place probably in the course of the next financial year or even earlier. I am hopeful that contracts in respect of Jabiluka could well be signed before Christmas. I might say that signing contracts with Australia's overseas customers is not made any easier by the policy of the opposition parties in respect of uranium mining.

The Public Service Commissioner's Office goes forward on its steady path. It has just completed quite a substantial review of its operations. I hope that internal reviews of that nature are efficacious but, in any event, the staffing there remains stable and more priority is being given to staff development. Funding remains, in real terms, substantially the same.

In the area of police and emergency services, there have been some increases in funding for equipment and for additional staff that may be required during the year with the expanding situation that continues to prevail here.

The Conservation Commission vote is up by a reasonable amount. A very considerable amount of money is being spent on the 2 principal areas of national parks administration and urban beautification. The Department of Law is fairly steady.

I commend the proposals for allocation of finance to those bodies for which I have ministerial responsibility to you and other honourable members and I have pleasure in supporting the fifth budget brought down by my colleague, the Treasurer.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, we were privileged to listen to the Chief Minister this morning during question time in one of his Churchillian moods praying for this, that and the other. During the debate on the budget, we saw him in a far more familiar role with the innocent, heart-on-the-sleeve approach that he so often adopts when he has nothing else to talk about. I imagine that that will also be his style in a debate that is to take place later this afternoon.

The shadow treasurer has covered the broad areas of the budget. Like my colleagues on this side of the Assembly, I will cover those areas of particular interest to me. In November 1980, the Minister for Primary Production made a statement to this Assembly which he described as the government's rural policy. He said that the government had developed an overall strategy for the rural sector of the Territory's economy and that there would not be an obsession with the development of agriculture and horticulture at the expense of the pastoral industry. He went on to say: 'We are conscious of the need for balanced development and, in this context, we are also very much aware of the needs of our long-established cattle industry'. The minister has failed to honour the commitment that he gave to the pastoral industry. According to the budget papers for the financial year 1982-83, the Department of Primary Production has been allocated almost \$18.8m. This represents a little over 2% of total appropriations from the budget in the current financial year. That is 2% of the budget to be shared between the Fisheries Division, the agricultural division, the horticultural division and extension services as well as the Northern Territory's beef industry. The government proposes to spend about \$12m on activities directly assisting the beef industry, an industry worth \$100m a year to the Territory's economy. This compares with \$6m to be spent on agricultural and horticultural development. We do not oppose, and are certainly on record as not opposing, spending on agricultural and horticultural activities but I will certainly argue about the inadequate spending by this government on assistance to the beef industry.

Mr Speaker, let me again point out to the Minister for Primary Production and, perhaps more importantly, to the Chief Minister the importance of the Territory's pastoral industry. The reason I mention the Chief Minister, Mr Speaker, as I have done before, and I think the record shows it, is that in fact the only time that anything particularly positive happens in the Department of Primary Production is when the Chief Minister is in charge of it. As I mentioned earlier, the pastoral industry is worth around \$100m to the Territory

every year. Beef production allows 56% of the Territory's land area to be put to some economic use and probably the only economic use to which it can be put at this time. This means that large areas of the Territory are populated only because of the beef industry. The Treasurer told us in his budget speech that 1982-83 would see a 29% increase in funds allocated to the Primary Production Department. If you exclude the funding for the BTB eradication campaign, an issue I will return to in a minute, the increase is only a little under 2% in money terms.

Mr Speaker, in the minister's statement on rural policy in 1980, he said that 6 major problems could be identified in the cattle industry in the Northern Territory. These were: low productivity compared with southern Australia, cost price pressures, disease, weeds, feral animals and bushfires. The minister told us that these problems could only be overcome through more efficient management practice and that considerable efforts would be made to explore strategies that would lead to a reduction in input costs. As a result, he said, priority would be given to the extension of research work. I have been looking for evidence of this priority in the budget and I have had little success.

Mr Speaker, while I acknowledge that most areas within the Department of Primary Production involve some research and extension work, I wish to concentrate on 2 sections which must carry the greatest responsibility for these activities: the research services section and the research station section. In 1981-82, the allocation of funds for the department's research services section for salaries and associated allowances was \$1.153m and the staffing level was 47 employees. However, actual expenditure in this section last financial year was only \$772 000 and the number of staff employed was only 28 people. I would like an explanation from the minister as to where those people have gone and why there is indeed to be a reduction from that 28 down to 27 in the current financial year, taking into consideration the fact that he said there would be a very large increase.

The other research area that can be easily identified from the budget papers is the section dealing with research stations. There are 6 research stations and farms operated by the department whose role it is to deal with animal, pasture, crop and horticultural development. Regular field days give farmers and pastoralists access to this information. I have gone on record in the Assembly as saying what a valuable thing those field days are and how much I personally enjoy them and gain from them. I hope they continue. It is my view that the continued operation of these research stations is very important for the future development of primary industry. In the 1981-82 budget, there was an allocation of 64 employees to work at these research establishments. At the end of June this year, there were only 51 employees and in the budget that is now in front of us provision is made for only 49, a continuing reduction in the very area in which the minister said there would be an expansion.

If the total staff levels for research services and research stations are considered since the minister gave his policy speech for the 1980s and his commitment to continue increasing research, the following picture emerges. The 1980-81 budget allowed for a total of 114 employees for research services and research stations, the 1981-82 budget allowed for a total of 111 employees and the budget now in front of us allows for 78. I would like to know from the Minister for Primary Production how he can continue to make the policy statements he does and provide the Department of Primary Production with the budget that he has provided it with. I would like to know where the priorities are in those figures. He has to stop doing either one thing or the other. I would appreciate an explanation from the minister on the location of all research staff in the department and where these additional positions have disappeared

to. I understand that pastoral research has diminished in recent years to almost nothing and I understand further that Victoria River Research Station is currently under threat of closure. I seek from the minister during this debate his assurance that this will not happen.

Mr Speaker, I would like to conclude my remarks on primary production funding by commenting on the allocation for the BTB eradication program. Although there has been a considerable increase in available funding, it remains a long way from what is necessary if the campaign is to be a success. At a meeting I recently attended in Alice Springs it was said, and quite correctly, that sooner or later that figure has to be made public. The cost of the BTB eradication program - if it is to be pursued to its logical conclusion - has to be made public and everyone in the Territory and in the federal spheres has to be able to look that figure firmly in the face and make a decision on whether the program should continue or not because it will be a bit expensive. The number of employees allowed for this program increased from 32 last year to 44 this year and the level of funding for compensation to producers for reactors slaughtered and areas which required destocking has also been increased. However, it remains to be seen whether these funds can be used effectively. In last year's budget, there was an allocation of \$690 000 for compensation as part of the BTB campaign but only \$356 000 of that sum was actually spent. It appears that some cattlemen were not aware that funds were available for destocking last year and, as a result, opportunities to advance the campaign were lost. That is the story that I get from them. I blame the government fairly and squarely for that lack of information.

There was also a considerable underspending of rural adjustment funds last financial year. I have raised the matter in the Assembly. Several explanations have been put forward in this Assembly by the minister and none of them are satisfactory. I must repeat that, although there has been an increase in funding for disease control this financial year, I am sure I would have the support of the minister if I said that it was not enough. The increased funding fails to provide assistance for producers who continue to be faced with considerable costs in participating in the BTB program. I am pleased to say that the federal ALP has recognised the problem. The shadow primary industry spokesman, John Kerin, has committed a future Labor government to providing a holding subsidy for those involved in the campaign - something which is desperately needed in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to the government's education budget. Unfortunately, I am not really in a position to say what the government's educational priorities and policies are because the Minister for Education has not produced any of his White Paper policy statements even though he said he was going to. This, of course, is despite the fact that he tabled the Green Paper on Education in March last year and it is now October this year. I understand that he has had a draft White Paper on his desk for some time along with a number of advisory reports awaiting action. I have some sympathy for the minister in deciding on educational priorities, particularly in a community with as diverse a range of special circumstances as the Northern Territory. However, I think the minister's long delay in providing clear policy statements, particularly regarding the enormous amount of time and effort that such a wide-ranging cross-section of people in the education field put into the draft White Paper, has become a matter of great concern. I hope that this sittings of the Assembly will see the production of at least one of those policy statements on education.

I know the minister claimed that one reason for not issuing a comprehensive White Paper was the diversity of views expressed on a number of issues tackled by the working party producing the draft. Again, I have some sympathy for his dilemma. Education is an area where everyone is an expert and where you are almost certainly going to upset somebody.

I wonder if at least some of that difficulty might arise from what appears to be a different attitude to education between the Minister for Education and the Chief Minister who has suddenly taken an interest in the education portfolio and very publicly. While the Education Minister is busy announcing plans for system-wide testing and a more rigid following of core curriculum, an issue he knows to be contentious among both teachers and parents, the Chief Minister is suggesting in an influential magazine a far more flexible approach than that of his Minister for Education. I refer to an article the Chief Minister wrote - or at least I assume he did - for the latest issue of Parent, the Council of Government Schools Organisations' magazine. In that, he draws attention to the very interesting and innovative system of education propounded by a Tasmanian principal and based on ideas expressed by Michael Middleton. I am well aware of those ideas proposed by Mr Middleton. He is proposing a flexible system which allows students to excel in areas of special ability and work at their own pace in various subject areas. The Chief Minister makes the point that 'education must be progressive and flexible enough to change as the needs of its students change'. I agree with that also.

Mr Speaker, I do not intend to dwell on this apparent difference of approach to education between the Chief Minister and the Minister for Education - and I have been personally present when the Chief Minister has made a number of those statements - except to say that varying statements made by people such as the Minister for Education and conflicting statements made by the Chief Minister do not make it very easy for those people interested in education in the Northern Territory to analyse the priorities in the education budget or indeed the priorities of the government generally in this area. The task is made far more difficult because of the very general information we are given in the budget papers. I will have to leave many of my questions to the committee stage of the debate when perhaps the minister can clarify some apparent discrepancies between what was allocated in the various areas last year and what was actually spent.

However, there are a few general observations that I would like to make now. I might begin by saying that I am pleased that the government's allocation for education has exceeded \$100m for the first time. I would also point out that, while the rate of expenditure appears to be slightly decreasing, in fact, in real money terms, it is barely keeping pace with inflation. I appreciate that overall budgetary constraints and priorities have a bearing on this but it is an area I will examine more closely at another time.

I would like to mention a few specific aspects of the education expenditure and highlight both the good news and the bad news. I am particularly pleased to see extra funding for both the Northern Territory Teaching Service and for salaries to allow for an extra 61 schoolteachers. I am aware of and concerned about the high teacher turnover rate in the Northern Territory. In this regard, I commend the government's primary teaching scholarship scheme and I hope that it encourages many of our own Territory matriculants to stay in the Territory to train as Territory teachers. I also welcome the money allocated for teacher housing at Nhulunbuy and I hope that it heralds a new budgetary approach to the very real problem of teacher housing, a significant factor in the very high teacher turnover rate in the Territory. I am also pleased to see additional Commonwealth funding for Aboriginal education assistance, an area of obvious special need in the Northern Territory where 25% of the students are in fact Aborigines. I will be interested to see how this funding is actually spent as it appears that, of the \$125 000 allocated for December 1981 to June 1982, the Northern Territory government only spent \$83 000. I am aware of the good work being done to train Aboriginal teachers and part-time teachers and I commend the government once again for its efforts in this regard. I am also aware, however, of problems associated with the replacement of Aboriginal teachers

who undergo training and I hope increased funding in this area will result in increased service as well.

Mr Speaker, there is one smaller area of expenditure which causes me some disappointment and that is the funding to COGSO. I would have thought that, since the minister has at least introduced legislation to allow for expansion of school council responsibility, a few extra resources might have been allocated to that group to enable both teachers and parents to better cope with the phasing in of these new school councils. Given the minister's impassioned plea for parent teacher cooperation, I would have hoped that he might have reflected that view a little more clearly in his budget.

The phasing-in period of the new school councils will be particularly important. I must say - and I have not mentioned this before - that one could hardly get a more enthusiastic or dedicated worker than the Council of Government Schools Organisations' Executive Officer, Mr Mike Hurnel. I know he spends many evenings of his time and gets time off in lieu to visit school councils at night and assist them in their work. I feel that some extra funding for an increased number of in-service training sessions to be held to break in, if you like, school councils and schools would be desirable.

I mention one item of student funding for which I will seek some clarification later. I was interested to note that student assistance funding was underspent by \$98 999 last year and has been reduced again this year on the ground that demand appears to be stabilising. Given the high number of isolated children in the Territory, I would be interested in a more detailed explanation from the minister.

Mr Speaker, I must say that I rather welcome other areas of the budget and I am pleased to see increased funding for both the Community College of Central Australia and the Darwin Community College. However, there appears to have been a general underspending last year at the Community College of Central Australia, and also a staff cutback for the coming year. I will be seeking some explanations from the minister in this regard.

There is one more issue that I would like to raise. I will close on it, even though I imagine it will evoke the wrath of Senator Baume and perhaps the minister here, given Senator Baume's remarks on the ABC this morning. I refer to the quite significant rise in funding both at federal and Territory levels for non-government schools, an overall increase of 19%. I note as well the rather large leap in funds allocated for subsidies in respect of additional loans expected to be taken out by non-government schools, an increase from \$19 000 last year to \$101 000 this year. I might point out too that the government last year overspent its budget for independent schools grants by \$356 000. I raise this matter because I am as alarmed as my colleagues are at the growing tendency of the federal government in particular to fund non-government schools at the expense of government schools despite that idiotic statement made this morning by Senator Baume that it can be so easily dissected. I do not imagine that the government intends to give any of that money to the independent Aboriginal school at Yipirinya. It is my strong personal view and the view of my party that the government, particularly where it is using taxpayers' money, must be accountable to the community to provide equal education opportunities for all. Indeed, it has a commitment to do so under the Education Act. It is important that I emphasise that the ALP remains committed to the provision of funds to non-government schools to bring the standard of those schools up to the level of government schools. That is where we believe the emphasis should lie. I am not saying this is done in the Territory because I know it is not but, in many states, the larger private schools that receive ridiculous amounts of public money are putting in things such as gymnasiums and pools.

We are told that the Commonwealth grants to non-government schools will climb by more than \$50m to nearly \$370m by 1984 while those to the government schools in the same period will increase by just over \$7m to almost \$237m. In an age when rapidly changing society demands that everyone has equality in education, the situation is totally unacceptable. Private schools, as they have a right to do, have restrictions and conditions on entry which very often relate to denomination, scholastic achievement and so on. Government schools are not permitted to operate under any such conditions. They have a charter that they take on all comers. That is why very often it is a fallacy to compare government schools and their performance with non-government schools. Government schools have this obligation, which is not shared by the private sector, to take everybody who turns up at their door looking for an education. That is the reason why it needs to be emphasised once again. Certainly, in the federal sphere of budgetary allocations to the Territory and other states, the emphasis needs once more to return to the funding of government schools, and the funding to non-government schools needs to be restricted to those areas that are below the standard of government schools to enable them to reach the standard of government schools, and not the other way round.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Tiwi): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak today in support of the budget, I would like to preface my remarks by saying that taking all things into account, this budget is very acceptable to the people of the Northern Territory. The budget takes all facets of life into account, especially the development of the Northern Territory. Money will be spent in making money, Mr Speaker, and money will be spent on development.

I have a particular interest in the development of primary industry in the Northern Territory, both primary industry connected with the land and primary industry connected with marine resources. The Northern Territory stands in a unique position regarding agricultural development, particularly as it relates to the establishment of a university in the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory is unique because it is in a relatively stable political position compared to countries which enjoy the same climate as we do in the Top End. The top end of the Territory is classed as having a tropical climate and there are no countries in the world with a tropical climate which have a stable political climate. We are also in a unique position because the Northern Territory is part of a developed country. We can afford to help underdeveloped countries in the same tropical band. We can extend help to these countries through an interchange of research, personnel, by the export of live cattle to those countries and by the interchange of seeds from pasture crops and horticultural crops.

That brings me to the next point. Whilst I have no argument with the budget as presented, in checking the figures, I see that the Department of Primary Production has an increase of about \$4m and the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority has an increase of about \$2m. I do not deprecate at all the fact that the increase in the budget for the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority is half the whole budget of the Department of Primary Production. In future years, I would like to see active consideration given to research. I was reading the explanations to the Appropriation Bill as they relate to the Department of Primary Production. In the description of the primary functions of the department are mentioned management of fish resources, quarantine services, weed control operations, plant and animal disease and protection against pests, market development, administration of legislation, encouragement of greater utilisation of Northern Territory primary products - well that would be marketing - assistance in times of natural disasters, for example, drought relief, and, finally, encouragement in the development of potential fuel-producing crops. However, no mention has been made of the research that should be undertaken by the Department of Primary

Production if it is to fulfil its proper role for primary industry in the Northern Territory.

One could say, of course, that the encouragement of the development of potential fuel-producing crops is a facet of research. It is. One could also say that weed control operations come under the heading of research. But, Mr Speaker, not enough research is being done by the Department of Primary Production considering our unique position in Australia and in the world, the particular tropical climate we enjoy here and the variety of climates in the Northern Territory. With the establishment of a university in the Northern Territory, this need will be strengthened. I feel sure such a university will pay particular attention to agricultural research in the tropics, tropical medicine and tropical veterinary science. It is all the more important that research projects be considered, funded and actively engaged in by the Department of Primary Production if we are to be ready for the establishment of a university in the Northern Territory.

I was very pleased to see that the 1982-83 appropriation for the Department of Transport and Works is roughly twice that in 1981-82. My main concern with the operation of the Department of Transport and Works is the building and maintenance of roads in the rural area as that work applies to my electorate. Most people who settle in outlying areas, whether in the rural area outside Darwin or further afield in the Northern Territory, can usually make do themselves. They can supply their own electricity and water but it is extremely difficult for them to build their own all-weather roads. It is therefore important that the Department of Transport and Works has an adequate budget from which allocations can be made to build and maintain roads in the Northern Territory. Unless an adequate road system is developed and maintained in the Northern Territory, settlement and development will not occur satisfactorily.

I would have liked to have seen more money allocated to the Conservation Commission. Its budget has only increased from a little over \$16m to a little over \$17m this year. Not only is the Conservation Commission doing the job of preserving the countryside for future generations of Territorians, it is also the basis of the tourist industry in the Territory. If proper care and attention is not paid to the bush and our tropical flora and fauna in the Northern Territory, the tourist industry will fall flat on its face. We all know that the industry's main drawcard is the unique country here. It is not the sophisticated items of interest offered in cities down south and countries overseas; it is our bush and the animals and flora in it. Unless we can provide a solid basis for it through the work of the Conservation Commission, the tourist industry will not operate successfully in the future. The Conservation Commission cannot establish areas of care throughout the Northern Territory in one year. It takes several years to work these up so that they become areas of interest for the tourist industry.

It was interesting to note that the appropriation for the police has not risen by very much this year. It has only risen from \$26m-odd to \$27m-odd. I find this very interesting in view of the greater demands that are placed on the police by the community. If somebody has been shot inadvertently or a cat is up a tree or someone is lost, you call on the police. I think that it is an indication of the way they have paid great attention to the allocation of the money to their departments.

I was interested also to see the appropriation for the Northern Territory Emergency Services. There was quite a jump in the capital item from \$3000 to \$51 000. On checking this out, I found that part of that will pay for a barge which is to be used in the Daly River area for evacuation in times of flood. Whilst I have no argument with this, I hope that this barge will be used

economically throughout the rest of the year in some way, whether down there or in other areas. The thousands of dollars of public money to pay for the barge must be used effectively. Whilst I am aware of the flooding situation that occurs at the Daly, I am also interested to know if similar facilities will be offered to isolated Aboriginal communities in times of emergency.

In reading the explanation to the Appropriation Bill as it relates to the police, I note again that the service is divided into 5 areas: 'The Northern Command, Southern Command, Operational Services Command, Executive and Management, and Uranium'. Again, I would like noted in Hansard my regret that, in this budget, the police still perpetuate a style of woolly and inaccurate nomenclature that is not usually associated with police thinking. My experience with police officers is that most of them are clear thinking and have powers of exact description. This heading of 'Uranium' is unclear and denotes an immature, shorthand description which is not appropriate to the rest of the budget items as described.

Mr Speaker, more attention and finance should be given to research, not only to research in primary industry as it applies to land but also to research in the fishing industry. I know some money has been allocated to the fishing industry for field studies, the identification of species and varieties of fish and marketing. The time has come when some pure research must be initiated in the fishing industry. This will not happen overnight. Projects must be decided upon that are fitting to the Northern Territory and research staff engaged. To many people, pure research is a waste of money because you do not see flashy or showy results overnight. Research into any scientific project is usually very time-consuming. It takes place day after day after day as long as the experiment continues. Sometimes a particular research project is not successful and a new start has to be made on another facet relating to that particular project or a new project started. This makes the general public feel that they are not getting their money's worth from research. However, thinking people and those people who want to encourage agricultural and fishing research agree that consideration must be given to engaging in research to a far greater extent than in the past. Whilst on the subject of research, it is absolutely essential that we also consider research into the mining industry. The mining industry seems to spend time and money on watchdog, environmental controls rather than on other facets. Here, research comes into it again.

I noted the Commonwealth payments to the Northern Territory. I see that the NTEC has an increase in subsidy from approximately \$45.5m to just over \$56m. I see the Northern Territory Housing Commission also benefits from a Commonwealth payment for crisis accommodation from \$50 000 to \$100 000. The Department of Primary Production benefits in the bovine brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication program with an increase from \$2m to \$4m. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth gave no allocation to agricultural extension services this year. Previously, it gave just over \$600 000 to the Northern Territory government. As far as extension services are concerned, that is chickenfeed but this year the chickens do not even get fed. There is nothing at all.

The results of primary industry research have to be made known to the people for whom it is undertaken in the first place, namely the people engaged in primary industry. I would also like to see increased interest paid by the Department of Primary Production through funding, through the engaging of staff and through projects in extension services in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I will just go through the capital works program briefly as it relates to my electorate. Considering the work that is proposed to take place in my electorate, I have no argument at all with the budget. The first

thing that comes to mind is the construction of a police complex at Berrimah at a cost of \$11.5m. I expect that this sum will be exceeded as building costs rise with the increased cost of living. I feel sure that it will bring a spin-off for the long-suffering residents of Berrimah. I have spoken of this before. I cannot see the police complex to be built in Berrimah to the tune of \$11.5m functioning properly with the state of the gravel roads in Berrimah. I feel certain that the people living in Berrimah will end up with better roads if not first-class bitumen roads. Thus, they may get something for the rates they pay in that area.

It also pleases me to see the attention paid to Aboriginal essential services in my electorate. On Bathurst and Melville Islands, there is to be work on barge landings, the upgrading of water supplies, fire station construction, internal roads, a security area at barge landings and air terminals. The works in progress at Snake Bay are to the value of over \$237 000. At Nguiu the works in progress are in excess of \$806 000. The works in progress in Pularumpi are in excess of \$385 000. There are new works for Bathurst and Melville Islands, with the idea of providing basic health facilities. Without proper sewerage, water reticulation, roads, barge landings and electricity reticulation, the health of the people in these communities would suffer. For Bathurst Island, the proposed works include increased water supply by the provision of 3 bores, internal roads and drainage, and an upgrading of the generating equipment. At Milikapiti, there will be upgrading of sewage ponds, internal roads and electricity reticulation.

It gives me great pleasure to see that \$725 000 is to be spent on sealing Secrett Road in Berrimah from McMillans Road to Farrar Road and Lagoon Road to Secrett Road and the Stuart Highway. These people in Berrimah are very long suffering. They have been paying rates. The unimproved capital value of their properties is rising. They keep paying rates and they do not get much in the way of services offered to them. Whilst I am sorry that this sealing of roads will not extend as far as it should, it is nevertheless a start. I think the reason that only these particular roads have been mentioned is because there is a through road planned from the right-angle corner of McMillans Road where it comes around by CSIRO to the Stuart Highway at the 11-mile.

Regarding the capital works program for the Department of Education, \$315 171 is to be spent in the Tiwi electorate. That is for the construction of the Humpty Doo High School, the upgrading of certain facilities at the Jabiru School and the works in progress at the Humpty Doo Primary School.

Over \$1m is allocated for works in progress at the Humpty Doo village centre stage 2 and the Humpty Doo horticultural access road. There is also a sum of \$100 000 proposed for new works in the Humpty Doo village centre in relation to roadworks, car-parks and water reticulation.

Mr Speaker, \$150 000 has been allocated for works in progress on the Arnhem Highway to provide facilities for a mobile heavy weighing platform. That is not the sort of thing that everybody would use but it is very important to have some form of weighing of vehicles travelling on highways, particularly the Arnhem Highway because every wet parts of it break down due to heavy traffic travelling to Jabiru and Jabiru East. These vehicles are extremely heavy and the loads they carry cannot be lightened. It is very important that some prognostication be made of what roads will be needed for future work at Jabiru.

It gives me much pleasure to see that there is money to be spent on roads in the Tiwi electorate by the Department of Transport and Works. There is work being carried out by the roads division already and, whilst the upgrading of the Stuart Highway does not particularly apply to the Tiwi electorate,

nevertheless, it gets the people there and back. Works in progress in the rural area will receive nearly \$3m. I am very pleased to see that the sealing of Gunn Point Road will take place because this road services the sand and gravel extractive industry. Sand and gravel trucks have caused deterioration of roads which the local people are not very happy about. Gunn Point Road will be sealed in part. The stretch from Whitewood Road to Hillier Road has been completed. That is mentioned in works in progress. Girraween Road is another road which the sand and gravel trucks use. Again, they always wreck it to the detriment of my constituents so I am very pleased to see that it has been bituminised in part. I hope in the very near future the rest of it will be bituminised.

A sum of \$480 000 is mentioned for proposed new works on arterial roads: Knuckey Road arterial extension to McMillans Road to an access road to Berrimah police headquarters. No doubt my constituents at Berrimah will benefit from this as well as the police. The dual carriageway of the Stuart Highway will be continued from Berrimah crossroads to the Howard Springs turnoff. Again, anybody who has travelled on the Stuart Highway from about 7.30 am to 9.00 am and from about 4.30 pm to 5.30 pm will know that there are thousands of people in the rural area and most of them seem to be travelling on the road at that time. A dual carriageway to the Howard Springs turnoff will make their trip a little shorter and I feel sure that they will appreciate it greatly.

There is a proposal to reconstruct more roads, namely, Kennedy and Sayer Roads and also Gunn Point access road. This Gunn Point access road would be the access road to the enlarged recreation area by the Gunn Point Prison Farm. Many more people will be able to take enjoyment from that beautiful recreation area as a result. Those 2 projects - Sayer Road in the McMinn's Lagoon area and the Gunn Point access road - will cost \$540 000.

All in all, I am very pleased with the budget as it relates to the Tiwi electorate. I have added up the amount of money spent on works in progress. It totals in excess of \$41m. The proposed new works in the rural area are in excess of \$3m. I feel certain that the people in my electorate, as with the rest of the Northern Territory, will have no quarrel with this budget.

Mr DOOLAN (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I will be very brief. Rather than try to deliver a speech, I will comment on excerpts from the honourable Treasurer's second-reading speech. He said: 'Rapidly developing economies like the Territory's must slow down for a time but, when conditions improve, they will resume their vigorous growth'. I do not agree with that for one minute. He went on to say: 'This budget proposes no special schemes to create employment'. Mr Speaker, I think that is tragic. I think that what has happened is that he has forgotten that one-third of the Territory consists of Aboriginal communities, missions, settlements and so forth. You yourself, Mr Speaker, spoke at length in the last sittings about the shocking conditions that exist at Numbulwar. I have quite a number of Aboriginal communities in my electorate and similar conditions exist in those communities. By saying that the budget proposes no special schemes to create employment, the Treasurer has forgotten one-third of the population of the Northern Territory. Apparently they are doing all right in the uranium province. I do not have to reiterate that you, Sir, said that people at Numbulwar, if they could work, would work - if they had something to damn well do.

He went on to say that looking after needs of Territorians first of all means ensuring that there are opportunities for work. He then said that there is no real reason to give them opportunities to work. You know, Sir, as I know, had they the opportunity to work, they would work but they just do not have the opportunity. There is no way they can work. If they could work, they

would work. Europeans say that these people will not work. They do not have the opportunity to work. What the Treasurer is forgetting is that he is talking about one-third of the workers in the Northern Territory who have no work because they cannot get a job.

The unemployment rate in the Territory on some settlements is absolutely disgusting. About 80% of the people cannot work because there are no jobs. What do we do? We turn around and whinge and say they are bludgers, that they do not want work, that they just sit on their backsides and do nothing. I am sorry to point my finger at you, Mr Speaker, but you said it yourself: the people at Numbulwar will work if they have something to do. The Treasurer raves on about wonderful opportunities and says that we have this and we have that. Where do they get the jobs? They are not unemployable. You know that, Sir, because you have had them working on your station for a long time. I have seen them work for something like 30 years. They do not work because there is nothing for them to do. If they do give them a job, it is some idiotic job that does not interest them and that they do not want to do. I am sorry if I am getting a bit upset but I feel very strongly about this.

The Treasurer went on to say that investment in the Territory continues to reflect confidence in the government's capacity to maintain a healthy economic climate in comparison with other parts of Australia. Amongst other things, he talked about a 'vigorous opportunity in cropping'. What 'vigorous opportunity in cropping', Mr Speaker? For the locals, there is no vigorous opportunity in cropping. Look at the Douglas-Daly program. That is not local. That is not our mob but people from down south. They had to have \$100 000 for a start and they had to have a whole lot of equipment. They are privileged people because they have the dough. I will tell you who they are, Mr Speaker, and I have it from the very best authority. They have come from down south. Their uncles or grandfathers had properties but they could not get any land so they got the land up here. They had to have around \$100 000 in cash plus a lot of equipment and they had to transport it up here. Is that local? Who the hell are we working for?

In the March quarter of 1982, average adult earnings in the Territory were \$364 per week which was \$23 higher than the national average. Mr Speaker, \$364 a week is \$19 000 a year. You may work that out as an average but it is not the kind of income that the local fellow gets. An average includes top public servants on \$60 000 a year. There is no way that the average bloke takes home \$364 a week.

The Treasurer went on: 'It is a matter of grave concern to this government that, despite initiatives in the recent federal budgets, the average Australian is finding it increasingly difficult to turn the dream of owning his own home into reality. To some extent, this is because his priorities have shifted and he no longer expects to make the necessary sacrifices to achieve this goal'. That is nonsense, Mr Speaker. The average Australian wants to own his home and his own bit of land yet the Treasurer turns around and says that his priorities have shifted and he no longer wants to make the necessary sacrifices to obtain his own home.

The Treasurer also stated: 'The Minister for Education has previously raised in this Assembly the government's recognition of the difficulty faced by the Territory in attracting suitable teachers'. He wants to get locals to do it and I think that is eminently sensible. I cannot think of anything more sensible than to try to obtain local teachers.

He said that 'government initiatives in supporting existing farmers and encouraging new farming ventures are now beginning to pay dividends'. Look at

Jimmy Sullivan at Adelaide River and blokes like that. Do you think that this government is trying to support existing farmers?

I must congratulate the government for the capital works program. New roadworks total \$24m. The road program allows for major upgrading of the Stuart, Barkley, Victoria and Buchanan Highways as well as the Petermann Road. Thank God, they are going to do something about the Victoria and Buchanan Highways.

There is one complaint that I would like to make before I sit down. The top part of the road to Top Springs is really excellent. Roadworks have been completed, with culverts and bridges where necessary. You would not know the place. But the road from Top Springs to Victoria River is absolutely shocking. It is a bone-rattler. It almost kills you to cross it. It is about time the government did something about that.

I was at a place called Yarralin which used to be called the 11-mile in from VRD. The road is dreadful. It is only 11 miles long but it is full of bulldust and holes. You can just about bog in the bulldust. I was there 2 days before Cabinet had a meeting at VRD. I wish to God some of the ministers had gone in there but they did not. That road is cruel. Most of the Aborigines there do not have very good cars at the best of times. They get bogged in it and it ruins vehicles. They do not have all that much money. If they spent \$1500 on a car, it would not last 2 weeks.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Alice Springs): Mr Speaker, I would like to make a few general observations before going on to talk about the Alice Springs area. Firstly, I note that, for the first time, our budget involves over \$1000m which might be considered a very generous budget, particularly as we by no means raise all that revenue ourselves. Some would say that it helps to make up for the years of neglect when we were under Commonwealth rule, but I prefer to see it as an investment in Australia's future. We have a Memorandum of Understanding with the federal government which works very well. I just wonder how that Memorandum of Understanding would work if we had a federal Labor government. I hope that that is one question that will not be answered. We already know Labor's uranium policy. It would be a disaster for the NT if it were implemented. It is detrimental to Australia already.

The responsibility for the budget weighs heavily upon the Northern Territory. We have to make the very best use of the funds provided to ensure that the investment bears fruit and we eventually become independent. I believe that this is a most responsible budget. It is well balanced. The money which has been provided has been committed but we are not overspending; we are living within our means. It is balanced from another point of view. There is a good balance between support for wealth-creation and social benefits. My study of the budget makes it very clear to me that this government sees that people do matter. Wealth-creation is a vital area. From it comes the opportunity to create jobs that will continue. I am sure that this government aims to become self-sufficient in the revenue-raising area. That will not happen overnight; it is a long-term goal.

Not so long ago, Western Australia was on the receiving end. Today that state is an excellent contributor to the wealth of this country. I would like to think that, in time, we will be in a similar position. A bigger economic cake is most important. I note with pleasure that this budget gives increased support to wealth-creation areas. I am particularly pleased by the ability this government has to attract private investment. There are so many areas in which private companies have been attracted to the Territory. The government has helped create that particular climate and I believe that it is our job to do that.

We already have the Mereenie and Palm Valley fields which are being proved up and it will not be too long before they come on stream. There have been other discoveries of oil and gas about which one can be quietly optimistic. These will be very important indeed to Australia, particularly in times of defence emergency.

The uranium industry is vital. At the moment, the price of uranium may be down but one thing is well known: it takes many years to get uranium power plants into operation. In about 5 years' time, plants will be coming into operation which will need increased amounts of uranium. The Territory will be placed to supply that need.

Tourism, the beef industry, agriculture and horticulture are all areas in which I believe increased efforts will be made. The government does not need to put a lot of money into it. It has only to provide land in areas where the soil is suitable and there is water and give suitable people the opportunity to develop the industry. These areas are revenue generators and job providers.

One honourable member mentioned this morning that unemployment in the Territory went up in 2 months from about 4.2% to 6.8%. No one likes unemployment, but I think the Chief Minister explained the situation very well indeed. We import our unemployment. It does not take many people coming into the Territory to make a big percentage difference. I know that there are many southern people in the Territory who could not find jobs down south. They have come to the Territory and found jobs and are very grateful indeed for that. I welcome this population growth - although it gives us some headaches in the provision of essential services for them - because there are economic spin-offs to be gained in economies of scale.

I turn briefly to the area of social benefits. Housing, education, roads, health, sport, recreation, the arts and the environment all add to the quality of life. They are all catered for in this budget in an ongoing way. It is a budget aimed at attracting and holding people in the Northern Territory. In order to attract them, we must have job opportunities. The chance must be there for people to put their shoulders to the wheel and share in the wealth of this Territory. On the other hand, families must be content with all those aspects of the quality of life that I have just mentioned. I commend the budget mix.

Turning to the Alice Springs area, I believe it is well served in public works. I am particularly pleased about the upgrading of the water supply: the new bore that is to be brought into operation; another large pump to help pump the water from the bore outside Alice Springs; and the new tank on the Sadadeen Range. I doubt whether many people in Alice Springs were aware that, at times last summer, we came very close to running low on water. I welcome the extra effort that has gone in to upgrading the water supply to ensure that we have adequate supplies at all times.

NTEC has some \$10m for capital works. The eighth generator set is to be installed at the power-station and there is to be conversion to dual operation so that the motors can run on oil and gas. This will be very important because of the gas pipeline and the oil refinery. These are private investments which will benefit Alice Springs considerably. The gas, when it comes, will lower our electricity bills and jobs will be created in the construction phase.

I believe the government has done a good job in creating a climate for investment. The Araluen Arts and Cultural Centre will be launched officially this Saturday with the turning of the sod. Some \$4m-odd is to be spent in its construction. It will be a great boon and a lift to the quality of life in Alice Springs. At the community college in its new site at Sadadeen about

\$1m is being spent on the first stage. It is going ahead very well indeed. The first stage of operation will begin at the start of next year. The second stage is proposed at \$5.1m. The Yulara multi-million dollar development will bring spin-off benefits to Alice Springs in job opportunities. It will benefit the Territory as a whole. The RSL crossing causeway is not a huge project but I believe that it is important because it will allow some of the traffic to avoid the central area of Alice Springs and make the roads a little safer.

I am particularly pleased at the private enterprise and tourist accommodation developments that are occurring. The Chief Minister mentioned this morning that the casino is to double its accommodation. A Gap Road motel and numerous other developments have started or are in the pipeline. Some of them are quite large. People see opportunities to invest in the Territory in all sorts of holiday and tourist developments. I am particularly pleased that Gillen House will be upgraded. The Sadadeen primary and special school - \$0.5m development - is just about completed. I note the Larapinta Drive headworks - there is \$674 000 for development in that area. There is also \$219 000 for rural tourist development for external services related to it and \$1.67m for external services for Sadadeen subdivision. Barrett Drive construction will help serve the Golf Course Estate. This is another private development in the town which will better utilise the land there. \$1.5m has been allocated for the proposed Alice Springs industrial estate area. These are all to the benefit of Alice Springs and will provide many jobs.

One should not neglect to mention that \$3m is to be spent on realignment of the Stuart Highway. Of particular interest to the local people will be the Larapinta crossing where accidents occur very frequently. Traffic lights are to be installed there for the first time. That is the price of progress but is certainly better than having people injured in accidents.

I note that, in the centralian region, many hundreds of thousands of dollars will be spent on roads. This will aid the tourist and cattle industries in particular and again will have spin-offs for Alice Springs, as the major town in the area. Again, I note with pleasure the proposal to upgrade the Alice Springs drainage system. Something like \$2.7m has been allocated for that work.

The Conservation Commission has \$320 000 towards capital works to improve our park facilities and make them more attractive and convenient for the public. This is in addition to its administrative grant for the important job of protecting those parks, looking after the heritage and ensuring that the areas are attractive to our tourist and local populations.

The trunk sewer from Mt John to Sadadeen is well under way and \$2m is to be spent on that particular project along with a rising main - \$403 000 in the Heavitree Gap area - and the Undoolya Road sewerage connection which had some problems last year when there was a breakdown in the rising main at the top of Todd Street and temporary measures had to be undertaken. This will be remedied.

I believe the budget gives job opportunities. It will encourage the private sector to create jobs and there are many public works which will be beneficial to the people of Alice Springs and the surrounding areas. It will also result in many social benefits. As I have said, I believe the budget offers a good balance between job-creation, wealth-creation and social benefits. My experience in talking to people in Alice Springs is that it is considered to be a good budget. It has been very well received.

Mrs O'NEIL (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I would think that this Assembly, in the past 12 months, has spent more time considering health issues than has been spent since the Legislative Council held an inquiry into medical and health

services in the Northern Territory 10 years ago. That health issues have been discussed so frequently in this Assembly in the last 12 months is a reflection of the very grave concern of the population in the Territory as to the state of health services and what is seen as a reduction in the degree of health services. In my view, that concern is very genuine and accurate when it is considered that wards have been closed, facilities closed and people turned away from hospitals, and sometimes from emergency services, as the Minister for Health knows. Other disturbing things have happened. It is within that context that I will be looking at the Department of Health budget figures, not only for the forthcoming financial year of 1982-83 but also the situation which is revealed in the budget papers over the last financial year and, indeed, in the previous year.

Very regularly, the minister has explained problems in the health area almost entirely in terms of changes in the federal department's financial allocations to state governments and the Territory government for hospital services. I have had the fairly tedious task of going through some of the minister's many press releases over the last 12 months. I was struck by the number of times he attributed problems in health services to the changed federal health-funding arrangements. In January, when setting up a task force to study financial loss aspects of Darwin Hospital, he stated that 'the move has been taken because of rapidly increasing costs from the financial constraints being placed on the Health Department by the federal government'. Subsequently, when speaking to the Hospital Management Board meeting in February, he said: 'The challenge of delivering health care in the current economic climate is an enormous one. The task has been to maintain a high level of health care services within the constraints of a very tight budgetary limitation. Those limitations have been forced on us and on health departments in all the states by the impact of the Commonwealth user-pays scheme. Our financial position is tight. The \$1m we received from the Commonwealth last week will ease some of the immediate strain but it will not provide the answer to our long-term problems. The whole future of our health department operation hinges very largely on the outcome of our claim for extra funds which is currently before the Commonwealth'. He said the same thing in March. In April, when announcing that an additional \$1.58m had been received from the Commonwealth, the minister stated: 'It will go some way to easing the current tight cash flow position of the Health Department. The most important application of the funds will be to enable wages to be met'. At that stage, we had our Minister for Health suggesting that wages in the Health Department would not be met because of the federal government's tightfistedness.

It went on and on and on. That was the principal reason which the minister reiterated time and again for the many problems which were experienced by Northern Territory people in the health area. Thus, it is particularly interesting to see what actually happened with the Health Department last year because it is quite at odds with what the minister claimed was happening. I have the figures in front of me.

The estimate for the Health Department's expenditures in 1981-82 was \$89 660 000 - the same figure which had been spent the previous year. In fact, the Health Department only spent \$88 600 000. It spent \$1m less than it thought it would. Perhaps we can give it some credit for this. Of that \$89m, it had been thought that the Commonwealth government would contribute \$21.5m. That was the estimate which we looked at in this Assembly 12 months ago. For a variety of reasons, this went up to \$27 800 000. That was a plus, Mr Speaker. That additional money was used to overcome the reduction in revenue-raising by fees in Northern Territory hospitals and health services. It had been estimated that \$12.5m would be raised but, in fact, only \$8 800 000 was raised.

When you take the Commonwealth allocations and the Northern Territory revenue-raising capacity from the total budget, you come to the figure of what the Northern Territory government anticipated it would be spending from its own resources on the Health Department. That is the money that this Assembly 12 months ago appropriated to be spent on the Health Department. In fact, we appropriated \$55.5m but the Northern Territory government spent less than \$52m. Nevertheless, the minister has been telling us all along that he could not pay the wages and that things were so bad because of the federal government. At the end of the year, the minister had an extra \$3m tucked away. God knows where it has gone - to some other department or Palmerston or the NTDC. That money has not been spent yet people are being turned away from hospitals, health clinics are being closed and people in the bush are being threatened with having their ambulance services removed. The Northern Territory government has saved not an insignificant amount from the sum which this Assembly appropriated 12 months ago to spend specifically on health services.

There is an even more fascinating figure when you look at what the Northern Territory government, from its own resources, has been spending on the Health Department. It said it would spend \$55.5m and it spent less than \$52m. In the previous year, 1980-81, it spent \$61m out of a total budget of \$89m. Quite clearly, the budget figures indicate that it is the Northern Territory government's own determination to reduce expenditure in the health area which has caused the situation which has confronted the people of the Northern Territory in the last 12 months in regard to health services. Let us not hear again this nonsense from the Minister for Health that it is all the fault of the federal government and that he is doing his best to ensure that services are maintained and that people are paid. Of course the federal government scheme is iniquitous. It is a dreadful thing, particularly for the Northern Territory. I would not defend it for a moment. However, let us not have the minister hiding behind that and not having the honesty to tell the people of the Northern Territory that this government's priorities are to spend less on health than it has spent in the past. All of those figures do not take into account inflation which is about 10.7% at the moment and has been about 10% over the last 12 months.

If we look at what is proposed for the year 1982-83, we find once again a total budget of \$89.6m - the same for the last several years, despite inflation. On 20 April, the minister said: 'Since it can be expected that future years will see an escalation of our costs, it is essential that the correct base figure be struck'. The minister expects an escalation of costs yet that certainly has not been taken into account in this budget before us.

From time to time when the minister talks about health problems - and he has been backed up from time to time by the Chief Minister - he deviates from his theme that it is all the Commonwealth's fault. He says that our costs are so high here. A recent example that he used was South Australia. He said that the cost of delivering health services in Adelaide is much cheaper than in the Northern Territory. The minister knows that that is a lot of hogwash. You cannot compare the delivery of health services in a long-established health system that has a compact European population centred close to a capital city with the situation that exists in the Northern Territory. It is totally inappropriate for the Chief Minister or the Minister for Health to say that we have to try to keep our costs down to what they are in Cairns or Adelaide or whatever. The minister knows that is nonsense because, when he goes off to Canberra to ask for more money, he says precisely that. I have a press release which he issued when he was having talks with the former Commonwealth Health Minister, Mr MacKellar. He reminded Mr MacKellar that the Territory health services were catering to a small population dispersed over great distances containing a high proportion of disadvantaged people and utilising

high-cost hospitals built by the Commonwealth. Let's not fall back on the second excuse either. Our health costs are high in the Northern Territory, they will remain high and the Northern Territory government has a responsibility to meet them. No one will applaud it more than I if it does that prudently, cautiously and without wasting money. However, it is doing it by reducing the level of services available to the people of the Northern Territory. I certainly hope that this will not continue although, looking at these figures for 1982-83, I fear that it will.

I notice that, at some stage, the minister has claimed that the budget allows increased funding for Aboriginal health and preventative health measures. That would be absolutely admirable but, in the budget papers before us, I can find no hard evidence to that effect. It is true that there appears to be a redistribution of funds from hospitals to Department of Health services. Once again, this appears simply to reflect internal rearrangements. For example, hospital aerial medical services costs are now to be borne by the regions and these are very substantial costs.

I note also some changes in grants-in-aid which have been applied by the Health Department in traditional areas over many years. There is a very minor reduction of \$57 000 here. I give the minister notice that I will be asking details of some of those changes in the grants-in-aid in the committee stage.

I also see no evidence of money for capital items recently announced by the minister: the community centre for Darwin rural old timers which he indicated the Health Department would like to be responsible for and the sobering-up shelters in major towns which he announced in September. It is my view that all Assembly members would applaud this idea as an attempt to redress the serious problems of alcoholism in the Northern Territory community but I regret that no money has been allocated in this budget to achieve that aim.

Moving on to community development, I regret to see there has been no allocation for a prison farm in Central Australia. The minister assures me that there has been and I am pleased to hear that. It is certainly my view that the prison farm at Gunn Point and the one proposed for Alice Springs are a far better means of dealing with people held within the Correctional Services Division than very expensive facilities such as that at Berrimah. I would like to see an expansion of this type of prison within the Northern Territory.

The community development budget is otherwise unexceptional as far as I can see. There is one small item which I would like to commend. Division 70 provides \$99 000 for Northern Territory government archives services. This might seem to be small and esoteric but it is something that has been neglected in the past. I am pleased to see that this matter is now being addressed as part of the ongoing improvement of overall library services in the Northern Territory. The former Minister for Community Development, the member for Casuarina, will remember that I used to spend a lot of time worrying about library services in the early days after self-government when those services in the Northern Territory were very poor indeed. I am happy to see them improving and, as a further step along the road, the allocation for archival services in the Northern Territory. It is most important that our records be kept properly for historical and other purposes. I think this is something that we in the Northern Territory are becoming more aware of. This move would be applauded by the general community.

I also take the opportunity to advise the Minister for Community Development that I will be seeking details for grants-in-aid within his department for welfare services and arts and cultural affairs and in respect to funds made available through the dollar-for-dollar scheme and special grants to

local authorities. Otherwise, I found the Department of Community Development's budget unexceptional and I wish that I could have said the same about the Department of Health's. Certainly, in my earlier years in the Assembly, that department ran smoothly enough and caused me and other members of the Assembly little concern. Health services have now become of very great concern to this Assembly and to members of the general public in the Territory. I very much regret to say that the budget before us will not, in any way, overcome those problems.

Mrs LAWRIE (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, it is fascinating to hear members on the government side say that, in these hard times, we have what is only to be regarded as a reasonable budget for the Territory, all things considered. Of course, it is their friend and colleague, Malcolm Fraser, who has led this country into the parlous state which presently exists. I do not see that they should find the necessary restraints a matter for self-congratulation. They are birds of a feather; they flock together and they must bear the odium of this country's recession along with Malcolm Fraser.

I have 2 broad concerns in the budget. One relates to health and the other to education. By arrangement, I thank the Minister for Health for allowing me to speak before he does so that he may be able to allay a couple of concerns which are abroad in the community.

Some time ago when members in the Assembly were expressing the problems they found with a contracting health service, the Chief Minister rose to his feet and, in his blustering and hectoring manner, demanded to be told where the services were contracting and where a lesser service was being provided. Even the apocryphal Blind Freddy would now realise that health services in the Territory are less than were provided some years ago and are likely to contract even further in the coming years unless we have a change of government at a federal level. For example, we used to have 3 dietitians in Darwin in the health department. Two went on leave and have not been replaced leaving only one who is rushed off her feet trying to do 3 jobs at once. We find that medical attendance at community health centres is restricted, the doctors' hours are restricted, and people do not have the same access to those centres as was their right previously.

Even more disturbing is that we find there are now restrictions on the normal screening of children, firstly at the community centres and, secondly, within the schools at the early school age. This is documented, Mr Speaker. We have letters from the Department of Health stating these facts. It is not a figment of my imagination. I would ask the honourable minister, in reviewing his budget in the ensuing months, to see if a greater priority could be given to the screening of children in early childhood because it will be a saving to the taxpayer if any problem can be recognised and remedied at an early age rather than allowed to develop. I would think that his colleague, the Minister for Education, would back up that statement because, from the documentation I have received, schoolteachers are now being asked to become lay health workers. For example, honourable members may or may not be aware that assessments of 3-year-olds are no longer to be carried out at community health centres and, instead of the normal overall assessment of a child entering pre-school, these assessments are only to be carried out in year 1 of school if requested by a parent or teacher. The normal mandatory testing no longer exists.

If the parents live with the child and have cause for concern, they will take steps anyway but, in this very early and vulnerable stage of a child's development, teachers are having the onus put upon them to assess whether or not each child in their care needs a medical assessment and report. It has been put to me, as chairman of a school council, that this is a quite unfair

imposition and that parents and staff at pre-school and junior primary levels are extremely concerned. The senior primary school staff and high school staff are concerned because, particularly if a child has an eye-sight problem and it is not recognised in the first year of schooling, irreparable damage can be done to progress through a psychological effect which can show itself in years to come.

Mr Speaker, there is another reason for asking the minister to reconsider this policy decision and to continue the excellent practice of screening both at the community health centres and in the first year pre-school attendance: the high turnover of population in the Territory. There is something over 67% turnover in one school in my electorate alone. It is not possible, with such a turnover of population, for teachers to carry out health assessments even at that very primary level. People in the community with which I am most closely associated, Nightcliff, have written letters to the Secretary of the Department of Health, and have asked me to raise the problem in the Assembly. I do this in the context of the budget debate. I share the concerns of the honourable member for Fannie Bay - concerns she has expressed over the years in this Assembly. I ask the minister to give some undertaking to at least review the policy in time for the school year due to commence in 1983.

Mr Speaker, I spoke about my hope that the Minister for Education would support my call and I hope also that the Minister for Education, who has the responsibility for the Industries Training Commission, will add some support to criticisms I am about to make against the Department of Transport and Works and NTEC for the dramatic downturn in their intake of apprentices for 1983. To look at the Department of Transport and Works' figures, in 1977 that department had 10 apprentices. All these figures are first year intakes; they are not cumulative figures. In 1978, the department had 17, an increase of 7. In 1979, there were 25; in 1980, 20; in 1981, 30; in 1982, 15; and, in 1983, I understand that in all trades under the auspices of Transport and Works there are only to be 6 apprentices taken in Darwin and 6 to 9 throughout the Territory as a whole. That is a dramatic downturn in the training program run by that government department.

I am aware that the minister may say that we are investigating other ways of ensuring that trade training continues. He is likely to say that his department has been asked to report back to him on a scheme where it takes first-year apprentices, trains them and then farms them out to private industry for the subsequent 3 years of that trade training. If I have anticipated his remarks correctly, may I sound a note of warning. It is sad to relate that there are 2 people in the Commonwealth Employment Service in Darwin, one in Darwin central and one at Casuarina, whose specific job it is to try to place mid-term apprentices whose masters have dismissed them because their companies have failed or they do not have the work to continue training the apprentices. Since the government is severely restricting its apprentice intake and private enterprise is experiencing severe difficulties and is also restricting its apprentice intake, then we see a fairly bleak prospect for the thousand school leavers this year. Given what is happening in private industry, I cannot see that the proposal being bruited abroad by the Minister for Transport and Works will in any way alleviate what is almost tragic for the young people of today. It is bad enough that they cannot enter apprenticeships to start with. It is even worse if they have completed 1, 2 or even 3 years of their training and then their indentures are not fulfilled because their masters have to dismiss them because of economic circumstances.

Mr Speaker, in case I am to be accused of being a Jeremiah in offering no alternative, may I suggest that the government introduce a system which is in operation, I understand, in Western Australia: preferential tendering to firms

which have apprentices. It happened in Western Australia when there was a dramatic downturn in the building trade and the government - a conservative government - enacted legislation which determined that preferential contracting would favour those firms which were training young people. If it can be done in Western Australia, which has vast distances and problems with communications and administration, then it can be done in the Territory. We have a local preferential system for firms but, because of the 3-tier tendering system that is open to abuse, a local firm will get the main contract, subcontract to a southern firm which has no ties and responsibilities here and which has no apprentices, and our local trainees miss out. I suggest to the government that that proposal be considered as a matter of some urgency. I hope that the honourable Minister for Transport and Works heard what I said earlier about his scheme of one-year training and then going to private enterprise. He is not looking too happy at the moment.

I also mentioned that NTEC was likely to restrict its intake of apprentices next year. I will give some figures over the past few years for that organisation. In 1979, NTEC had 22 first-year intake apprentices: 15 in Darwin, 5 in Alice Springs and 2 in Katherine. In 1980, it had a total of 10: 7 in Darwin, 1 in Alice Springs, 1 in Katherine and 1 in Tennant Creek. In 1981, a good year, it had 27: 20 in Darwin, 6 in Alice Springs and another 1 in Tennant Creek. In 1982, there were 20 overall: 10 in Darwin, 4 in Alice Springs, 3 in Katherine and 3 in Tennant Creek. I understand - I do not have firm figures - that next year there are likely to be between 9 and 12 in the Territory. This is a 50% decrease again.

One of the philosophies of government apprenticeship schemes has been that the department takes these young people on contract for the 4 years of their indentures. It does not promise them continuing employment. The government departments very wisely realised that, if they did that, they would have to restrict their apprentice intake year by year. What they have been doing instead of taking on the young people is giving them the trade training and then more or less, turning them loose upon the private sector after they have gained those qualifications, firstly to gain wider experience - the old journeyman concept - and, secondly, to be of use to the private sector. There are many small firms which do not have the resources or the capacity to take on an apprentice but which have benefited by this very wise government training-scheme which has operated in the past. I am certainly disturbed that 1983 will see a 50% reduction in what has been an excellent trade training scheme by government departments. I have mentioned 2: Transport and Works and NTEC.

Mr Speaker, there is only one other body which I wish to mention in passing and that is the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority which has a fairly reasonable budget. In these times of austerity, I wonder, Sir, if the amount given to ADMA could not have been better given to the Department of Primary Production which for years has done an excellent job under most difficult circumstances, thereby saving the heavy administrative overheads of ADMA and boosting a department within the same minister's area of responsibility - in other words, putting more money into technical staff and less into the administrative overheads. I commend that concept to the Minister for Primary Production.

Finally, may I say that the second-reading speech presented by the Treasurer some 4 weeks ago was heard in silence. We listened to the shadow treasurer, the member for Sanderson, this morning with courtesy and silence and, by and large, that has been the tenor of this debate. However, there has been one notable exception: the deplorable remarks of the Chief Minister who yet again descended to personal abuse in the context of what is hopefully the time for all members representing people of this Territory to indicate where they feel

the government's priorities should lie and, as some honourable members have done, tedious to others though it may be, to go through their electorate bit by bit congratulating or otherwise the government on the state of roads, culverts and wells within that electorate. That is the prerogative of any member but I think the debate is best served by reasoned, calm, honest discussion and even by disapproval of the government's budget. But the remarks I heard from the Chief Minister this morning do him no credit and I think tend to discredit this Assembly in the eyes of the populace who do read Hansard and sometimes wonder at the standard of debate which occurs.

Mr TUXWORTH (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I would like to touch briefly on a wide range of matters that were mentioned by several members today.

I begin with the comments by the member for Sanderson who spoke about the mining industry and the attitude of the government in setting charges and creating jobs in this area. The honourable member referred quite rightly to the downturn in the industry which can only be described throughout the country as a whole as quite serious. In fact, the permanent closure of some mines in Tasmania and New South Wales has been a great blow to those states, particularly Tasmania where the number of mine employees is very great and the opportunity for alternative employment is very limited. In the national context, the Northern Territory's position, while it is serious, is not as bad as that in some states. I think the most important thing for us to do as a Territory in the next 12 months is to survive and be ready for the upturn. This has always been in the back of our minds when we approach such matters as government charges and royalties for the mining industry. I think it is in the back of the minds of the men when they are making their pay claims against the companies because we are very close to shooting the goose that lays the golden egg. That will not be to the benefit of anybody in the long term. I think it is fair to say that prudence in this area is something that we should be very mindful of.

The honourable member referred to the disappearance of 600 jobs in the Northern Territory. I was not quite sure how the 600 jobs disappeared because it seemed to me that the honourable member was saying that statistics showed there were 600 more people applying for them and, because the jobs were not there, 600 jobs had disappeared. All the honourable members on the other side have touched very heavily on the job-creation syndrome and the need for work and the responsibility of government in providing employment. I believe too that that responsibility falls to the opposition. It is pretty hollow stuff to talk about job creation and the maintenance of jobs when the opposition continues to maintain such an aggressive stance against the development of the uranium industry in the Northern Territory.

Mr Bell: Oh, turn the record over.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I am sorry that I have touched a nerve with the honourable member but I know the Leader of the Opposition agrees with me. He is not the least bit upset, but the other honourable member really takes exception to it. He does not have any need to because what I am about to say is really true. You cannot have your cake and eat it. You cannot talk about job creation and work for the unemployed and, on the other hand, adopt a policy which is put on you from another part of Australia that prevents the creation of jobs to the detriment of opportunities in the Northern Territory.

The government has an opportunity in this area and it has a responsibility to provide jobs. The opposition does too. Its responsibility is to oppose the policy that is being placed on it by its federal counterparts. It should tell them that that policy has no place in the Northern Territory because it

is interested in the people of the Northern Territory and the jobs that will be created and that, for its own political reasons, it will dissociate itself from the federal stance. When it takes that position, all the bubble about how it supports job creation will be genuine and believed. In the meantime, it knows and we know and the people know that it is just pious pap. You could not describe it as anything else.

The honourable member for Sanderson touched on the need to create jobs through the National Parks and Wildlife Service or our Conservation Commission with grass cutting and tree planting. She mentioned also the need to bring major projects forward. The honourable member did not see the great significance being placed on the bicentennial celebrations and the need to do some things by 1988. She felt projects such as the roads and the railways should be taken off the program for that period and be done now with high schools and a few other things. With due respect to the honourable member, before we can do that, we have to have the money to pay for the project. The planning for those projects is based on the premiss that the money will be collected over a future period. On that basis, that is exactly when the contracts will be brought forward.

Mr Speaker, if I could move on to the comments made by the honourable member for Fannie Bay, I am at a bit of a disadvantage because I did not bring along a swag of press releases to read out to honourable members. If I had known the member for Fannie Bay was going to spend her time reading out the press releases of the last 9 months, I would have gathered a few up myself to occupy the members' time. However, the member for Fannie Bay did touch on a few matters that I believe I ought to clarify.

The honourable member took me to task for blaming the federal government for the Northern Territory's position in so far as its health system is concerned. She said that the federal government was not in fact to blame but I was because I had reduced services. I know the honourable member for Fannie Bay only grasps those things that she wants to but, for her benefit, I will run over it again because the point is very important.

We had a budget for the Health Department last year of some \$89m which was made up of contributions from 3 areas: our Treasury, the federal Treasury and the medical benefits funds. We knew what our contribution was because we determined that. We knew that the federal government had robbed us on its assessment and we were fighting tooth and nail to have that matter rectified but we were not sure that it would honour it. The other aspect was totally unknown because the medical benefits funds' operation in the Northern Territory up until last year had been very limited. The unknown factor was the level of contribution we would get from the funds. If we had known the contribution from the Commonwealth and the funds, we would not have had any hassles last year. However, we are not crystal-ball people. We had an obligation to be careful with our money until we knew what the financial position would be. I think it is totally irresponsible to sail in on the premiss that you will have a certain amount of money available to you and then find out 12 weeks before the end of the financial year that no funds are available to pay people's wages. That is irresponsible and I am not particularly interested in being a part of it.

The honourable member also suggested that, because this year's level of expenditure - taking inflation into account - is the same as last year, then things must be dreadful. I think the honourable member ought to give the people in the department a little bit of credit for the manner in which they have put their house in order and have become much more efficient. We are in the business of providing a service. If people do not want a service, we do not spend money on providing something that is not needed. That is pretty

reasonable. It is a statistical fact that the level of demand for health services has dropped. Consequently, there is a need for us to review some of the things that we are doing and channel our efforts into other areas where we can be more effective.

Mr Speaker, I would also make the point that I have spoken to every management unit of the various sections of the department involved in the budget formulation and they have told me that they are happy with their appropriation and that it is fair and reasonable for the job that they have to do. If I had a situation where management personnel in the respective units of the department were saying that things are terrible, then I would have to agree with the honourable member that we might have a problem. The fact is that the department has improved its efficiency incredibly and it has regionalised its operations. The people in the regions are now more responsible and more sensitive so far as budgetary and policy matters are concerned. The head office syndrome is not as strong as it used to be and people are becoming much more efficient as a result. These things have been worked out in the last 12 months and we have been successful in achieving them. I do not see that the 3000 people in the department should be subjected to continual criticism about how they are cutting this and cutting that.

Mrs O'Neil: You take the responsibility. Don't blame them.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the member is only highlighting her ignorance of the situation with her interjection. One of the rules that I have is that I do not make arbitrary decisions about medical matters. I am happy to make them about financial matters but medical matters are left to the doctors and the people in the system to organise the priorities themselves. The management and the medical people have told me that the finances they have for the year for their respective units are adequate and they can live within them.

The honourable member also said that it was not fair to compare the Northern Territory health system with the states or Northern Territory hospitals with other hospitals. That is the greatest load of bunk that I have ever heard. The relationship and the comparison of hospitals against hospitals and states against states and populations within each state is the premiss on which the Commonwealth funds the states. If the honourable member is saying that none of that counts, that we will do our own thing and the Commonwealth will pay for it, that is the greatest load of hogwash I have ever come across. We do not have to have the same or cheaper services than the states but we have to be able to demonstrate that, wherever we are more expensive in delivering a service, there is a legitimate reason for it and that we are not being irresponsible or wasteful. That is the reason why we have comparative figures and must always have them. If you want the federal funds to dry up, all you have to do is stop playing the game by the rules.

The honourable member said that she could not see in the budget the funding for the sobering-up centres. I would advise her that the funding for the centres is a matter that I will take up with my colleagues during the course of the year because it has not been determined how those centres should best be provided. It is quite likely that we will be able to come to an agreement with the local government or churches in the respective towns. In that case, we are not talking about a capital appropriation within the health budget but about funding to those organisations. Definitely, the matter has to be addressed.

The honourable member also raised the matter of grants-in-aid. We have about 40 organisations that receive funds through grants-in-aid. Very few

of them received less than they did last year, many received the same amount and quite a few received more. If the honourable member has a problem with any particular group that she would like to discuss, I would be happy to take that up.

I would like to say to honourable members who criticise the operation of the Health Department that there are many people in the department who are trying to improve and reassess their efforts to provide the best service possible to the community. I would make the point that, while sometimes we see a service as being reduced, the Health Department personnel would argue that their priorities need to change as the community changes. The argument of having a health service or a hospital doing the same thing for 10 years simply because it has been done for the previous 10 years is paramount to waste because, in that 10-year period, the whole community has changed and the delivery of the health care system must change if it is to be effective.

Mr Speaker, let me run through some of the things that are very positive achievements of the department in the last 12 months. The Katherine Institute of Aboriginal Health, which is now well under way, is making a very great contribution in the area of training Aboriginal health workers. It is a redirection of activities that were already going on in the department and I believe it is a great initiative by the people within the department. It is one which I support fully.

During the year, we have taken over the function of air monitoring from the Department of Transport and Works and we have had a full year's operation of the Drug and Alcohol Bureau. Honourable members will see in the budget that there is a considerable increase in the amount of money being spent in the drug and alcohol area.

The department has sponsored the Down's Syndrome Group of the Northern Territory and assistance has been provided in many ways, both with the provision of buildings and supportive personnel and a contribution of money. If ever there was a group of people who needed a bit of help and have a very good cause in this community, I believe it is the Down's Syndrome Group. That action within the department is one that I believe brings great credit on it.

The department is continually reviewing the community health services and that must go on so long as we continue to grow and develop because our needs will change yearly and from suburb to suburb. The increased involvement of, and participation by, Aboriginals in community health programs is another expansion which I believe to be very important. The concept of enabling Aboriginals to understand our health system and the way we do things is of great importance to us as a community. The sooner we get Aboriginals to comprehend why we do the things we do for health and how they can benefit from them, the better we will all be.

During the last year, we have seen the renovation of one of the old hospital buildings in Tennant Creek to establish a nursing home which has been funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Security. Again, this initiative has come about because the community is changing. Older people are opting to remain here. If we are to develop as a community, we need to provide support for these people.

Mr Speaker, a new development has come about in recent days and I know this is a very pertinent point to raise in relation to your own community. Some Aboriginal communities would like to have their own doctor or share one with other communities. In practical terms, that is very difficult because sometimes the communities are too small. They cannot recruit medical staff and are in

need of assistance. The department has joined with Bathurst Island, Oenpelli and Kalano in a joint venture to provide a doctor to those communities. I do not expect that the program will be without its problems or faults from time to time. The initiative came from the Aborigines; we did not put it to them. They came to us. I think that development was very positive.

During the year, I announced that the department will start its midwifery training program - another big plus. The program starts next month. Twelve girls from all over the Territory, out of about 200 applicants, will begin the first training course. We have good reason to be proud of that.

Next year, in conjunction with a program run by the Darwin Community College, the department will be conducting a community health course for nurses. I am very satisfied with the cooperation I have had from my colleague, the Minister for Education. This too is a program that is not very common throughout Australia and it is very difficult for Territory girls to enrol down south because of the small numbers. In the course of time, this program will keep many girls in the Territory whom we would be rather loath to lose.

I come now to the points raised by the honourable member for Nightcliff. The honourable member touched on several small points, and I will try to cover some of them now. On others, I will need to obtain some additional information for the honourable member and I will do that. The honourable member spoke of the declining health services. I would be happy to have her sit with me and departmental personnel to talk about the declining services because what the honourable member perceives as a decline might be a different way of doing things.

The honourable member also raised the issue of dietitians. I cannot answer her off the top of my head other than to suggest that there may have been a problem of recruitment rather than finance. I have no knowledge of any limitation on dietitian staff.

The honourable member was also concerned that health centres were not operating full time. So far as the provision of services from health centres is concerned, we are there to provide a service to the people who need it, not to put 6 people in a building and keep it open 40 hours a week and tell the world what a good job we have done. If there is a change of direction by the community health nurses in an area, it is because their workload and their customer-pattern is different and they need to redirect their day and their efforts to serve the people that they are there for. I do not have any involvement in that area at all, Mr Speaker. Again, if the honourable member would like me to raise it, I would be happy to join in a meeting about it.

Concern was expressed about the school screening program and the review that is undertaken there. Let me assure the honourable member that this is a medical decision. I have no political input to it at all. It is something that has come as a review within the northern region of the department about the way it is screening schoolchildren. One of the things that has become obvious to us in recent days - and I will be speaking to the Assembly about this in the months to come - is that there is a very serious need for us to have a comprehensive child health screening unit to cover a wide range of faculties for all children between infancy to the 19-year age group.

Mrs Lawrie: We had one.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, I do not believe that we had one of the type that I am talking about. I would be happy to brief her on it in the days to come.

The assessment that is being carried out on school screening is one that has been brought to my attention already and I have asked the department for a paper on it. I am more than happy to discuss the matter with all honourable members. I foreshadow that I will be introducing a paper this week which reviews our community health programs in the Northern Territory. It is by Terry Whiting from a consultant firm in Melbourne. The matter of school screening is addressed in this paper. I intended to ask that members take it away and read it and come back with any suggestions they have. Perhaps then it could be debated in the November sittings if that was felt appropriate. Let me say that I would be more than happy for officers of the department to visit every school council throughout the Territory to discuss the issue of the school screening. There is no objection on my part to the school screening. Thirty years ago I was one of the children who benefited from it. I understand why it was started and I have been a great supporter of it. What the department and the medical people are saying is that we need to re-emphasise some aspects of our screening and have a redirection in others. I assure honourable members that there will be no deterioration in the service. There may be a new way of delivering it and it might be more specialised when it comes, but it will not be eliminated altogether.

Mr Speaker, I have touched on but a few of the activities of the department. I know that the honourable members opposite cannot address all the matters relating to the department in a debate of this nature any more than I can but I make the offer that, if any member would like to have a particular point addressed in detail in the committee stage and can give me 24 hours notice, it would make it much easier for me to provide an intelligent response.

In closing, I would like to say that I think the budget is a tremendous one for the Territory and I support it wholeheartedly.

Debate adjourned.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence be granted to the honourable member for Stuart for the duration of this sittings due to his attendance at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference in the Bahamas.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Appointment of Board of Inquiry into the Operation of the Northern Territory Development Corporation

Ms D'ROZARIO (Sanderson): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly, pursuant to section 4A of the Inquiries Act, resolve that a board of inquiry be appointed to inquire into, report on and make recommendations concerning all aspects of the operation of the Northern Territory Development Corporation and, in particular, matters relating to:

- (1) the methods of assessment used by the corporation to investigate the financial viability of a potential recipient of development funds before those funds are made available;
- (2) the requirements of the corporation in terms of asset backing for security against loan funds or guarantees provided to clients under the development assistance program;

- (3) the criteria applied by the board of the corporation in deciding which applicants for a loan have been successful;
- (4) the methods of monitoring the performance of recipients of development assistance from the corporation;
- (5) the criteria applied by the board of the corporation in dealing with applicants for cash incentives under the corporation's Industrial Research and Development and Invention Assistance Grants Scheme;
- (6) the extent and appropriateness of the corporation's relations with other government departments and authorities, including the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority;
- (7) the rate of return on capital employed by the corporation in each year since its inception; and
- (8) methods of increasing the accountability of the corporation to parliament.

Because of the need for confidentiality in relation to loans and guarantees of the NTDC, the board of inquiry should undertake the whole of the proceedings of an inquiry in private in accordance with section 16 of the Inquiries Act.

Mr Speaker, the opposition has long been concerned with the accountability of the Northern Territory Development Corporation to the Territory community, largely because of the amount of public money for which it has responsibility. Our concern stems from the actions of the predecessor of the corporation, the Primary Producers Board as it was then known.

Some members of this Assembly will recall that there was a censure motion moved against the government because it had advanced some \$150 000 as a cash advance to the receiver of the Northern Australian Development Corporation without any security. As a result of that action, the government was forced to introduce the Encouragement of Primary Production (Validation of Actions) Bill. Mr Speaker, as you yourself would recall, the object of this piece of legislation was to validate a loan that had already been granted. In other words, this Assembly was asked to pass retrospective legislation to legalise actions of the government.

The government introduced the Territory Development Bill in 1978 to replace the Primary Producers Board. In his second-reading speech in introducing the bill in May 1978, the honourable minister who had carriage of the matter at the time said: 'Stringent terms and conditions of eligibility for assistance will be applied and the merits of individual applications will be carefully evaluated and weighed against the benefits of such development to the Territory. Mr Speaker, it is clear that the words of the minister were nothing more than words. The opposition has called for the establishment of a board of inquiry and the reasons for the call are apparent in the terms of reference that I read out earlier.

After 5 years of operation, it is our belief that there is a need to inquire into whether or not the directions that the corporation is taking in an attempt to promote development in the Territory are still appropriate. It is considered by the opposition that an inquiry is appropriate to assess just how efficiently the corporation is or is not doing the job for which this Assembly established it.

In our view, there are 2 areas of concern which alone warrant an inquiry into the NTDC. It has also long concerned us that the corporation should be far more accountable to the public because of the amount of public money that

it spends. In May 1979, the opposition, in an attempt to make the NTDC more accountable, attempted to amend the original Territory Development Act. In his second-reading speech when introducing that particular bill, the honourable sponsor of the bill said: 'The Territory Development Act as it stands calls for little, if any, accountability for the Northern Territory Development Corporation in relation to funds expended by it and certainly it should be accountable to the parliament because the parliament is the custodian of public moneys'.

Although that attempt to make the NTDC more accountable to the Territory community failed, the opposition has continued to pursue that issue. The reaction of the government to these persistent calls for more accountability has been merely a reference to the provisions of the Financial Administration and Audit Act and the fact that this act requires the corporation to submit annual financial statements of its activities. It is our view that the government continues intentionally to miss the point of the calls made by the opposition. I would make a further point in relation to the provision of annual reports which I will direct to the Minister for Industrial Development and I remind that minister that the corporation has even been remiss in the provision of the reports required by it under the provisions of the Financial Administration and Audit Act. Long delays have been experienced in the release of these reports because of major problems associated with the auditing of the corporation's accounts.

I would repeat that such a process, even if it were followed to the letter of the act, provides no check at all on whether there has been misuse, intended or otherwise, of public funds through the Northern Territory Development Corporation. The call for an inquiry by the opposition is justified on those grounds alone. However, the catalyst for the present call by the opposition is clearly the collapse of the Buntine group of companies and the revelations that have since followed that event. As a result of the Buntine collapse and the involvement of the corporation in that affair, we now have a clear pointer to the need for an inquiry and whether or not the corporation has in the past maintained, and continues to maintain, adequate standards of financial management in its lending practices.

Mr Speaker, it appears that the Buntine group obtained from the Northern Territory Development Corporation a guarantee for \$750 000 in support of a loan that the group had obtained from Citibank. It would appear also that this guarantee was made available on the basis of security that was either inadequate or non-existent. It would also now appear that there was totally inadequate investigation of the value of security offered by the Buntine group. In the last sittings of this Assembly, several questions were raised about the events that I have just mentioned and the Chief Minister conceded that the government was unaware of the true financial position of the Buntine group, that the government was unaware of what amount of the loan offered by Citibank had in fact been drawn upon by the Buntine group and, finally, he conceded that the government had no idea of the market value of the assets that had been put up for security for guarantee for the Citibank loan to Buntine.

Mr Speaker, the fact that the group required a guarantee from the corporation to ensure that Citibank did not foreclose on them suggests that the group's financial position was a somewhat difficult one, and yet the corporation had absolutely no idea of the financial state of the Buntine group. It was unable to say what the market value of the assets were that had been put up for security for the guarantee, nor had the assets that had been put up at the time of granting the guarantee been checked. There are obviously major problems in the operation of the corporation and it is the Territory community that will end up footing the bill.

Investigations since this matter was raised in the Assembly have been conducted into circumstances surrounding the Buntine guarantee. These have involved searches in relation to personal guarantees that were offered by Mr Dalziel. I might add, in passing, that information about the activities of Mr Dalziel is not at all difficult to come by in New South Wales. It seems that everyone there knows about the activities of this gentleman. It would appear that, as part of his personal guarantee, Mr Dalziel put up as security a property known as Fernhill. That property, according to Mr Dalziel, was said to have a value of \$1.67m. It appears that, since this property valuation was offered by Mr Dalziel, the property has actually been auctioned by the mortgagees, the National Bank of Australasia, and that auction took place on 23 September. It may not be news to the honourable minister that the property fetched at auction a sum of about \$440 000 and, of the proceeds of the sale, it appears that Mr Dalziel will receive not one dollar.

Further investigations have led to concern about the nature of the share transactions involved in the sale of the Buntine group. There is a need for an inquiry into the operations of the group from the point of view of the \$750 000 guarantee alone without any other matters being considered.

There has also been widespread concern in the business community about the involvement of funds from the Territory Insurance Office in certain transactions involving the Northern Territory Development Corporation. If this is true, then the risks that exist with the NTDC will spill over also into the Territory Insurance Office. There are obviously commercial implications if doubt exists in relation to the security of the investments that the TIO undertakes and this issue may be cleared up immediately if an inquiry is agreed to. The Chief Minister has always operated as a one-man band and it appears that the sole instrument in the band is now losing control. It is obvious to the public that disquiet about the type of investments being undertaken by the Territory Insurance Office would on its own warrant a full inquiry into the activities of the Northern Territory Development Corporation and its relationship to the Territory Insurance Office simply to bring those matters to light. Mr Deputy Speaker, if I might refer to the terms of reference outlined in point 6 of my motion, members will see that it calls for an inquiry into the relations of the corporation with other government departments and authorities.

Further investigations have led to further disclosures that cause the opposition considerable concern and I am sure that the government will also be concerned about their nature. In 1979, the Minister for Industrial Development, who still holds that portfolio, told the Assembly: 'The belief of this government is that information provided to the Northern Territory Development Corporation, and any resulting financial or other assistance provided, is strictly confidential'. Again, this appears not to be the case upon examination of numerous cases that have been brought to our attention. As I have maintained throughout this entire affair, it is the belief of the opposition that an inquiry is the appropriate forum for such an investigation and, therefore, I do not propose to bring forward the names of companies or individuals that have brought their circumstances to light. It is clear that, in the absence of agreement to an inquiry, there would also be a need to protect sources of information.

However, there appears to have been several instances where information that has been collected by the corporation or on behalf of the corporation from a person or company that has sought financial assistance from the NTDC has then been made available to a third person or organisation outside of the corporation. This is the most disturbing trend that has come to light. I am sure that I do not need to spell out to members of this Assembly the implications of such actions when we have southern sharpies, for want of a better term, who come to town and would be happy to snap up a Territory-based company which happens to be in a

temporary financial difficulty. Nor is there a need for me to point out to members the potential for a good idea to be put to the corporation by a Territory-based organisation and have that idea revealed to someone waiting in the wings to avail himself of the circumstances which existed at the time in the Territory-based company. May I point out again, Mr Deputy Speaker, that these allegations warrant an inquiry into the NTDC. They appear to be far too frequent to be a figment of the imagination and, indeed, in our checkings of the circumstances which have been brought to light, we are convinced that the allegations are genuine and an inquiry is warranted.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is one further area of concern that must be raised in relation to the operations of the corporation. This involves apparent collusion between the corporation and certain businesses in this town in relation to loans granted for certain work to be done. Such a system could be open to challenge that the quotations for work to be done in relation to corporation loans would not be competitive and therefore the taxpayer was losing out at the hands of the company which offered the quote. It seems to me that there is a need for an examination of the whole system of the corporation seeking quotations from particular firms in this town to allow it to assess what the amount of a loan would be in order to get the firm making the application under way again.

It is true that, unlike other countries, adequate monitoring measures, performance and accountability criteria for economic development corporations have not been institutionalised elsewhere in Australia. Nevertheless, comparisons are available to us and, if we look at the Northern Territory Development Corporation and compare it with the Victorian Economic Development Corporation, a suggestion clearly comes through as to how inadequate the present control mechanisms are that are available to this Assembly. I will give but 3 examples of the type of control mechanisms of which I speak.

The first is to be found in section 11 of the Victorian Economic Development Corporation Act. This section empowers the minister to set quantitative performance targets relating to the objects of the act and include such determinations in the annual report of the corporation. This means that the corporation must have some idea of its performance target. Not only must it have some idea of its performance target but it is required to notify it in its annual report.

The second example is in section 43 of the Victorian Economic Development Corporation Act. This section provides that the corporation must submit an annual report to the minister and, in turn, to parliament. This document must not only include a report on the operations of the corporation but also on its efficiency and effectiveness including the extent to which the quantitative targets have been achieved. Here we have an economic development body not only setting its targets but also reporting to the parliament on the extent to which those targets have been achieved. These control mechanisms are not available to the Northern Territory Assembly under the current provisions relating to reporting by statutory authorities in the Northern Territory.

The third example relates to the provisions of section 41 of the Victorian Economic Development Corporation Act, which requires the corporation to report to the Treasurer setting out contingent liability of the corporation with respect to guarantees executed by the corporation. This represents a regular monitoring device to ensure that the Treasurer is aware of the extent of guarantees which have been provided for the Victorian Economic Development Corporation. Again, this information is not available to the Assembly of the Northern Territory. We have no idea of the total value of guarantees given by section 19A under our own Northern Territory Development Corporation Act by the Treasurer in

respect of loans taken out by applicants for assistance to the Northern Territory Development Corporation.

I consider that all these procedures are really quite modest. There is no real reason why they should be excluded from the Territory Development Act. As I have said, the opposition is aware of numerous examples which demonstrate that there are fundamental problems in the administration of the NTDC and the impact of its policies in the business community. The examples I am referring to are circumstances which have been brought to the attention of members of the opposition. I am sure many of them would also be well known to members on the other side of the Assembly. It is simply a question of the impact of these odd circumstances on the business community. That is the entire point of this motion.

From our examination of the many examples which have been brought to light, it is clear that it is not a matter of a single unfortunate incident, namely the collapse of Buntines. It is not simply one unfortunate incident as the Chief Minister has said. It appears that there is a consistent pattern of behaviour which is emerging and that pattern clearly shows that the NTDC is inefficient and out of control. When I say 'out of control', I am referring to the control exercised by this Assembly. Ultimately, we are responsible for the expenditure of public money. I am not referring to whether the minister who at the moment has the control of the NTDC thinks he knows what is going on there. I am referring to the control exercised by the Assembly, which I think is the proper principle of public scrutiny.

It is clear that the bad administration of the Northern Territory Development Corporation is caused, in part, by excessive secrecy, inadequate monitoring of performance and mechanisms for controlling performance, and a lack of effective accountability to the Assembly. Of course there are well-known remedies for these failures but the government has consistently failed to avail itself of them. Let me discuss some of the matters that I have referred to. I come first to the matter of excessive secrecy.

Under section 17 of the Territory Development Act, the corporation is 'subject to the directions of the minister in the exercise of its powers and the performance of its functions'. That is a fairly standard clause but, nevertheless, this Assembly does not know what directions are delivered to the corporation and, worse still, how these directions affect the corporation's performance. It is the view of the opposition that these directions should be published in the annual report of the corporation as they are, for example, in the annual report of the National Enterprise Board of the United Kingdom. I am not suggesting for one moment that this clause is in any way unusual. I merely suggest that other corporations have used the technique of reporting in their annual reports what the directions are and their effect. This suggestion should be taken up by the minister.

The next matter in relation to secrecy is also related to inadequate monitoring of the performance of the NTDC. I point out that I am not suggesting that the NTDC should in any way involve itself in matters of day-to-day management in firms that have received assistance from the corporation. Quite apart from the question of eligibility criteria, there is a need for more regular reporting than currently exists between the corporation and its clients. In the case of the National Enterprise Board of the United Kingdom, firms are required to produce information, usually at monthly intervals, on performance and financial prospects. They are required to produce an annual budget and a 5-year strategic plan. That plan is required to be revised each year, having regard to performance in the preceding year.

We are aware, of course, that there is a brief reference to loan management in the Northern Territory Development Corporation's 1981 annual report and the corporation's view of the problem is certainly one that concerns me. The corporation remarks at page 8 of its annual report for 1981 that it is concerned that some borrowers do not make provision to meet instalments as they fall due. It goes on to say that clients should be aware that, in such circumstances, the corporation has little option but to proceed with legal processes to recover the money. I would have thought that an adequate system of monitoring the performance criteria would have ensured that this situation does not arise as often as it obviously does. The point is not to take legal action to recover the money but rather to be forewarned of the need to take remedial action before the situation arises. There is no point in penalising companies after they have gone bad - throwing good money after bad, as I have often heard the Treasurer say.

In our opinion, we need better monitoring and performance criteria in relation to the activities of the corporation as a whole. At the very least, the responsible minister should set a performance target for the corporation in respect of the rate of return on capital available to it. The government should also address itself to the management techniques canvassed, for example, in the reports of the Victorian Public Bodies Review Committee. Without a performance target, publication of the minister's directions, or indeed the lack of them if he never gives any, and better systems of reporting from firms to the corporation and from the corporation to the minister, the NTDC will forever remain out of control of this Assembly and continue to put public money at risk.

Mr Speaker, I emphasise again that no one is suggesting that the commercial dealings of individuals and firms be made public. What we are suggesting is that the existing system of control and accountability is totally inadequate. The NTDC and the minister responsible for it are not accountable to this Assembly in any meaningful way. Until they are, the business community can have no confidence that the NTDC is performing its functions efficiently and impartially. Only the inquiry that I have urged will ensure that the NTDC can be made to fulfil its proper purpose and account to this Assembly. I urge all members of this Assembly to support the motion.

Mr STEELE (Primary Production): Mr Speaker, I support the idea of this debate taking place today. Some people would see the motion as the result of progress in the Northern Territory and obviously some of the criteria suggested in the motion are worthy of further discussion. Some of the items are quite unreal and they would be difficult to implement. In seeking an inquiry into the operations of the Northern Territory Development Corporation, the opposition has touched on a number of issues and I think it is in the best interests of members if I present my remarks in point form.

I think it is important for members to realise that, in March this year, I instructed the corporation to undertake a review of its guidelines. I would not like it implied from this statement that there were deficiencies with the corporation's guidelines. All financial institutions must obviously from time to time reassess their operations in view of changing circumstances in the business world at large and adapt accordingly. We have been going since 1978. I do not know how long the Victorian bureaucratic institution that the honourable member refers to has been going but obviously, with its greater experience, it saw a need to make some changes that we have not as yet seen necessary. There has also been an ongoing review of procedures since that date in an attempt to ensure the corporation meets the objectives and criteria which are laid down for it by Cabinet and spelled out in the Territory Development Act.

I have also been aware that the corporation may well from time to time need to review its operation given the new degree of sophistication which exists in today's financial and business community. Steps have been taken to appoint qualified consultants to provide this high level of service and advice so that the corporation can operate secure in the knowledge that it is up to date in modern methods of financing in projects which will be of benefit to all Territorians.

The methods of assessment by the corporation to investigate the financial viability of a potential recipient of the development funds before those funds can be made available are similar to those used by other financial institutions in Australia. The corporation, in line with the government's private enterprise policies, does not purport to undertake its own feasibility studies of applicants' proposals but rather investigates and assesses the individual merits of applications submitted to determine if assistance should be offered. There are 2 stages involved in the corporation's assessment of the financial viability of proposals involving financial assistance applications and a further control stage before funds are made available to approved applicants.

Firstly, corporation staff receive and assess applications for assistance and report to the board on such applications. Applications are lodged by way of a detailed application form providing full details of the applicant, the proposal, the applicant's financial position, past performance and projected financial performance. Each application is required to be supported by a statutory declaration that the information provided is correct. The extent of investigation on each application varies with the complexity of the proposal. For example, an existing venture requiring assistance for expansion or diversification might require an emphasis on past operation and financial results as a guide to future prospects. A new venture, on the other hand, generally requires more reliance on technical views and evaluation of production and marketing projections against other information and experience available. Assistance sought under specific schemes such as the Rural Adjustment Scheme requires adherence to eligibility and determination criteria set down in the Commonwealth States Northern Territory Rural Adjustment Scheme Agreement. On completion of assessments and associated investigation, details are incorporated into a business paper for presentation to the board of the corporation. All business papers concerning applications for financial assistance are signed by the corporation's loans manager and authorised for presentation to the board by the General Manager.

The second stage is the consideration of the application by the board leading either to a decision on the loan, if within delegation limits, or recommendation to the minister for approval. The board meets monthly and considers applications that have been assessed by corporation staff. The board examines the applicant's request and the business paper detailing the assessment results. Members then proceed to determine if the application meets the assistance guidelines. These guidelines are the parameters of the corporation's ability to provide financial assistance as set down by Cabinet. An outline of the existing guidelines is contained in the corporation's last annual report as tabled in this Assembly. Like all financial institutions, the board reaches a point of judgment where it must weigh up the information before it and determine if an applicant is considered able to implement successfully a project so that funds advanced can be satisfactorily serviced. The variables are such that future liability cannot be absolutely determined. In the corporation's position of lender of last resort, this judgment becomes even more difficult than that made by commercial financial institutions.

In summary, the board in its determination - and, where delegations are exceeded, in its recommendations to the minister - tests the eligibility in relation to guidelines determined by government, reasonably assures itself

to the extent possible with the information available that the assistance can be serviced, then determines or recommends appropriate security for assistance to be provided. Before any funds are released, a further stage of documentation of the proposed assistance and compliance with the conditions of assistance is necessary.

The corporation utilises both the Department of Law and commercial solicitors to prepare the legal documentation for approved assistance. Such documentation is required to be executed and lodged in appropriate registries before funds are released. The corporation follows normal commercial practice in this regard. Conditions covering matters such as insurance, equity, firm quotes for work to be undertaken and funds drawn down scheduling must similarly be complied with before funds are released. In the case of guarantees, the corporation does not have the same direct control of draw down of funds from the agreed financial institution. Depending on whether the guarantee is primary or residual in nature, the corporation determines the extent of involvement with the client and financial institution during the draw down stage.

Referring to point 2 of the motion, in respect to security for loans and guarantees, the corporation is guided, firstly, by the provisions of the Territory Development Act and, secondly, by the guidelines determined by Cabinet to apply in respect of corporation financial assistance. The current guidelines of the corporation will ensure that appropriate security is taken in each case. However, it may be necessary in some cases to settle for a lesser security than would normally be considered commercially prudent in order to get particular beneficial projects under way. The corporation concerns itself with the value of assets available for security for assistance sought. Like all financial institutions, the corporation prefers property mortgages and other specific securities where they are available and with an assessed realisable value high enough to cover the level of assistance offered. In the lender of last resort role of the corporation, however, such security is often not available or requires collateral security of other assets. Accordingly, in some cases, the corporation is reliant on securities such as floating debenture charges, bills of sale and charges over particular plant and equipment items.

The corporation attempts to maximise its security position to ensure that it has appropriate remedial action available in the event that recovery becomes necessary. Unlike banks and other institutions, however, the corporation does not apply fixed criteria to the relationship between asset value and assistance levels. By the nature of its role, the corporation is generally placed in a higher risk situation than normal commercial institutions and ranks behind those bodies in many of its security arrangements. To apply a fixed percentage borrowing limit to asset backing across the Territory's industries at the current stage of development would have an adverse effect. At a more developed stage of the economy, this may become appropriate as evidenced in some of the states. Where appropriate, the corporation seeks guarantees from company directors both as a means to improve security and remedial options and to ensure that the principals are tied to the project. The corporation also generally seeks an equity involvement of around 30% of the projects. Although this generally ensures an excess of assets over liabilities in the project, it is the particular security taken which determines the corporation's access to the assets of the venture.

In response to point 3 of the motion, the criteria applied by the board of the corporation in deciding which applicants for a loan have been successful, the board considers each application separately on its merits in accordance with the guidelines set by Cabinet. In considering applications for assistance, the corporation is primarily concerned with eligibility under the guidelines, the ability of the applicants to service the assistance sought and adequacy of

security. The corporation concerns itself with all aspects of the business and financial affairs of the applicants and evaluates the proposals to satisfy itself that primary considerations are met. In so doing, it considers matters including the production prospects, marketing prospects, technical ability to undertake the project, management ability, financial situation, financial projections, security availability, past performance and ownership considerations. Currently, loans of up to \$100 000 can be approved at board level under the delegation arrangements and the board recommends approval in excess of that amount to the minister.

I will comment now on item 4, the methods of monitoring the performance of the recipients of development assistance institutions. The corporation's prime means of monitoring assistance provided is through its own lending system. A client meeting all payments on due dates requires less monitoring and remedial action than a client in arrears. Once an arrears situation arises, interviews and reviews become necessary, leading to varying degrees of corporation involvement in remedial action. A loan management subcommittee, consisting of a member of the board, the loans manager and the loans management officer, regularly reviews arrears cases and instigates appropriate action. Severe cases are referred back to the board for approval, recovery or other action.

The corporation, however, also attempts to monitor establishment progress and operations to detect difficulties before they are reflected in arrears of payments. In the establishment stage, close liaison is maintained with the client through the progressive release of funds against invoices and other documentation. In dealing with its clients, the corporation has a range of circumstances varying from basic liaison and monitoring of successful operations to formal participation in schemes of arrangements or corporation controlled trust account arrangements.

Mr Speaker, I will deal now with item 5 of the motion. The purpose of these schemes is to foster industrial research and development and invention activities which will ultimately benefit the Territory. Examples of the types of benefits which may flow from industrial research and development and invention activities are the establishment of new manufacturing operations in the Territory, reduction of the costs of production of existing operations, creation of job opportunities, the development of new markets and growth in the export of Territory products. Both schemes are subject to eligibility requirements and both schemes have an upper limit on grant size. A maximum of \$20 000 is available to a company undertaking industrial research and development while a maximum grant of \$5000 can be made to an inventor.

The eligibility requirements for an invention grant are as follows: the applicant must be a bona fide Northern Territory company, resident or group of residents, an application for a patent must have been lodged, an applicant must not be in receipt of assistance from any other assistance scheme and no applicant will be eligible for assistance for more than one project at any one time. The Industrial Research and Development Scheme is open only to companies and not to individuals. Applicants must not be in receipt of assistance from any other schemes and no applicant will be eligible for assistance for more than one project at any one time. The primary criteria for assistance under either scheme is that research or the invention is likely to have significant application to Territory industrial development. In considering applications, therefore, the corporation looks first at the feasibility and practicability of the project reaching a successful conclusion. In undertaking this assessment of feasibility, the corporation makes use of available technical and other expertise, both within and outside of government. This is necessary to allow a full evaluation.

Having established that a particular project is likely to succeed, the

corporation then assesses the potential benefit to the Territory of the project. Given that a project has prospects of success and, if successful, will benefit the Territory, the corporation then considers the ability of the applicant to undertake his proposed program, the availability of alternative funding, the financial commitment already made by the applicant and any other special factors. The corporation will not provide grants for the development of a project which has not been developed by the applicant beyond the good idea stage. All applicants for assistance must have made a significant commitment, both in time and money, before assistance will be considered. The scheme is on a one-year trial basis. At the end of that time, a full assessment of its effectiveness will be undertaken and a decision made on its future.

I will now comment on item 6 of the motion, the extent and appropriateness of the corporation's relations with other government departments and authorities, including the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority. The government has an effective system of interdepartmental liaison through its coordination committee and the corporation uses this forum to keep all other departments informed about its activities. Of equal importance is the ongoing relationship between the corporation and other government bodies. The corporation is in constant contact with various departments on matters of mutual concern, both in general development matters and in cases of individual assistance requirements. For example, the corporation has a long history of liaison with the Tourist Commission which has resulted in the overall development of more and better accommodation throughout the Northern Territory. The corporation also liaises regularly with the Department of Lands and the Department of Primary Production on rural industry matters such as the operation of the Crop Contract Scheme. Constant liaison on the future of the fishing industry is also taking place between the corporation and the Department of Primary Production.

The corporation uses, when appropriate, the expertise of other departments in the assessment of industrial research, development and invention assistance applications and in general financial assistance applications. Furthermore, the corporation keeps itself informed of the activities of other government bodies which may affect its own operation. For example, recently the Chairman of the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority addressed the corporation board outlining the activities of that organisation and identifying areas of mutual endeavour.

The third common area of liaison is in assisting investors and businesses in the establishment of development projects. In these cases, the corporation liaises with the service departments such as lands, transport and works and NTEC in order that the infrastructure requirements of development projects are fully coordinated.

In response to item 7 of the motion, the rate of return on capital employed by the corporation each year since its inception, members will recall that, when the Territory Development Act was passed in 1978, it was quite clear that this body was being established with a primary function to assist the development of industry. There was no intention to establish the body for a profit motive or as a trading base in the commercial arena. Rather, the corporation is an arm of government established to assist and stimulate the private sector to develop and its success cannot be measured in financial terms.

The term 'rate of return for capital' has a very specific meaning in commercial enterprises and is totally inappropriate in relation to a government corporation which expends much of its money for the general benefit of industrial growth in the Territory without direct return. Expenditure on such activities as promotion, marketing and small business advice is a direct responsibility of the government which is met through the corporation. Items such as grants

to the Central Australian Beef Promotion Committee are just a small part of NTDC activity. Theoretically, a rate of return on capital can be calculated from the corporation's accounts and any accountant could do so from the published financial statements. The figures, however, could be meaningless and in no way reflect the performance of the corporation in its charter.

Item 8 of the motion relates to methods of increasing the accountability of the corporation to parliament. The corporation, like any other statutory bodies established by the Northern Territory legislature, is accountable to parliament through the minister in accordance with the administrative arrangements orders. The Territory Development Act provides for the corporation to be responsible to the minister and to the Treasurer and the corporation is subject to the directions of the minister. In relation to loans, the act provides for ministerial responsibility in that the power to approve loans passes to the corporation only by delegation from the minister. The requirement to report to parliament is set out in the provisions of the Financial Administration and Audit Act. The corporation is a prescribed authority within the meaning of that act and accordingly is subject to the provisions of part IV of the act.

Further, the corporation is required to have its estimates approved by the minister each year in accordance with the Financial Administration and Audit Act. Those estimates are provided to this Assembly in the budget papers each year. I should point out to members a review in respect of the provisions of the Territory Development Act has been undertaken. The corporation operates on the basis of careful assessment and a degree of risk. If there is no risk, finance would probably be available from normal commercial sources. More importantly, if no one was prepared to take a risk, there would be no development. An example of this must be the Tennant Creek abattoir which was only constructed because of government initiative and, in particular, the corporation's initiative. The abattoir has operated successfully for 3 killing seasons and will almost definitely reopen next season under new owners.

The corporation, despite the risks it has had to take, has a sound record. Its management is as efficient as other financial institutions as is its monitoring of loan funds. The corporation's role is as a lender of last resort and it has to accept risks exceeding those of commercial operators. Arrears on loans amount to \$1.6m as at 31 August 1982, representing 8.9% of its total loans outstanding. 30% of the above amount represents arrears on loans to the fishing industry. This reflects the general downturn of the industry nation wide. The situation is being carefully monitored and the type of recovery action taken is determined on an individual basis. When all other avenues have failed, legal action is usually taken.

Mr Speaker, before concluding my remarks, I would like to refer to another aspect of the corporation's loan documentation. Currently, all corporation loans include conditions which define the particular purpose for which loan funds can be applied. This condition is included in letters of offer and acceptance and in security documents. The wording of this provision is as follows: 'The applicant acknowledges that such a loan is not transferable, is available only for the purposes stated in the loan application and that, upon sale of any asset over which the corporation holds security, the full balance of principal and interest shall become payable to the corporation'. This condition has been included since early 1981. Prior to that time, loan purposes were included in the offer and acceptance letter but not in security documentation.

Documentation of guarantees, however, has taken a more commercial form as the corporation does not directly control the release of funds to the client. Correspondence has established the purpose of funds being provided. The corporation at various stages has examined the need to include a formal financial

assistance agreement in its documentation. Legal views are varied as to the need for such a document and the benefit flowing to the corporation from such an agreement. The documentation of guarantees is complex, involving at least 3 parties. The corporation is taking further legal advice as to how documentation may be provided which does not prejudice the position of the corporation through further default provisions. Actual control of funds involving another financial institution under a guaranteed security arrangement will require complex administrative arrangements.

Mr Speaker, the member for Sanderson raised a few items. She referred in particular to the excessive secrecy, as she described it, in relation to the dealings of the corporation and she spoke with some authority about conditions that apply in the Victorian legislation. As I indicated at the commencement of my remarks, obviously the Victorian body has been in operation for a long time.

Mr B. Collins: Do you know that?

Mr STEELE: I am not too sure. I accept that the Victorian bureaucracy, through its various arms, has been lending money for a long time. To suggest that it may have new legislation is just a smokescreen by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, this government has been going for 5 years. As I indicated in my remarks, the arrears on loans are 8.9% of the corporation's portfolio. I believe that that speaks for itself.

Turning to the confidentiality question that the honourable member raised, we have checked all the states and looked at what they do. It is true that opinion is divided as to the extent of confidentiality that should be afforded the relationship between a government lending-body and its client. It would appear from our investigations around Australia that 2 governments favour a reasonably frank disclosure and the other 5, at this stage, favour maintaining reasonable confidentiality in respect of the client-corporation relationship.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on the question of collusion that the honourable member raised, we have not heard anything here today that would support an inquiry, particularly on the basis of what she has had to say. If she is prepared to go that extra mile, and perhaps the Leader of the Opposition might like to do that - he has plenty of information to provide to us - an inquiry might be warranted. The information which she has provided does not indicate a need for an inquiry.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the motion for an inquiry into the Northern Territory Development Corporation. I would like to thank the minister for that 30 minutes of nothing we have just had - another of his very forgettable performances. I am glad the government is keeping its big guns until last in this debate because it had better come up with something better than that otherwise it will be supporting this motion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we had another performance from the Chief Minister this morning - one that is becoming very tiresome - in the budget debate whereby a bucket was dropped on the opposition and another bucket was dropped on the press and anyone else who dared to criticise the actions of this government. I honestly believe that that attitude has sustained the Chief Minister - who runs the Northern Territory but who has occasional lapses - for some time now. I honestly believe that it is the belief of the Chief Minister that his government and himself are above criticism. Those days are at an end and it is a good thing that they are.

The operation of the Northern Territory Development Corporation, the collapse of the Buntine group, the government guarantee through NTDC and the way the government through the Chief Minister has dealt with the questions arising from these issues are of great concern to us. During the last sittings of the Assembly, it was quite obvious that the Chief Minister had decided that these issues were too volatile to be trusted to his ministerial colleagues and we were yet again exposed to the familiar performance of the Chief Minister stepping in, under the cover of legalism, to divert many questions from the Treasurer and Minister for Industrial Development. Why is it that the Chief Minister has continually moved in to push aside government ministers and answer questions in relation to their portfolios when they are subject to very proper scrutiny by this opposition? One wonders what confidence people of the Northern Territory are expected to have in their ministers when it is quite clear that the Chief Minister himself has none.

This is yet another example of a government that is failing and is incapable of properly discharging its functions. If this government is not performing in particular areas, the Chief Minister should be looking at constructive measures rather than grimly trying to subvert a proper examination of the issues involved. We had a bit of the Churchillian side of the Chief Minister this morning, as I mentioned, in the 'praying' this and 'praying' that in question time and the bleeding-heart Chief Minister - which is the more familiar side of him - in the budget debate.

I wish to make some comments on the tactics of the Chief Minister in diverting these questions. It is an approach which only fuels speculation that the government has something to hide in relation to the operations of the NTDC and it highlights the government's irresponsible management of its resources. The Chief Minister's attempts to divert the disclosure of important and relevant information concerning the question of the NTDC is, in my view, a misuse of his position as Attorney-General. While the opposition is aware that certain legal steps are being taken regarding the affairs of the Buntine group, this does not dispose of every question raised in the issue. Indeed, the legal issues covered by the receivership are readily defined. I can understand the Chief Minister taking that approach if proceedings for breaches of the Companies Act were to be taken regarding the takeover by Mr Dalziel. Apparently, they are not being considered and the Chief Minister was confused in the responses he made to those questions.

What is it about the operations of the NTDC that the government is trying to cover up? This is the type of question one must ask when met with this kind of response from the government to questions by this opposition. Recently, the Chief Minister claimed that the NTDC had a successful image in comparison with private companies. I want to use the same analogy. I suggest people of the Northern Territory have rights as shareholders, because it is their money, to know from their current directors - that is, the government - what is being done with their money. Since the government clearly does not appreciate its accountability in this area, perhaps this analogy might make it easier for it to comprehend. I say with great feeling that the government clearly does not appreciate its accountability in this area or the Chief Minister would not have used his stupid comparison with operations of the ANZ Bank, as he did on the ABC the other day. It does not use taxpayers' money to make its investments. Both the minister responsible and the Treasurer have a high profile in the management of NTDC. This is clear from their statutory position in regard to the corporation. Mr Deputy Speaker, I refer you, particularly, to sections 17 and 19A of the Territory Development Act. Questions relating to the discharge of these functions and the overall management of the Territory's institutions are matters that ministers cannot automatically refuse to answer on the grounds of confidentiality and the misused application of the sub judice rule.

I now wish to comment on the Buntine loan in respect to the involvement of Mr Dalziel. The history of Mr Dalziel throughout Australia and the fact that this man could move into local business with a track record of corporate malpractice behind him and with a firm personal contact with the General Manager of the Northern Territory Development Corporation through which he gained assistance is a worrying development in government practice. What sort of image does this create for the Northern Territory? How can we expect investors and responsible developers to view the Northern Territory government as other than second rate? While the Chief Minister is dropping buckets on everyone who raises a hand to criticise him, he might as well drop one on the Australian Business Review as well. The Chairman of the Northern Territory Development Corporation tried to explain why he agreed to assistance being given to someone like Mr Dalziel. I quote Mr Simpson from a recent article which appeared in the Australian Business Review weekly: 'It is not his role to check credentials of businessmen'. I quote from Mr Simpson again: 'If someone comes in well dressed and well mannered, what do you do?' If that is the Northern Territory Development Corporation's criterion, it is a disgraceful state of affairs.

According to the inspectors of the New South Wales Corporate Affairs Commission, Mr Dalziel indeed is well mannered and well dressed. Mr Simpson knows more about Mr Dalziel than that. In fact, he had worked for him in Western Australia and also had dealings with him in New South Wales. What was readily known from 1976 and 1977 was that Mr Dalziel had been investigated by inspectors of the New South Wales Corporate Affairs Commission regarding malpractices involving companies in that state and others. What do we know about Mr Dalziel from this? In the first interim report of the inspectors appointed to investigate and report on the affairs, Marumba Oil had no liability and Regent Nickel Corporation had no liability. For Bounty Oil Limited, the following comments appear in relation to Mr Dalziel. I quote from page 93 of the report:

We now turn to consider Mr Dalziel's position. Mr Dalziel has been examined by us over a number of days. In our opinion he is a highly astute and intelligent man with an ability to comprehend complex intercompany relationships. He has an acute financial mind and of all those whom we have examined understands more quickly and deeply the implications of financial transactions, in particular financial transactions involving a variety of companies and connected fund movements between those companies. He denied that he had at any time any knowledge of fund movements which took place between 7 and 22 September 1972. We do not accept his denial.

It should be noted at this stage that the interim report and the final report, to which I refer now, later involved, in simple terms, a number of round-robin deals and assets-stripping by Mr Dalziel and others. On page 118 of the interim report, the following comments appear in relation to Mr Dalziel:

We think that Mr Dalziel's overriding consideration is to make profits out of the group, irrespective of whether the making of such profits works to the detriment of shareholders. The conclusion is borne out by the subsequent history of events within the group after 15th September and while under Mr Dalziel's control. He was, in our opinion, wholly unfitted to hold a position of trust within a public company.

There are further references to Mr Dalziel in the final report of the inspectors. I instance the comment on page 63 of the report:

So far as Dalziel was concerned, his prime interest was to place information before shareholders, so presented as to satisfy them and to make them believe that Marumba's activities were proceeding in a manner satisfactory to their interests. In our opinion, this policy was most certainly pursued by him irrespective of the accuracy of the information which was put before the shareholders.

Finally, on page 50 of the report appeared the following:

In sum, it is our opinion that what took place in the course of the fund movements of 8 November was a carefully calculated plan, conceived and executed by Dalziel, with the intent of benefiting his own interest to the detriment of the public companies involved.

To quote an article that appeared in the Northern Territory News on Saturday 25 September, this is the man who was actively pursued by the Chairman of the NTDC, Mr Ted Simpson, and a Darwin solicitor, Mr Geoff Clark, whose name keeps cropping up when one looks at NTDC, and who, to quote Mr Dalziel, 'wooded me over 4 weeks to buy Buntines'. Mr Deputy Speaker, we also know that, in 1978, 5 separate Supreme Court proceedings were commenced in New South Wales naming Mr Dalziel as the defendant in actions involving claims totalling more than \$2m arising out of assets-stripping and fraudulent corporate practices. Mr Simpson says: 'What do you do, if he's well dressed and well mannered?'

Mr Speaker, it concerns me greatly that a man such as Mr Dalziel, with this public history behind him, could obtain assistance through the NTDC and also obtain, as a result of that assistance, an interest in a company that had been operating in the Territory for 21 years. The government should have known Mr Dalziel's background and this raises the important question of checking loan applications carefully and ensuring that only those persons who should be given assistance by the NTDC get it. Territory businesses should be protected from this type of person. I have no doubt that there are many well dressed, well mannered corporate manipulators licking their lips at the prospect of obtaining assistance from a very gullible and superficial government which is naively plodding down the road of development at all costs with no regard to safeguarding the assets of Territorians by proper administration of the Territory's development flagship, the NTDC.

The opposition is rightly concerned with the sharp practices and failing confidence in the government which had better realise it is about time for it to grow up. The ineptitude of the government and particularly the responsible minister in dealing with the development matters increasingly points to the fact that the government is not managing the Territory's affairs in an efficient and responsible manner. I am the first one to admit, Mr Speaker, that the Chief Minister cannot do everything even though at times he has to. It is quite clear that the government does not have proper control. It is essential that development occurs in the Northern Territory. The government does not assist development by continuing to act in this manner. Better management is needed.

Mr Speaker, the call for an inquiry by the opposition is an attempt to clear the air regarding NTDC, to clarify the government's position regarding development assistance in the Northern Territory, to review and hopefully learn from past experiences and, with that information, to assess the proper procedures, criteria and administrative measures required for effective and stable development of the Territory. The government stands to gain a great deal from this inquiry if it has nothing to fear and if it is truly interested in coming to grips with a proper policy of development assistance that will provide for fair and equitable distribution of NTDC's resources. It is important

that confidence in that body be restored. At present, it is at a great low.

I refer the Chief Minister to the terms of our motion. We have in fact used that section of the act that provides the confidentiality for this investigation. The government's refusal to agree to an inquiry will only serve to confirm a lack of confidence in the business community in the Northern Territory abroad and accelerate the growing perception that this government is by the few for the few. The people of the Northern Territory deserve better than this from the government.

Mr Speaker, I move on to another matter - a very recent one - of great concern to us concerning NTDC and North Brick Industries in the Northern Territory. There is a great deal of intrigue surrounding the involvement of North Brick Industries and the recently announced appointment of an adviser to NTDC in the Asian region, Mr Koh, in the arrangement of a loan from NTDC to North Brick Industries Pty Ltd. On 27 July this year, NTDC and Amray Australia granted a loan of \$2.1m to North Brick Industries Pty Ltd. Both Mr Koh and Mr Geoff Clark, whom I have previously referred to, are directors of North Brick Industries and are also directors of Icarus Pty Ltd, the major shareholding company in North Brick Industries. It would also appear that Mr Koh was at that time a consultant to NTDC. The Chief Minister's letter publicly released last Friday shows that Mr Koh was appointed on 6 August 1982. However, the letter states: 'Terms and conditions of your consultancy have been settled by an exchange of letters between yourself and Mr Simpson'.

It is understood from the public information available to us that NTDC participated in the loan to North Brick Industries to the extent of \$600 000 of Northern Territory taxpayers' money. The amount of the loan is secured by a fixed charge against North Brick Industries Pty Ltd. It is interesting to note that, unlike requirements for many other borrowers - and I know some who have borrowed money from NTDC who have had to hock themselves up to the gold fillings in their teeth; they were very interested in this story - there is no collateral in the nature of registered mortgages, personal guarantees or further charges on shareholding companies. On the face of it, therefore, there would seem to be at least a departure from the more usual requirements of this arrangement.

Mr Speaker, the security of the loan, judging from what is available on the public record, appears to rest on the substance of the shareholders. Icarus Pty Ltd, of which Mr Koh is a director, has been allocated 1 529 999 shares. They are \$1 shares but they are only paid to 1c. This company has 2 nominal shareholders and each holds a \$1 share. On the face of it, we have a situation which looks as though there is not sufficient substance to the security. While there may be further explanations for this situation, it does show signs of irregularity and, in the view of the information outlined, does not give one confidence in the administration of resources and the proper standards of lending policy and security arrangements.

The Chief Minister has recently stated publicly that there is no conflict of interest in the appointment of Mr Koh as a consultant to NTDC and there is no need for an inquiry into its operations. The facts that I have outlined show a definite conflict of interest between the government's consultant to NTDC for the Asian region who, at the time he was engaged or at least at the time when negotiations for the appointment were being completed, was a director of a company that secured a loan of \$600 000 from the Northern Territory Development Corporation. I would like an explanation for that this afternoon. The scenario does not give one confidence in the overall management of NTDC or in the public assurances of the Chief Minister. If what I have described does not fit the definition of a club, then at least it is a very cosy operation indeed.

Mr Speaker, the following questions require answers and highlight some of the areas of concern to the opposition in calling for this inquiry. What role should NTDC have in assisting the proper utilisation of loan funds to ensure the attainment of the original purpose of the loan? What criteria is used in assessing proposals placed before NTDC? I am not satisfied with the rubbish I heard this afternoon. What checks on the credentials of applicants are being used? To what extent and in what form should NTDC be accountable to this Assembly? Are sufficient security requirements being imposed by NTDC, particularly where substantial loans are involved? What safeguards are available to protect applicants from the disclosure of confidential loan information to persons outside the corporation? Until these questions are answered, taxpayers and the business community can have little confidence in NTDC or in a government which refuses to confront the problems which my colleague, the member for Sanderson, has outlined.

I stress again that I would like an explanation from the Chief Minister this afternoon personally as to why he does not see a conflict of interest in a person on 6 August being appointed - and, I might add, in a very privileged position indeed - the middle man between NTDC and the South-east Asian region, where we are diverting all our efforts, and on 27 July, as director of a company, the same person received a loan of \$600 000 from the same corporation.

Mr Speaker, we recognise a role for a body like NTDC in fostering development but the fact is that NTDC has been run incompetently. It has been run with excessive secrecy which has facilitated harmful activity outside the corporation's own self-proclaimed guidelines. It has encouraged wasteful expenditure of public moneys and it has engendered favouritism. What we have is not an unfortunate aberration associated with one collapse, that of Buntine group but a consistent pattern of unacceptable behaviour. It is ironic indeed that the government's only recourse is to argue in the name of commercial confidentiality that these matters cannot be further examined by this Assembly. The opposition respects commercial confidentiality. That is why we have pressed for a private inquiry under the Inquiries Act. What we will not condone is a government which not only fails to exercise ministerial responsibility but refuses to adopt a mechanism to measure performance and enhance accountability which is commonplace elsewhere. Why shouldn't the Northern Territory taxpayer have those same guarantees and assurances.

The business community in the Northern Territory well understands that this state of affairs is totally unacceptable. If expressing concern about the proper management of millions of dollars of public money and the public's right to know about these dealings with its money are interpreted by the government as anti-Territory, then I am perfectly happy to leave it to Territorians to make that judgment. For far too long the government has been allowed to get away with that kind of nonsense. Passing the buck to the opposition is a cop out, a political device to avoid facing its own responsibility. I believe that the government's time on this particular issue has run out.

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, it is sad to think that the members of the board and staff of NTDC can be pilloried in the way that they have been over the past couple of months when it is obvious to you, Mr Speaker, to myself and to all other honourable members that the members of the opposition who have spoken thus far have not even looked at a previous annual report of the Northern Territory Development Corporation in researching their arguments in support of this inquiry this afternoon. If the Leader of the Opposition said that I was tipping buckets this morning, I rather think that the role was reversed this afternoon because, quite frankly, the speech of the Leader of the Opposition was nothing short of a personal attack on the Chairman of

the Northern Territory Development Corporation, on the minister for that corporation and of course on myself. These remarks in relation to myself are, by implication, a very grave insult to my ministerial colleagues and to the senior public servants who work hard for this government and who have a great deal of input in the policy decisions that this government takes.

I refer honourable members to page 8 of the last annual report of June 1981 and to the previous annual reports of the Northern Territory Development Corporation where the loans are classified by industry groupings and full amounts of those loans are set out. I refer members to a paragraph on the same page which sets out the total exposure of the Northern Territory Development Corporation in some detail in respect of guarantees and the number of those guarantees.

The call for the appointment of a board of inquiry implies that there are reasonable grounds to question the operations and activities of NTDC. We need to be quite clear about that because it would be a very serious step. Justification for a board of inquiry has nothing to do with questions of whether the corporation has provided assistance to some company or other which has not in the event generated the hoped for level of benefits. In fact, despite anything that honourable members opposite might say, the sole cornerstone and linchpin of their call for this inquiry is the collapse of the Buntine group out of which the Northern Territory taxpayer has not yet suffered the loss of one dollar and, further, the alleged relationship between the Chairman of the Northern Territory Development Corporation and Mr Dalziel. I would point out that the remarks referred to by the Leader of the Opposition in his diatribe were those of an inquiry into activities of public companies whereas the Buntine group are private companies. I do not think the Leader of the Opposition read out the part of the report where the investigators told the Attorney-General: 'We think that Mr Dalziel's overriding consideration was to make profits out of the group irrespective of whether the making of such profits worked to the detriment of shareholders'. If that is a fault in a public company, it is a virtue in a private company where the shareholders are yourselves.

Mr Speaker, justification for a board of inquiry has nothing to do with questions of whether the corporation has provided assistance to Buntine or some other company which has not in the event generated the hoped for level of benefits. Nor has it anything to do with the confidentiality with which the corporation conducts its affairs. It seems that the opposition is frustrated by this confidentiality because it has not been able to pry into the corporation's affairs or the affairs of the businesses that it is involved with. I am not really sure whether the opposition knows its mind on the question of confidentiality or anything else. I refer first to the press release of the honourable member for Sanderson of 26 August in which she said that the opposition was not arguing whether or not the provision of a guarantee to Buntine Roadways by the government was justified:

We accept the fact that the company provides a vital service to the cattle industry and that its demise would cause major problems. What we are concerned about is that such matters should be conducted under a cloud of secrecy, particularly when public funds are apparently at risk.

Now of course we come to the last clause of the motion moved calling for the inquiry:

Because of the need for confidentiality in relation to loans and guarantees of NTDC, the board of inquiry should undertake the whole

of the proceedings of an inquiry in private in accordance with section 16 of the Inquiries Act.

Mr Speaker, I listened to all those people this afternoon without uttering a word of interjection, as I did this morning. Unfortunately, in this Assembly, I cannot rise to speak without continuous interjections from the other side. Rather than go through the sheaves of notes that I have, perhaps I should read a letter from a leading Territory company, in fact the only Territory public company. I would point out that, after the honourable member for Sanderson tabled her motion, she saw fit, at that stage, to circulate all Territory businesses seeking dirt to throw at NTDC. Of course, when an authority is in the business of dispensing moneys, there will always be some jackals and hyenas and people who are unsuccessful for one reason or another who want to throw some dirt. It is surprising that we have not heard references by any opposition speaker to any details, facts or letters that may have received from members of the public or, in particular, from these Territory businesses. Indeed, all we have heard from the honourable member for Sanderson, other than about Buntine, is innuendo. All we heard from the honourable Leader of the Opposition was about Buntine and innuendo about a brickworks that will provide a very large measure of employment and an export business both within Australia and without Australia for the Northern Territory from the outlay by NTDC of a loan of \$600 000. We have not heard any facts other than those. I have a letter here, from which I am authorised to read, from the Territory's only public company. I think it speaks volumes and does more than anything I can say:

My dear Minister, it has come to the attention of the directors of this company that a concerted effort is being made by some sections of the community to discredit the activities and operations of NTDC. While we appreciate that this company has received assistance from the corporation - we have also had proposals rejected - we do not believe that this should preclude us from making comment on the role and effectiveness of the organisation in furthering development of the Territory. In our opinion, the criticism levelled at the organisation is, in general, comment arising from either those who do not understand the modus operandi of a lender of last resort or unsuccessful applicants. It is a fact that, except for the advice and support of the corporation, many worthwhile ventures would not have managed to get off the ground, to the detriment of Territory development. In addition, the small business office is used a great deal by business throughout the Territory and provides an excellent service for those in need of assistance. While we have heard suggestions that the procedures of the corporation for obtaining security for funding are inadequate and need review, our experience has been to the contrary.

It has been our experience that officers of the corporation have handled each application on its merits in an efficient and professional manner, and we commend them for their efforts. No doubt, as in any commercial operation during a world-wide period of financial instability, there will be projects that will not be a success. But this must be expected and accepted and not be used as a reason to restrict or derogate the operations of the corporation. Contrary to those who have set out to denigrate the corporation and its officers, we believe that its successes and positive achievements provide an excellent basis for expanding its operations thereby ensuring that the Territory will continue to benefit from the establishment and development of projects which would have not otherwise come to fruition.

Mr Speaker, a board of inquiry should be constituted only to deal with substantiated allegations of incompetence, impropriety or some other serious failing. I have heard 2 speakers from the opposition and I am still waiting for those substantiated allegations. I have not yet heard one justification for establishing an inquiry. The government is not prepared to enter lightly into a board of inquiry. An inquiry is not a proper vehicle for the gratification of fishing expeditions. Those who have spoken to support an inquiry have not established that first and most fundamental requirement - that grounds exist. In attempting to distract us with illusion and fantasy, the opposition has conveniently, but very unjustly, overlooked the substance of the development corporation.

I want to remind the opposition and inform Territorians of what NTDC has accomplished in its short years of operation. Since 1978 - and these details are in annual reports - NTDC has approved 192 loans and 8 guarantees. Approved loans and guarantees total \$46.4m. As a result of NTDC's financial activities during the 1981-82 year alone, over 300 jobs were created, \$4m in income was created and Territory output was increased by \$13m. This excludes jobs created through the development of a number of major projects with which NTDC has been closely involved. The range of industries assisted extends from pastoral, horticultural and agricultural to fishing, processing, manufacturing and tourism. I am at a loss to understand how this record of achievement can be said to warrant scrutiny by a board of inquiry. Certainly, the corporation will become involved with some businesses which do not succeed. If that justifies an inquiry, then we will need to initiate an inquiry into the activities and dealings of virtually every financial institution in this country. The corporation, like any other financial intermediary, makes proper provision for doubtful debts. This provision is currently \$1.1m. That is reasonable for a financial institution of this type.

To suggest that NTDC's operations have been other than in the very best public interest is either mischievous or reflects an abysmal understanding of the role which NTDC plays in a difficult commercial environment. It is well known that I am a charitable man and I am prepared to accept that, in the opposition's case, it is the latter. I take this view because it is the only possible interpretation that can be placed on the 8 specific matters proposed for consideration by a board of inquiry. These 8 matters can be grouped into 3 broad headings. The first deals with those matters which are public knowledge - items 1, 3, 5 and 6 seek information about NTDC procedures which are freely available to any interested party. The Minister for Industrial Development has quite clearly explained the procedures, although any officer of the corporation could and would have done so in the normal course of daily duties. In the back of the annual report is the accounting policy of NTDC if anyone chooses to read it. The second deals with those which are meaningless - items 7 and 8 are meaningless to an organisation such as the corporation. The minister dealt quite satisfactorily with those issues. The third deals with those which are irrelevant - items 2 and 4 show a dismal lack of understanding about the role of the corporation, how it must operate to achieve its objectives and how it must operate to continue producing the stream of benefits for Territorians that its activities have generated to date.

The opposition attempted to make much of alleged secrecy surrounding the activities of the corporation. It is unable to resist the current fashion of hammering away at government for public service secrecy. It is a pity that it has not grasped the very important distinction between secrecy and normal commercial confidentiality. How many banks, Mr Speaker, lay out for public scrutiny a catalogue of their financial transactions and the loans they have made? NTDC is a financial institution and, as such, will necessarily become party to information which is not for public consumption and should not be.

Over and above this, NTDC works in a fairly confined commercial environment, unlike that in Victoria. I wonder what the Victorian Economic Development Corporation or the National Enterprise Board of Great Britain has done for either of those places. Certainly, we did not hear about any of their results this afternoon. If what the present Victorian government said about the Victorian Economic Development Corporation is only one-third true, it was not a body from which we would want to take any leads or examples.

The Territory is a small place. Given its limited portfolio of activities, even a broadly aggregated presentation of the corporation's operations could place it in a position of providing information that should be kept privileged. I would suggest to honourable members opposite that they talk to officers of the Australian Bureau of Statistics. They make the point that the degree of information that can be made available will often depend on the number of people whose contributions go to making up the statistical series. The smaller the number, the less information that can be divulged because it becomes easier to identify particular company details. Under those circumstances, only limited material can be made available. That is not secrecy; it is just preserving confidentiality and keeping from some people information that is none of their business.

The opposition has made no credible allegation of any cause for concern about the activities of NTDC. It has shown a complete ignorance of business and commercial procedures and glossed over the real talking point as far as the corporation is concerned - its enormous contribution to the well-being of Territorians. It had its facts wrong and its innuendo was way off target.

The Leader of the Opposition asked for an explanation of an alleged conflict of interest between Mr Koh and the Northern Territory Development Corporation. I am completely at a loss to understand any conflict of interest whatsoever, Mr Speaker. Why cannot someone be retained by the corporation to go into the marketplace and solicit projects as an intermediary simply because he has a loan from the corporation, gained at some previous time - admittedly in this case, relatively recently. Why not? In this case, it did not do that but it may have led to the meeting of that person and the corporation. Mr Koh is a person who can provide the Territory with the sort of introductions it needs in the marketplaces of South-east Asia. That sort of expertise certainly does not grow on trees. There is absolutely no conflict of interest whatsoever. The simple fact that he is a retained representative of NTDC guarantees for him no preferential treatment whatsoever by the board of NTDC nor the minister. Mr Koh and his connections in South-east Asia have been directly responsible for a great deal of investment in this Territory. The campaign against the Sabah group, in my view, has led to the loss in the last several months of probably upwards of \$20m of projects that may have come to the Territory but were scared away when the Sabah interests became conscious of the hostility against them in the pages of the popular press in this town. Mr Speaker, there is no conflict of interest between Mr Koh and the development corporation and nor could there be unless, as the retained representative, he recommended a project in which he was directly and personally involved. That situation has not arisen and will surely be discerned by the corporation in the unlikely event that it arises.

Mr Speaker, despite all I have said, this is not to say that the call by the opposition for an inquiry has not produced results. It has raised doubts in people's minds - doubts which are totally without foundation. As such the corporation's momentum has been checked. The result is needless interference with a healthy business in these difficult times of encouraging Territory growth. Mr Speaker, to the opposition I say: no inquiry. To the corporation and its staff I say: on with the job that Territorians want you to do.

Mr Robertson: Congratulations to the opposition. It has achieved its objective.

Ms D'ROZARIO (Sanderson): Mr Speaker, the honourable Minister for Education had a chance to speak. I waited a few moments before rising to close the debate. He did not do so but he sits there now to tell us what we should have done and what we should not have done and what the results of the inquiry would be. It is quite clear to the opposition that the government does fear an inquiry into the operation of NTDC. If that were not the case, the government would have acceded to this request for the inquiry in order to quell some of the disquiet within the business community that is more obvious than the Chief Minister would admit.

Mr Speaker, I will take up a point that the Chief Minister raised in response to a letter which was circulated by myself to businesses. He said that there was no result from this particular letter other than a negative one which raised doubts in the minds of the community and checked the activities of NTDC. I did in fact receive 2 letters saying that NTDC was good. I of course received dozens of letters supporting the inquiry. One person wrote and said he supported what we were trying to do, but did not support the inquiry because of the public expense that would be required.

I say with some confidence that business did respond to the letter and I should at this point also explain the contents of the letter and the objective I was seeking when I circulated it. In his press statement, the Chief Minister accused me of being irresponsible in moving a motion and then seeking to obtain the evidence for the terms of the motion. It is quite clear to me that, despite the fact that some 400 of these letters went out, the Chief Minister did not see one or, if he did see one, he did not understand what it said. For the record, I propose to read the text of the letter into Hansard in order to explain what was being done. When I have read it, it will be clear to all members that I was doing what any responsible parliamentary spokesman would do: firstly, informing the business community that this notice of motion had been given, for indeed it was given on the last day of the Assembly sittings; secondly, providing it with the terms of reference of the motion so it would know in detail what the proposal was; and, thirdly, asking businesses to indicate their support for the motion and, if they did not wish to indicate their support to me, I offered them the suggestion that they could convey their views to the Chief Minister. I make it quite clear that at no stage did I want businesses to come forward with specific details in order to provide evidence for an inquiry. Here is the text of the letter dated 8 September:

As you may be aware, the opposition has been concerned for some time about the operations of the Northern Territory Development Corporation. This concern has been highlighted in the recent sittings of the Legislative Assembly with inquiries to the government concerning the financial difficulties of the Buntine group and the broader aspects of the functions of the Territory Development Corporation. The issues raised in the Assembly together with criticisms I have received from sections of the business community lead me to call for a board of inquiry to be appointed to inquire into, report on and make recommendations concerning all aspects of the operations of the Development Corporation.

A copy of the proposed terms of reference is attached. Whether the inquiry is held or not will depend on what support the motion receives in the Legislative Assembly. The Territory Labor Party will be supporting the proposal. I believe that industry has real concern and interest in this proposed inquiry. Accordingly, I would like

you to consider whether there are particular aspects of the corporation's functions that concern you whether you consider that any improvements can be made to the existing situation and whether you have any particular objections or criticisms of the corporation's role or functions.

If you share my concern in relation to the matter, I would appreciate hearing from you or alternatively could I suggest that you communicate your views to the Chief Minister. Finally, I would urge you to give these matters serious consideration as I believe they are important to a balanced and proper development of industry in the Northern Territory.

In response to an interjection by the honourable Treasurer who has not seen fit to participate in this debate despite the fact that he has a leading role in the guarantees given by NTDC, I would say that the 3 points were asking people to direct their minds to the particular matters that were of concern to them. It did not in any way solicit details of their operations so that we could use it as evidence. This letter clearly said: 'I believe that industry has real concern and interest in this proposed inquiry'. Had I not believed that, I would not have put this motion. Nevertheless, this is the letter that went out and I would say that it was the responsibility of any person who was moving a substantive motion to this effect to inform industry of the terms of that motion. Obviously, the Chief Minister thinks otherwise.

We heard from the honourable minister in charge of NTDC the reasons why an inquiry should not be held and he went through the 8 points which are particularised in the motion point by point. I might say that I appreciated his rundown of what happens theoretically when a person approaches NTDC for a loan. That is quite well known. Of course, we know that there are monthly meetings of the board and that staff receive applications, that they lodge them before the board when assessments are done and so on and so forth. I have no doubt that some applications are actually dealt with in that way.

The reason for raising this particular motion is the clear indications that have emerged that there are some applications which are able to bypass that route. I would refer members to the answer given by the honourable minister to a question asked by me at the last sittings when he made it quite clear that sometimes the board may be bypassed. I refer to Hansard of Wednesday 1 September when I asked the honourable minister as follows: 'In view of the published policy of the Northern Territory Development Corporation that it does not see as its role the provision of assistance to general transport operations, what was the justification for the provision of assistance by way of guarantee to the Buntine group? By way of a footnote, may I inform the minister that this published policy is to be found at page 6 of the Northern Territory Development Corporation Annual Report for the year ending 30 June 1981'. The answer that was given by the minister of course caused not only myself to wonder but indeed many applicants to NTDC to wonder as well: 'Mr Speaker, the policies of the Northern Territory Development Corporation need to be flexible from time to time. If there are serious economic conditions prevailing in which the government sees that assistance should be provided, the government would make a decision to that effect'. 'The government', Mr Speaker! Obviously, the board of the corporation is not the sole decision-making body in respect of those sorts of decisions. Mr Speaker, I have no doubt that there are applications that are dealt with at ordinary meetings of the board but the view that we have is that there are numerous applications which are not dealt with in the manner outlined by the minister.

We then had the honourable minister tell us with respect to item 7 - I will

also refer to the remarks of the Chief Minister in this respect - which relates to the rate of return on capital employed, that NTDC was primarily set up in order to assist industry and was not a profit-making enterprise. Notwithstanding all that, he informed us that, if we cared to look at the financial statements, we could in fact calculate this particular rate of return. Of course, that is true. It is really a very simple calculation. He then went on to say the figures in the annual report would in no way reflect the operations of the corporation. That is the precise point that we are making: notwithstanding that the corporation complies with provisions of the Financial Administration and Audit Act, there is no accountability to parliament. The minister responsible for the corporation told us that it is accountable to parliament because the figures are published but then he went on to say that we may calculate a rate of return but of course it will in no way reflect the operations of the corporation.

Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister also referred us to the financial statements and even implied that perhaps we had not read the last annual report. I can assure him that I have read the last annual report and indeed all annual reports that NTDC has ever presented in this Assembly. He referred us to the annual reports and told us that in fact his advice was that items 7 and 8 were irrelevant. We have all conceded that item 7 in so far as the information is available to us by existing mechanisms is irrelevant as far as accountability and knowledge of this parliament of what the NTDC is doing is concerned.

Item 8 is very interesting indeed. It asks that the inquiry consider methods of increasing the accountability of the corporation to parliament. Somebody has advised the Chief Minister that it is irrelevant for this parliament to have any knowledge of what NTDC is doing. This just sums up the style of government which we have. We have a Chief Minister who stands up and tells us that increasing accountability of NTDC to parliament is irrelevant. I think he shows extreme contempt for this parliament. There is a long tradition of accountability, particularly in the area of public moneys and expenditure. The Chief Minister has told us that he considers that particular matter irrelevant.

The Chief Minister said that the sole linchpin for this inquiry was the Buntine collapse. I have readily admitted, not only in this parliament, but indeed to the business community that the Buntine collapse is what instigated this particular motion. However, it has been repeatedly said that there are numerous other examples where irregularities have been brought to light and that these too should be investigated. For the Chief Minister to insist that there was only this one case and his rejection also of the inquiry is a clear indication that NTDC does have things to hide from this parliament. If the government members opposite were to deny this, they would allow this inquiry to proceed. The Chief Minister has made references to hyenas and sour grapes and all sorts of other things within the business community. I am sure they would be very interested to hear those remarks. I am sure that they would be very interested to know how their legitimate concerns are treated by this government.

I come again to the question of confidentiality which is the only response that has been offered to this opposition on any occasion on which it has raised this matter - the question on commercial confidentiality. The Chief Minister seems to find some conflict between the terms of my motion and a press release that I issued earlier. What the Chief Minister, with all his legal training, does not seem to grasp is the fact that the inquiry would be conducted in private. The report of the inquiry would be available to this parliament and the contents would subsequently become public. This is a simple point that the Chief Minister intentionally misses on each occasion that this matter is raised.

The Chief Minister has also canvassed at length the contribution of NTDC to the development of the Territory industry. Of course, there have been several occasions where that contribution to Territory industry has been acknowledged. I would say that, on all occasions when there have been debates on the Northern Territory Development Corporation, it has been acknowledged that, by and large, the operations of NTDC have contributed to the development of industry. What we are talking about is a trend which is emerging whereby some firms are being given preferential treatment. The Leader of the Opposition outlined one example which in no particular way was answered by the Chief Minister other than to say that there was no conflict of interest between one of the parties involved and NTDC. If the Chief Minister thinks that all we have done by this motion is to create doubts in the minds of the business community, he has a simple way of resolving that: simply allow this inquiry to proceed.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 7

Mr Bell
Mr B. Collins
Ms D'Rosario
Mrs Lawrie
Mr Leo
Mrs O'Neil
Mr Smith

Noes 10

Mr D.W. Collins
Mr Dondas
Mr Everingham
Mr Harris
Mr MacFarlane
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Perron
Mr Robertson
Mr Steele
Mr Tuxworth

Motion negatived.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ROBERTSON (Education): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mrs LAWRIE (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise this evening to welcome you to the crossbenches. It would appear, Sir, that you have joined me as an independent member of this Assembly because you have been sacked, turned out, by your colleagues within the Country Liberal Party. They, Sir, have disowned you to a man.

Mr Dondas: What's this, what's this?

Mrs LAWRIE: The honourable minister will find out soon enough. If he cares to consult the Chief Minister or read the NT News or listen to the odd ABC news program, he will know all about it.

Mr Speaker, as we are all aware, recent events in Katherine have captured the attention of people right throughout the Territory. I refer to the land rights march, which I believe you spearheaded, and certain statements which emanated from your office and posters which were displayed just outside your office. Because of the high regard in which the impartiality of the office of Speaker is held, I am concerned that this could in some way prejudice your position as Speaker. I listened very carefully to what you had to say this morning when interviewed by an ABC reporter. I appreciate the difficulty you have. You have certain obligations to your electorate. You have strong feelings about matters which are raised in your electorate and you stated this morning that, at times, there would be conflict of interest. Mr Speaker, I say

with the utmost humility that, if those conflicts continue, I would respectfully suggest that you withdraw from one position in order to devote your full time to the other, and I leave you to make that choice.

The honourable position of Speaker is held in very high repute in all Westminster parliaments and, indeed, the position of first English Speaker is attributed to Sir Thomas Hungerford in 1376. However, the Westminster system started in 1258, in Henry III's reign, and the parliament presided over by Peter de Montfort was known as the Mad Parliament. Sir, I hope that appellation will not accrue to this Assembly because of events over the last couple of weeks.

My annoyance is not so much with you - you did what you believed was right at the time and I reserve my right to disagree with your order of priorities - but it is with the series of incredible statements emanating from the Country Liberal Party to which you have belonged and, presumably, still belong - though my presumption may later be proven incorrect - and which party you have represented in this Assembly longer than any of your colleagues, a point which may have escaped them too. When this controversy over the land rights march and ensuing matters first broke, the acting Chief Minister put out a press release in which he disowned you. He said you did not represent the Assembly, you did not represent the Country Liberal Party and you did not represent any other organ of government. That is absolute and total rot, Mr Speaker. You, as elected Speaker of this Assembly, must always represent the Assembly. The tradition goes back, as I have said, to 1376 and cannot be broken by a garrulous, nonsensical press release from the acting Chief Minister.

To compound the felony, the felony being your sudden disgorgement from the party, we have the person presiding at the head of the organisational wing of the Country Liberal Party, Graham Lewis, putting out a similar press release. Of the 2, I think his was the more incredible. He said that you were only speaking as a private citizen. Mr Speaker, this was after you had devoted considerable time and effort organising things from your electorate office because you believe this to be an electorate issue. I think, in your case, it certainly is. You used your office in a perfectly proper manner to bring forward an issue raised within your electorate with which your constituents were confronting you. Whether or not I agree with your point of view is irrelevant, but you did that as a member of the Assembly of the Northern Territory. Graham Lewis took it upon himself to disregard all that and say: 'Oh no, he is only doing it as a private citizen'. Mr Speaker, if you did it as a private citizen, are you yourself paying for the phone calls and your organisation's time? That is a total absurdity. The minute you do something that they do not like, your so-called colleagues in the Country Liberal Party attempt to disown you.

Mr Speaker, I was going to ask you in question time this morning if you were still a member of the Country Liberal Party. I shall probably ask you tomorrow. I do not really need to know, but I think the Deputy Chief Minister, who was acting Chief Minister at the time, and the chairman of the organisational wing need that reassurance if, Sir, that is reassurance to them. Mr Speaker, I am aware of calls for your resignation from certain people within and without the Territory. I have not joined those calls publicly but I have certainly taken the first available opportunity within an Assembly sitting - the first day - to express my disquiet at a conflict which I believe does exist between your role as Speaker and a role which you have to adopt, from time to time, because of your strong convictions on certain issues within your electorate. I must leave it to you, from time to time, to decide how to behave and which stance you shall adopt in the future. But I am totally disgusted that the acting Chief Minister would attempt to say you represented no one and that you did not represent the party. You have been here longer than he has. You have

had party pre-selection for 5 elections to my knowledge. Perhaps, Mr Speaker, you could take the lad aside and give him a little fatherly advice as to your long involvement with the Country Party in the Territory when Bob King came up from Woomera first to set it up with Goff Letts in the 1960s. I remember those days.

Sir, I do not think that the public of the Territory is going to be snowed by fatuous press releases from either the acting Chief Minister of the day or the president of the party. I feel a little insulted, on your behalf, that this kind of thing can be said in the press and there is no one to answer these strange allegations. Mr Speaker, you are in the Chair at the moment. If you leave the Chair this evening and wish to speak in this debate, I seek from you the knowledge of whether or not you are a member of the Country Liberal Party because, if you are, then you must represent it. If you have forfeited your membership, I look forward to seeing you seated alongside me, Mr Speaker, and no doubt we shall enjoy debates together.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, obviously I feel compelled to respond to the honourable member for Nightcliff's remarks in this Assembly today. Perhaps I shall be seen as being guilty of not being a student of the history of parliamentary practice and such. If so, I plead guilty from the start. Mr Speaker, if in politics today being the Speaker means that one is to be muzzled, not have an opinion on any matter and present an image of total impartiality on all subjects, then I am afraid we have lost something which we just cannot lose in politics and government today. I hope that at least some honourable members would agree with me that it is a nonsense to suggest that because you, Sir, are Speaker that fact controls your life outside this Assembly to the degree that you cannot express personal opinion, party opinion or government opinion.

It seems to me that, in the actions you have been involved in of late, you have been expressing some of those opinions and I support absolutely your right to do so. No press release of mine has ever not supported that absolute right for yourself. Indeed, the extension goes to other members of the Assembly, of course, to express their opinion as they see fit.

Mr Bell: Why did you have to disassociate yourself?

Mr PERRON: One is asked by the press, which has a habit of badgering all and sundry in trying to find a story these days, as to whether a particular member of the CLP is expressing a party view by his actions. Quite obviously, in many cases, he is not. There would be as many views in the CLP on some subjects as there are people and so be it. As far as the government is concerned, there are many views within government but there is a particular policy within government. Policy is also laid down within the CLP. It does not mean that a member of the CLP is totally forbidden ever to express an opinion not completely in support of the CLP line. There have been many examples, and not only in this Assembly. I guess there are even more blatant examples of federal members of parliament who have carried, very strongly, public causes totally contrary to their own party's and government's philosophies. I am sure that activity will continue from time to time.

I take some exception to the inferences of the honourable member for Nightcliff today because I made the statement that the honourable Speaker, in his activities in his home town when this Assembly was not sitting, was not representing the government. He was not. Ministers represent government as a rule. Was he representing the CLP? I did not recall from all the CLP conferences that I attended lately that he was endorsed specifically to carry a cause for the CLP and thus he was not representing the CLP in these

actions. Quite clearly, a member of the CLP can act contrary to other members of the CLP if he wishes to. Goodness, we do not have a policy on every single issue. Surely we can have members within the party who have opposing views. Should we be torn asunder because of that? Surely not. Really, the honourable member for Nightcliff is putting forward this view because, in response to press inquiries, I said that the honourable member for Elsey was not representing the CLP, the government nor, indeed, the Assembly. I did not recall any motions passed here authorising the member for Elsey to speak or march in the streets on our behalf. Clearly, he was not representing any of those organisations. Surely, if anyone in this Assembly expects that he should not do anything unless he has one of those 3 organisations' full endorsement, that he should lock himself in his bedroom and never be seen again until he appears in that chair - and that is the view that is being expounded here today - he is talking a load of absolute rubbish. The suggestion that any of the activities of the Speaker recently could in any way cast a shadow over his impartiality as a Speaker is a load of hogwash.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, as a result of my question this morning, there is probably little doubt about what I am rising to speak about this evening. It is not with a great deal of ease or happiness that I criticise anybody of the age of the Speaker of this Assembly - if you want me to refer to him as the member for Elsey, I am quite happy to do so - but, because of his behaviour between our last sittings and this sittings, I am left with absolutely no alternative.

It is my habit on Anzac Day to take my family to participate in the ceremonies that are associated with that celebration. I have been involved in Anzac Day ceremonies in many places around Australia and in Alice Springs on top of Anzac Hill. I have seen the Leader of the House standing ramrod straight at Anzac Day celebrations in Alice Springs. I have been to Anzac Day celebrations in Canberra and I have shown my children the name of my second cousin who was killed at Gallipoli. I have even participated in Anzac Day celebrations at Areyonga and explained in Pitjantjatjara the significance of that particular day to people who have their own awareness of it. Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, it will come as no surprise to you or to other honourable members that I regard the comments that the honourable member for Elsey has made about his war record both in this Assembly and at his infamous little gathering in Katherine a week or so ago as something of which he can be justifiably proud. I understand he made reference in Katherine to the Japanese yoke and I doubt that any of us here are ignorant of the forces of fascism that were abroad in the world in the 1930s and the 1940s and were successfully defeated through the agency of men such as the honourable member for Elsey.

He would also be equally aware of some of the unsavoury aspects of the rise of fascism. Perhaps the most unsavoury aspect of fascism in the 1930s in Germany was the widespread anti-semitic propaganda that we have seen in documentaries, in books and in newspapers time after time. It is with a great deal of sadness, a great deal of anger and a great deal of misgiving for the future of the Northern Territory that I see that a member of this Assembly, and not just a member but the Speaker, has been involved in attempting to exacerbate racial ill-feeling.

Mr ROBERTSON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I would seek your guidance on this but it would seem to me that an assault is being made upon the conduct and credentials of a member of this Assembly - quite different indeed from the form and method used by the honourable member for Nightcliff whose words I have no difficulty with in this regard - without a substantive motion having been put to that effect. If indeed that particular standing order is not being breached at the moment, I believe that some sort of counselling

from you might be necessary to prevent it from happening here shortly.

Mr B. COLLINS: To speak to the point of order, I am well aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, of the provisions of that standing order. It goes back to a time when I had an assault made upon me in question time quite improperly. The standing order refers to attacks on the character of the person being spoken about. I do not believe that the honourable member has attacked the character of the honourable member for Elsey. I have no doubt that the honourable member for MacDonnell will ensure that, in the remarks he is about to make, he does not attack his character.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have no intention of assailing the character of the honourable member. On the contrary, I have given him a character reference of which he can be justifiably proud.

However, his actions and some of the material with which he has been associated, both in the town of Katherine and in the Northern Territory press, are hardly something of which he can be proud. The particular cartoon, and I do not have a copy of it here, depicting a white man on his knees with what I assume was supposed to be an Aborigine on his back was exactly the sort of material that I have seen in documentaries.

Mr ROBERTSON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I really must take issue with the interpretation placed on my previous point of order by the Leader of the Opposition and the words that are now being used. The honourable member for MacDonnell quite deliberately and for a particular purpose opened his statement to this Assembly tonight by mentioning the events from 1936 onwards in Germany.

Mr Bell: 1933.

Mr ROBERTSON: If the honourable member does not mind, 1936 is when the issue really came to a head and I do study a little history. That is of course beside the point.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the House is claiming a breach of Standing Orders. He has not yet advised the Assembly of what that breach is.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to resume his seat.

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member refers to the procedures of the Assembly and, without your permission, he interrupts someone who is on his feet.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for MacDonnell has placed particular weight upon the fascism which pertained in Germany at the time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the minister what standing order he is referring to.

Mr ROBERTSON: I am referring to the same standing order, Mr Deputy Speaker, that you allowed me to discuss before. That is the standing order about casting doubts on the character of a member. What the honourable member for MacDonnell is trying to do is tie - and he has deliberately set out to do it - the events in Germany, which all decent-thinking people despise, in with the

subject of his debate, an attack on the Speaker and a member of this Assembly. Mr Deputy Speaker, I cannot sit by idly and allow such an assault upon the character and the motives of a member of this Assembly to continue unchallenged.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, as a reference to the Hansard will show tomorrow, the Leader of the House is really being very mischievous. The member for MacDonnell was referring specifically to the cartoon - he prefaced his remarks by saying that - and to its nature. I indeed have the benefit of the member because I have a copy of the offending poster. In fact, he has not attributed any fascist or Nazi tendency to the honourable member. He was referring to the similarity between this type of poster and those that were found in Germany at that time. Hansard tomorrow will show that to be the case. That is perfectly proper and well within the rules of this Assembly.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: I merely referred to that because the nature of the propaganda we referred to here in relation to the honourable member for Elsey is exactly the same in that it seeks to blame a particular social, political or economic ill, not on one person but on a group of people who are distinguishable only by race. That is evil; that transcends any sort of opposition that anybody may have to particular legislative frameworks with which one disagrees. I will come back to that in a minute or two.

We have the honourable Treasurer rather blotting his copybook. He looked quite good because he dissociated the government and the CLP in the press from these objectionable actions of the Speaker and the honourable member for Elsey. I can only say that his comments this evening indicate that they did not really dissociate themselves from the comments. They just did not want to make any. He was not speaking as a member of the government or as a member of the CLP. I find that a little disappointing.

Let us be quite clear of what we are talking about. The particular issue about which the honourable member spoke publicly was in relation to the federal Lands Rights Act. That act gives recognition to Aboriginal rights in land. That is a debatable issue. I personally strongly endorse the recognition of rights in land of indigenous minorities as has happened in the majority of cases - in the United States and in New Zealand for example. Whereas I find it amazing that people oppose such recognition, it is not really what we are here to talk about. What we are here to talk about is a conscious, racist, political campaign that poisons race relations in the Northern Territory. We are talking about a social issue, Mr Deputy Speaker. We are talking about the actions of somebody in political life who had the responsibility, and a greater responsibility because he is the Speaker of this Assembly, to draw together the people of the Northern Territory and not to divide them. The information I have is that the people of Katherine have been seriously polarised by the behaviour of the honourable member and I find that distasteful.

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I once again note my objection to this line of debate.

Mr BELL: I resent having my time eaten into by frivolous points of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member for MacDonnell to continue with his speech.

Mr BELL: Returning once more to the comments that the honourable member made about war records, what he has consistently neglected is that there are many Aboriginal people who have made conscious sacrifices and who participated

in the conflicts in which this country has been involved. In future, I would very much like him to recognise that fact instead of pretending that it is white Australians only who have been involved in these conflicts. I should not need to mention to the honourable member names like Captain Reg Saunders. I perhaps would have to remind him of people in my own electorate for whom I spend time filling out papers for service pensions and who have contributed to Australian war efforts - very old men who enjoy a far inferior standard of living to that of the honourable member. I would like him to bear that in mind next time he chooses to ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr MacFARLANE (Elsey): Mr Deputy Speaker, I had some forewarning of this debate. While I am disturbed that this Assembly should be subjected to this abuse of its Speaker, I find it consistent with Labor policy and tactics. Soon after Mr Isaacs became ALP leader in the Legislative Assembly, he accused me of partiality and repeated that accusation many times. On each occasion, he withdrew when it became unavoidable and apologised with little grace and no favour. Indeed, when he resigned his seat of Millner, I did not shake his proffered hand, surely a good indication of my contempt for the treatment he had given me in my office as Speaker.

The member for Elsey may have something to apologise for but that is up to him. How can I speak as a Speaker from the floor? But your Speaker has nothing at all to apologise for now or ever. He has done his duty with courage, impartiality and dignity. What the press has deliberately done is to confuse the member for Elsey with the Speaker of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. What the press has done is to try to muzzle the member for Elsey by calling him quite wrongly, quite deliberately, the Speaker. Just as it is easy to use the term 'racist' to silence critics of Aborigines and Aboriginal development, so these cowards refer to the member for Elsey as the Speaker of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly hoping that pressures will embarrass him into bowing to their will of not being truthful, not protesting but, instead, retiring from a rightful cause.

Land rights for Aborigines is despicable, disastrous legislation which sets one section of this community - the whites - against another section - the blacks. Land is an unusual commodity. They just do not make it anymore. This Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act is giving land away like it is going out of fashion. Let me give you one instance - Oolloo. When two-thirds of Oolloo were taken from Ron and Pam Rixon 10 years ago and when they were given a pastoral lease over the remaining one-third, the forfeited land became vacant Crown land. The Northern Territory Administration, Canberra controlled, had plans for this and other areas of vacant Crown land. But with the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 6 years ago, all vacant Crown land was frozen pending claims by Aborigines. When it became essential for the Northern Territory government to have land to expand its ADMA scheme, Oolloo was acquired. But the Northern Territory government could not acquire the vacant Crown land across the river which had lain idle for 10 years including 6 years under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act. Surely this is anomalous? Mr and Mrs Rixon and other families were working Oolloo as a cattle station but the vacant Crown land across the river was simply waiting after 6 years for someone other than a white person to lay claim to it. Surely it is not the intention of the act to disadvantage the Northern Territory by taking huge areas out of circulation forever?

The supporters of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act say that Aborigines own only 5% of the pastoral land and that foreigners own 51% of the pastoral land. Foreigners lease 51% of the pastoral land. The people

of the Northern Territory, black and white, own all the land except Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory, and the Northern Territory government administers it. No one can take the land with them, Territorians or foreigners, but Aboriginal land was taken out of circulation forever. Aboriginals cannot sell or transfer it. The claim that Arnhem Land is rubbish land is not sustained by fact. One-third of the Northern Territory full-blood Aboriginals have always lived in this 37 700 square mile area reserved for the exclusive use of Aboriginals since 1931. Their development has been no faster, no slower, no better nor no worse than the development of other Aboriginals. But Arnhem Land is a patchwork quilt of exploration licences with geologists and mining companies very interested in it. In any case, land is land and, if not pastoral or agricultural, can be of great value for its minerals, its tourist potential, its fishing, as a recreation area or even as a place to call one's own. Even this last, a place to call one's own, seems to discriminate against whites. I have dozens and dozens of people calling into my electorate office wanting land - 5 acres, 10 acres or 40, 100, 1000 square miles - for many and varied reasons, but one is for a place to call their own, to do what they want to do - just as I assume Aboriginals wish.

Mr Deputy Sepaker, one of the reasons, apart from stealing rabbits, why our forefathers came to this country was to escape the feudal system whereby a privileged few by virtue of birth owned huge estates, and those unfortunate enough to be landless were forced into servitude as serfs or vassals. We are establishing this very system here. We are searching out traditional owners and giving them what anthropologists say is their land and leaving it to the nouveau riche to disburse what can only be called largesse. One good example of this is in Arnhem Land where, at Roper River or Ngkurr, a community of many clans lives on an area belonging to Eric Roberts and his clan. The government has spent many millions on this community area - on essential services etc - and now wonders whether the Roberts clan owns this airstrip, the powerhouse, the water supply and reticulation, the houses, the shop, the hospital, the sewerage system - the lot. Who owns the land? The problems will sort themselves out presumably with the Roberts clan acquiescence.

I would like to read out a letter to Professor Kramer of the ABC dated 7 October:

I write again about what I regard as promotion of Aboriginal land rights by your commission. Recently your Katherine news correspondent, Miss Liz Finn, rang me and apologised for an ABC news item which said that I, as Speaker of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, was an organiser of the land rights protest march held last Saturday 2 October and said she would play the tape of her communication to Darwin ABC news office to prove that it was not stated as such by her.

On Territory Tracks on Friday 24 September, my involvement with the protest march was specified as 'by the Speaker of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly' several times. On national ABC news, 9.30 pm Saturday 2 October, it was stated that the Speaker of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly was in the march in Katherine. I was not. On NT ABC News, 9.30 pm Saturday 2 October, it was stated that the Speaker said the march was reasonable and sensible and was of 500 or 600 people, indicating that the march contained that number, but that other estimates had the march as low as 100 people.

I regard this series of mistakes as misinformation and I wonder just what your senior journalist is doing about them. He did not

answer his phone on Sunday morning and I finally rang ABC commissioner, Mrs V. Michell. I am entitled to be attacked and criticised for my views but the inefficiency of your news service makes one wonder just why you keep 6, 8 or 10 journalists to feed the same stale news with occasional changes when a calamity happens and to keep 6, 8 or 10 journalists who show such mediocrity as not to be able to divorce the duties of Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from those of the member for Elsey whose electorate duties are, at times, controversial, but who is prepared to go to his electors time and again for majority endorsement.

Without wishing to involve your commission in policy arguments, do you think Katherine people have the same democratic right to demonstrate their feelings as do Aborigines? If so, your attitude is not reflected in your programs. Journalists are no doubt talented which indicates why programs are so heavily slanted and why so many arguments are puerile. The guts of the opposition of the ABC reporter's view lies on the cutting room floor. As you can see, I have sent copies to the Minister for Communications and the former Minister for Communications and to your NT manager.

I regard the allegation that I spearheaded the march and that I did march as deliberate misinformation.

Mr Bell: It's also irrelevant.

Mr MacFARLANE: It might be irrelevant to you but it is not irrelevant to me and to the argument which has taken place. Even the Chief Minister said that I should not lead marches. I did not march. The honourable member for Nightcliff said I led the march. I did not. I addressed the meeting after the march as is my right as the member for Elsey. I have another letter here to the Managing Editor of the News:

Dear Sir, I am the member for Elsey in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and also its Speaker. I have held the first position for 14 years and the second for 8. Recently, a huge land claim has been lodged for Aborigines for an area around the town of Katherine of 4500 population, the centre of the Elsey electorate. I have always opposed land rights for Aborigines as divisive and discriminatory and my feelings are shared by many in my electorate which comprises roughly 50% white and 50% Aboriginal. An editorial and a cartoon were published in the NT News about 2 weeks ago and, judging by their contents, I decided that my side of the land rights argument would not be tolerated by your even-handed editor. So I sent, as an advertisement, a map of Katherine area land claim superimposed on Darwin, same scale, to emphasise the extent of the land claim and advising Darwin residents that, should the same thing happen to them, they would lose their recreation areas, the Howard Springs and Berry Springs reserves, and the two water supply dams, Darwin River Dam and Manton Dam. Your editor refused to publish this.

The march organiser, Mrs June Tapp, requested Mr Denis Collins, MLA for Alice Springs, to insert in the Centralian Advocate as an advertisement, a similar superimposition of the Katherine area land claim on Alice Springs. Your Advocate editor refused after consulting the Central Land Council. My point is that your papers are showing bias by not allowing readers to judge for themselves the extent of the Katherine area land claim and relate it to their own circumstances

and also by denying the opponents of land claims fair press. In view of this, I find your NT editorial of Friday 1 October ludicrous and look forward to your view on bias and request you examine if your Centralian Advocate editor sought his opinion of the offensive advertisement on land rights from the same Central Land Council that now, a few days later, your NT News editor so roundly and soundly condemns. His quote on Sir Frank Kitto is a memorable one and one would hope your editors do in fact remember it.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I feel I should participate in this debate, without in any way infringing on the provisions of standing order 55, to put on record the perception at least that I have of the role of the Speaker in the Northern Territory. I say that quite specifically because I do not think that the role of the Speaker in this Assembly in the Northern Territory can be equated necessarily with the role of Speakers in other places. In doing so, might I say that, over the years I have been in this Assembly, I have had many discussions with the honourable member for Elsey. He knows my views on the matters he is raising and I know his. That is really not at issue at all. If indeed, as the honourable member for Elsey has said publicly on a number of occasions, he is not attacking Aborigines - and I am quoting the honourable member - but is attacking the Land Rights Act, I would have no dispute with his actions whatsoever. Of course, that is not in fact what happened.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my particular problem, as I indicated when I was speaking to a point of order earlier, was the poster that was found outside the office of the honourable member for Elsey and indeed placed there by himself. He says it fell off a truck. He referred to attitudes - which I am afraid I cannot see were terribly relevant - of my predecessor in this Assembly. He knows equally well, although he chose for some reason not to mention it, that the formal move that was made by my predecessor demanding his resignation was not proceeded with by me and very publicly not proceeded with by me. I am not going to call for anything of the sort today. Certainly, it is not within my province to appoint the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. That is a job for every member of this Assembly.

However, there are a number of things I want to place on record in respect to some of the statements that have been made by the honourable member. The point has already been made by the member for MacDonnell. It deserves to be made again because I have a particular personal interest in the matter because I am related by marriage to some of the people who took particular exception to some of the remarks that the honourable member made at a public meeting in Katherine when he referred to his war service. I say again that no one has greater respect for the honourable member's grey hairs or war record than I have. I must advise the honourable member that Aboriginal people whom I know extremely well did take great offence at the attitude expressed by him that it was non-Aboriginal people - and the honourable member said that specifically - who went out to defend this country from the ravages of the Japanese in the Second World War and that Aborigines were hiding in the bush or sitting back allowing Europeans, by inference, to go and do that on their own. As the honourable member himself knows full well because it has been raised a number of times, that simply is not the case. There were brave men and women, particularly at Bathurst and Melville Islands, who acted as coast watchers, who served aboard submarines in the navy and who served in the army right throughout my electorate. In fact, I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, as a point of interest, that a connection exists between the community at Groote Eylandt and the community at Bathurst Island yet there is no cultural connection between those 2 communities. A strong link exists between those communities because some of the older men in those 2 communities served

together in the armed services during the war, as soldiers and as sailors, in the navy and as coast watchers.

I think that is a point that needs to be rammed home to the honourable member. It is an established fact that, in recent times, it has been discovered that many of the decorations which those people were awarded for service and for gallantry were never given to them and, indeed, they did not receive the financial remuneration that they deserved as people who were repatriated and entitled to war pensions. To the credit of the federal government, that is being redressed now. I am glad that it is. It is an acknowledgement of the fact that many Aboriginal people served in the armed forces side by side with non-Aboriginal Australians in the Second World War. I take some objection, as do people at Bathurst and Melville Islands, to statements like that.

I want to refer specifically to this poster, Mr Deputy Speaker, because the honourable member for Elsey is on record as saying that he is not attacking Aboriginal people but attacking the Land Rights Act. I must say, with all respect to the honourable member, Mr Deputy Speaker, the poster clearly indicates nothing of the sort. Let me assure the honourable member that I have been telephoned by plenty of people who said: 'You have to demand his resignation, you have to do this and you have got to do that'. I have done none of those things because I believe that ...

Mr Perron: You are wasting your time.

Mr B. COLLINS: Indeed, in answer to the interjections from the honourable Treasurer - he is always good for a few of these every sittings - I often feel that I am wasting my time with the attitude of honourable members like himself in coming to this Assembly because - he is nodding his head again - he treats it with utter contempt.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wondered where I had seen drawings like the one depicted on this poster before. The one in the centre of the map of the Northern Territory which depicts a non-Aboriginal on his hands and knees being ridden by an Aboriginal with a whip in his hand had a remarkable similarity to something I knew I had seen before. I was able to discover where. The artist who penned this particular cartoon has almost directly copied some of the outrageously racist cartoons and posters which were published in the Australian Bulletin in the 1920s. In fact it is interesting to look at some of the old issues of the Bulletin. This cartoon bears an amazing resemblance to some of the cartoons carried in the Bulletin at that time.

The poster carries, as its main feature, a map of the Northern Territory with a white person on his hands and knees being ridden by an Aboriginal with a whip in his hand. I say to the member for Elsey, if that can be interpreted simply as a political opposition to the question of Aboriginal land rights, I do not believe that is a fair interpretation of the picture. A number of pictures surround the main scene. There are Aborigines hiding behind trees saying: 'Stop, wait till they finish building it and we will jump out and claim it' and so on. I do not want to go through it. I am perfectly happy to supply any honourable members who want a copy of the photograph I have here.

I do not have time this afternoon to go through each one of these little cartoons and refute the nonsense they depict, point by point. They depict nonsense and misinformation quite deliberately. The centrepiece of this quite outrageous poster is offensive and disgusting to everyone who has seen it. Phone calls to my office have indicated that. That is what I object to. I do not think that the office of Speaker is enhanced by that sort of thing. Necessarily, it reflects on the dignity of this Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is a lot of argument and debate about the office of Speaker. I would like to go on record as saying it is a nonsense if it is put forward by any office holder of this Assembly or, indeed, any member of this Assembly that we are ever off the job. I would suggest to the honourable Minister for Education that, if he attempted to make a statement, which was provocative or in any way controversial in Alice Springs, as private citizen, Jim Robertson, then it would be carried, quite properly, in the press as the Northern Territory's Minister for Education said this, that or the other. I know the Minister for Mines and Energy would not disagree with me on that score. Indeed, a member is never off the job. Indeed, as we found out this morning, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I do not flinch from saying it, we are well paid to be on the job. I have said before that I do not oppose the salary levels of Assembly members in the Northern Territory because I think they are accountable salaries. Those salaries are reasonable because the members who are paid them can be brought to account. The member for Elsey said that, when he is down in Katherine, he is the member for Elsey and, when he is in here, he is the Speaker. He is in the same position as any other office holder of this Assembly. He is paid and receives the benefits and rewards, as is the right of every other office holder of this Assembly, 12 months of the year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if he does want to have his cake and eat it too, I would suggest that he make some rearrangement of that. I think in fairness - and he is a fair man in many ways - he would have to acknowledge that that is correct. It really is nonsense to say that one is only Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, or any parliament, when actually occupying the Chair. That is not how the Speaker is perceived.

I do not agree with his criticisms of the press. I think that the press quite rightly described him, when he made public statements, as the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. In this respect, I must say something else. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the honourable member for Elsey, regularly achieves national prominence. I have quite a collection of the times that he has achieved national prominence. It is always on the issue of race relations in the Northern Territory and the role that Aboriginal people play. Many articles - and I am sure that he is well aware of them - have been published over the years in the National Times and other papers quoting him. He is always, and quite correctly, referred to by the press as the Speaker of the Northern Territory Assembly. Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, that is exactly what he is 12 months of the year, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. He receives the acknowledgement that the Remuneration Tribunal quite properly makes, and we supported it on this side of the Assembly, of the office of Speaker. Honourable members will recall that that was not always the case. For some reason, the Speaker was not given the same status as ministers in this Assembly or other office holders but was paid, and had conditions of service, on a lower rate. We felt that was not supportable, even though the honourable gentleman does not carry ministerial responsibilities, because the office of Speaker needed to be recognised.

The honourable member for Elsey is, whether he likes to acknowledge it or not, the ceremonial head of this Assembly 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year. I am not suggesting that he muzzle himself, that he should not express opinions. I have never said that in this Legislative Assembly. I do not object to his taking part in the adjournment debate because I recognise that it is a feature of our small parliament that needs to be recognised. But it is a cop-out, and not a very convincing one, that, while receiving one side of the cake, he is not prepared to face the responsibilities involved. We support the proposition that the office of Speaker needs to have that distinction made and needs to be, at least, on the same level as ministers of this Assembly. It is a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year job.

I know that the members of this frontbench acknowledge that they are never off their jobs. They acknowledge that and so should the Speaker of this Assembly. Clearly, the member for Elsey is not prepared to do that. He said so here in the debate. I am suggesting that he has a conflict that he will have to face up to shortly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, a conflict of interests has always been inherent in the role of Speaker. On the one hand, the Speaker owes his membership of the Assembly to the endorsement of his party and the support of his constituents but, on the other hand, the same member, as Speaker, is the symbolic head of the institution of this Assembly. In the mother or parliaments, the House of Commons, the solution to this conflict of interest between party and parliament has been, in effect, for the Speaker to divorce himself from the party. In practice, this is recognised by the convention that the Speaker will be unopposed in his own constituency. In addition, the Speaker does not attend meetings of his party nor does he participate in a partisan sense in debate. Nevertheless, as is well known, Speakers in the parliaments of Australia have not followed these practices and, in my view, quite rightly. They are opposed in their constituencies and they often attend party meetings. In a small parliament, like our own Legislative Assembly, it is even more unrealistic and I do not believe that the practices of the House of Commons should necessarily be adopted here.

Having said that, Mr Deputy Speaker, I must say that my definition of the role of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly is that it behoves the Speaker to uphold the dignity and impartiality of the Assembly when he is here and, when he is not here, to maintain popular public support for the institution of parliament itself in the Northern Territory. That, indeed, is his ceremonial role and it is the role for which he is regarded. Mr Deputy Speaker, the task is an onerous and responsible one, requiring wise judgment and, on occasion, the tolerance and understanding of one's parliamentary and party colleagues. Nevertheless, when an apparent conflict is perceived between the interests of the constituency, party and Assembly, there are really only 2 proper courses which can be followed: either the interests of the Assembly - that is, of all the people - are placed before those of constituency and party or the Speaker should resign his post. It saddens me to have to say that recent events have brought the dilemmas which face all Speakers in Australia so clearly into focus in our own Assembly. The solution, Mr Deputy Speaker, lies in the hands of the Speaker and, failing that, with the Assembly itself.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Tiwi): Mr Speaker, I am not going to speak this afternoon on the recent actions of the Speaker or the honourable member for Elsey as other members have; I am going to speak in relation to answers given to questions that I asked this morning of honourable ministers.

The first question I asked was on behalf of a constituent and was related to the reregistering of interstate trucks in the Northern Territory. A constituent came to see me and he was rather upset and annoyed. He felt that, because of the unfair competition of interstate trucks used in the Northern Territory, he was put at some disadvantage and had to sell up a lot of gear and equipment in order to stay solvent. He assured me that, in this particular incident, the truck had been here more than the introductory 3 months and therefore should have been registered in the Northern Territory. In his reply, the minister said that it was rather difficult to check whether such trucks came from interstate periodically or stayed in the Northern Territory. To my way of thinking, it is not that difficult to check whether a truck is carrying goods from interstate to the Territory and returning to a particular state or whether it is working in the Territory on interstate number plates. It is pretty easy to see what sort of a load a truck is carrying, to read on

a truck a sign denoting its state of origin, the goods it carries and the business it is in. It is also pretty easy to identify the places of work of such a truck, where it unloads its goods and what it does.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the constituent who came to see me had a complaint regarding a particular company employing a particular truck with interstate registration. In the rural area, there are several locations used for the extractive industries - extracting sand, gravel and roadmaking materials. If an inspection were made by the inspectors in these areas to check whether such trucks were registered in the Northern Territory or whether they were registered interstate after the allowable 3 months residence and work in the Northern Territory, then the situation could be remedied and rationalised. As long as these vehicles are being reregistered in another state, when rightfully they should be registered in the Northern Territory, we are losing income which justifiably should go to the Northern Territory government. I do not ask for a tightening of the legislation or regulations. All I ask is that the current legislation and regulations be properly policed.

I asked another question this morning. In my electorate are 2 quite well-known parks and an area out at Fogg Dam which are managed by the Conservation Commission. Also, I know rangers in other parts of the Northern Territory. There is increasing concern over the number of domestic dogs taken to parks, let loose in parks and coming into parks, no doubt because they have been abandoned by their owners. I like dogs more than most people. I have had them all my life and I would say I probably still own more than most people around the countryside. However, I will say quite categorically: a national park or any other sort of nature park is no place for a dog on the loose. To my way of thinking, the owners of dogs show a selfishness and disregard for the true welfare of the dog, the same as some people who let their small children run loose on roadways unattended. They show a selfishness in that they only consider themselves and not the welfare of their children. They put the responsibility of looking after their children on the shoulders of other people. The people who take dogs to national parks and nature parks also put the responsibility for their pets on the shoulders of other people in that they expect other people to take precautions to avoid what may be in some cases the unacceptable behaviour of their pets.

I know that the parks patronised by tourists and local Northern Territory people are managed and controlled quite adequately by the rangers in those areas. I know the Northern Territory has a small population compared to other parts of Australia. I know these parks have low utilisation compared to other parks in Australia and they also have enormous areas compared to some parks in other parts of Australia. I appreciate the commonsense approach to the dog nuisance problem which has been referred to by the Chief Minister in his answer to my question. Nevertheless, the time is shortly coming when the question of domestic dogs in nature parks must be looked at seriously. Not only do the owners of these pets show disregard for other park users in the nuisance that their dogs might create but the dogs present definite threats to small wildlife. They also present a threat of interbreeding with the dingoes, which are rightfully in these nature parks and national parks, to the further detriment of the wildlife and to the detriment of the pure breeding of dingoes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if irresponsible people see that it is quite in order to take a domestic dog into a nature park and to let it loose, they could see it as a nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse. If they have any unwanted dogs, they will let them loose in the park where they will get plenty of food from the fauna and they will not feel so guilty about not looking after them. This sort of thing has to be stopped by tightening up the attitude to taking

domestic dogs into nature parks. I know there are many people who look after their animals but there are many more people who do not. They think that, because they have dogs, everybody else should like them. Unfortunately, not everybody does like them. I don't think that there is a place for dogs running loose in national parks and nature parks.

Mr Speaker, recently there was an unfortunate incident in the rural area when a lady was accidentally shot while she was going about her business in her garden. The shooting was certainly inconvenient and necessitated a stay in hospital but, fortunately, it wasn't fatal. This raises the question of the irresponsible use of firearms. There were young children playing nearby. If the shot that injured the lady had been further to the left or the right, it could have proved fatal to one of the children because of their height. Constituents, especially mothers who live in the area, have come to see me asking for some tightening up of the firearms legislation. I voiced my constituents' complaints to the police. I do not know how active they were in their inquiries. The people concerned also took their complaints to the police.

I do not think that further restrictions are the complete answer. I do not know what the answer is at the moment except to try to stress to people that the irresponsible use of firearms can lead to unnecessary wounding and fatalities. The question of further restrictions on the use of firearms in the rural area may be open to debate. I have to declare an interest here. We use firearms often at our place to kill animals. We kill our own meat to eat but we use our firearms in a responsible way. Other people no doubt use their firearms in a responsible way. I would hate to be restricted in the legitimate use of firearms and I think my constituents who use them legitimately would not like to be restricted in their legitimate use of firearms. I do not know whether an education campaign is necessary or whether a stringent police investigation is necessary after each incident. I hope that the police investigations after the last unfortunate incident in the rural area curb the irresponsible use of firearms in that area.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I recently attended the Sixth Australasian Parliamentary Seminar and I feel it is my duty to make some report on that seminar to the Assembly. It was a very enlightening seminar for me. It was the first time I had ever seen various parliaments in action. I am afraid my parliamentary experience is very limited. My knowledge of the roles of various parliaments within Australia and outside of Australia is very limited so it was a very enlightening experience.

The seminar began in Canberra. I suppose many people have been to that very esteemed building before but I am afraid that is the first time I have been there and sat through a sittings. We were addressed by various MHRs and senators and ministers and whips. The information I got from the seminar was very important to me. One of the most important things was that I was privileged to see a Senate committee operating. It was chaired by Senator Peter Rae. It seemed to run very smoothly. I am led to believe by the good senator that most decisions reached by such committees tend to be unanimous and the committees have altered the entire role of the Senate. The Senate has now taken a more bipartisan approach to legislation instead of conflict and confrontation.

I would recommend, as I know the member for Fannie Bay has recommended, a form of committees to be established in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. At the moment, we do have one committee which deals with matters outside of the Assembly. In fact, it is one that you chair, Mr Deputy Speaker. It seems to be very successful. I do not think you go into bun fights when you are drawing up your reports. I would suggest an extension of the committee system into the Northern Territory. A public finance committee or an estimates

committee would have obvious advantages. One must remember that, within the federal parliament, there are two houses, the upper and lower house. There is even more scrutiny there. In the Northern Territory, we have only the one house so perhaps the need for scrutiny should be even greater here.

The seminar session that impressed me most was the one in Canberra. There were others. Something of vital importance that was capturing headlines at the time was the question of ministerial responsibility. There was quite some time spent on the interpretation of ministerial responsibility, how members of British government interpret it and the way ministerial responsibility is perceived in Australia.

The seminar then moved to Hobart for 2 days. We were addressed by a number of people, amongst them the Chief Electoral Officer who spent some time explaining the virtues of the Hare-Clarke system. They are very proud of that system in Tasmania, Mr Deputy Speaker. Given the number of returned Labor Party governments in that state, I tend to agree with them. However, that is debatable. They discussed their various problems with tourism which are much the same as we experience up here: travel, air fares etc. These things affect them too. It is interesting to note the experiences they are having with their casinos, something I think we will experience up here fairly soon. Harder economic times breed lean times. The casinos are becoming popular in other parts of the world so, while they are not actually feeling the pinch, there has definitely been a drop-off in the usage of casinos in Tasmania.

From Hobart, we went to Wellington. This was the first parliament I had visited outside Australia. They only have the one house in the New Zealand parliament. They do not have any states so control goes virtually from what we would consider the federal parliament to almost what we would consider local government with very little in between. They work very well with the committee system over there too. Of course, it is a bigger parliament than we have and, given the number of members they have, they can afford many more committees. But the committees that they have work very well. Once again, I would suggest very strongly to the members of this Assembly that we look at a committee system. Even with only 19 members, we can still develop a committee system. It is not impossible. It is preferable not to involve ministers because they have responsibilities. But, in other parliaments throughout the world, I am led to believe that ministers are involved in committees. From what I saw in New Zealand and the obvious success of their committees, I can only attempt to impress upon this Legislative Assembly the value of those organisations that operate within a parliament. It is a very worthwhile concept indeed.

Unfortunately, the honourable Treasurer has gone but another thing that impressed me about New Zealand was a scheme called the ACC, Accident Compensation Corporation. It is virtually a no-fault insurance scheme. It is worth while having a look at the savings that can be made in insurance by having only one insurance company. Their third party insurance, for instance, is still only \$16, something that we do not seem to be able to achieve. If you have an accident, you do not sue or anything like that. Compensation is set at your income level. It is a very worthwhile scheme and perhaps something the Minister for Primary Production may care to suggest that the honourable Treasurer look at some time.

Perhaps the most interesting place we stopped at was Apia in Western Samoa. All the other places we visited had the same basic Anglo-Saxon society - Canberra, Hobart, Wellington. Apia is a completely different society. It was really an eye-opener to me. The people there are obviously very involved in their religion and extremely involved in their culture. They have tried to

meld those components into their constitution and into their form of government with some difficulty. When we left Wellington, there was one particular organisation in government. By the time we arrived there, it had been moved out and another group was in government. It became fairly difficult to distinguish between Prime Ministers. They seemed to be popping up all over the place with a fair degree of regularity.

They have very real problems in Western Samoa because it is an extremely poor country and because it does not really want to separate culture, religion and politics. The electoral system prohibits what we would term bribery or gift-giving within 3 months of an election. Gift-giving is very much a part of their customs and they are having great difficulty in melding this custom with the new electoral act. I wish them all the best. I think they will have to clearly define what they want. I believe that, with good sense, they will achieve what they desire: a sound government.

Besides these constitutional and political intrigues, the most interesting thing in Western Samoa was the parliament building itself. It would be one of the most original designs for a parliament that I have seen in photos or otherwise. It is a large, circular building with very wide verandahs. It is built of glass. People sit outside and look into their parliament to watch their members speak or they can come inside. It is much more open than the dog box parliamentary buildings throughout Australia. I would hope that, when the Northern Territory parliament house is built, we have as much innovation as the Western Samoans.

I appreciate that is a very quick summary of the seminar. I will be putting together a full written report and making it available to members. Hansard reporters recorded the discussions and the report will become available to members. Before I finish, I must thank the officers of the CPA in Canberra for their assistance, particularly the gentleman who accompanied us. It is an extremely worthwhile organisation. There are many small parliaments and countries with weaker economies than ours even within the Pacific region. I think that such seminars should continue to be conducted. Certainly, I would ask this Assembly to continue to support such seminars. I certainly gained a great deal out of the trip.

I would like to conclude by referring to a report I saw in the NT News the week before last that Airlines of Northern Australia intends to apply for a reduction in air fares between Darwin-Katherine, Katherine-Tennant Creek and Tennant Creek-Alice Springs. It was good to see somebody will get a drop in the air fares. If the inquiry finds that there is a need to reduce air fares between those places, I would hope that, before rubber stamping such an agreement, the Minister for Transport and Works would give some consideration to the residents of Nhulunbuy. It is perhaps a sign of the times that the people in those communities are choosing not to fly because of the cost but choosing to drive or take buses. Unfortunately, those same conveniences are not extended to all residents in the Northern Territory, particularly those people in Nhulunbuy and Groote Eylandt. Before the minister rubber stamps such an agreement, I would ask him to consider the plight of the communities of Nhulunbuy and Groote Eylandt before he involves them in more cross-subsidisation. Certainly, the burden is increasing all the time. It is not crying poor but the pinch is being felt very much in those communities.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker MacFarlane took the Chair at 10 am.

LEGAL PRACTITIONERS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 261)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr EVERINGHAM (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Honourable members will recall that the bill passed at the last sittings of the Assembly made major changes to the administration of the private legal profession in the Territory. In a sense, this bill is complementary to that legislation as it makes a consequent change to the requirements imposed on government lawyers under the Legal Practitioners Act. In the past, it has been the practice of lawyers employed by the Department of Law to take out practising certificates even though this was not strictly required. It was also the practice for the department to pay fees for such certificates. This caused no problems as the department was, in effect, paying the fees to itself as the certificates were issued by the Master of the Supreme Court. However, now certificates are to be issued by the Law Society and the question has been raised as to whether payments by the Department of Law will be valid. The solution the government proposes to adopt is that legal practitioners in the Department of Law be obliged to have practising certificates. This will give the payments by the department a statutory basis. The Solicitor-General and the Crown Solicitor are exempted as they will continue to be deemed to hold unrestricted practising certificates under the Law Officers Act.

The bill also corrects an error in the earlier bill. Members will recall that the bill excluded barristers from certain requirements in respect of trust accounts. It did this by amending the definition of 'legal practitioner' to provide that, in those parts of the act dealing with such matters, the term does not include a barrister. Unfortunately, in listing these parts, one was inadvertently added. This is a reference to part XI. That part deals with the performance of legal work by non-legal practitioners and, without this amendment, barristers would be precluded from carrying out certain legal work. The amendment, therefore, removes the reference to part XI.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

RACING AND BETTING AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 263)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, the government recognises the value of the racing industry in the Territory's social and economic structure. Apart from those directly or indirectly dependent upon racing for a livelihood, one has only to see its popularity as a tourist attraction, especially at cup carnivals, to appreciate the situation.

Estimates suggest the total investment in the industry currently ranges between \$4m to \$5m across the Territory. This government provides assistance

to the racing industry. In 1981-82 all but 0.5% of bookmakers' fees and taxes were channelled back to the Territory racing clubs through the Racing and Gaming Commission's Industry Assistance Fund. A similar proportion is budgeted for 1982-83.

Our 3 major racing clubs all suffered operating losses in 1981-82 but that situation should not be repeated this financial year. The clubs are constraining expenditure to maintain viable operations. In order to reduce expenditure, the Darwin Turf Club and the Central Australian Racing Club have between them cut back the number of race meetings to be conducted on their racecourses during 1982-83 by about 20%. This is designed primarily as an economic measure to curb operating costs.

Mr Speaker, when tabling a new Lotteries and Gaming Bill earlier this year, I informed honourable members that a complete review of the racing and betting legislation was to be carried out and that the government was hopeful of introducing a bill for a new racing and betting act later in the year. I wish to inform the Assembly that this review is at an advanced stage and that such a bill will be ready for the first sittings in 1983.

Having said that, the current bill is to enact an amendment to the existing Racing and Betting Act. This amendment, which is designed to assist the racing clubs in their present financial predicament, will allow clubs to operate via what is called a 'phantom meeting'. A 'phantom meeting' as defined in the bill will be a meeting with no local races being run. The amendment will allow betting by bookmakers on race meetings conducted elsewhere either in the Territory or in the states. The present act disallows that practice unless a local race has been staged. There are times during the year where clubs have difficulty in framing an adequate number of races for their programs or, alternatively, receive only a few nominations. They are duty bound to stage the races and pay out the appropriate amount of stake money. The phantom meetings will permit the clubs to cut costs on these poorly supported meetings as well as keep faith with the regular racegoers who prefer to bet on interstate races with a competitive bookmakers' ring.

Mr Speaker, the learner periods for the race clubs are coming up over the next 3 to 4 months and therefore the government is seeking the amendment at this time to assist the clubs now rather than have them wait until the new Racing and Gaming Act is available next year. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 259)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister): I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The bill amends sections 22 and 23 of the Workmen's Compensation Act relating to the situation where a workman receives compensation from his employer and another person. It is normal and fair practice in all legislation of this nature to ensure that an injured person can only recover compensation or damages once for the same injury. Sections 22 and 23 of the act achieve this result by requiring that, where a person receives compensation under the act and also recovers damages from another source, he must repay to his employer such

compensation payment received up to the level of damages. This bill does not seek to alter that situation in a general sense.

It has been drawn to my attention, however, that an anomaly exists because the provisions of the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act, while denying no fault benefits to persons able to claim workmen's compensation benefits from their employer, still enables them to sue for damages for pain and suffering and loss of amenities of life. Such damages as may be recovered in this manner must then be repaid to the employer as I have described even though the compensation received from the employer did not include any allowance for pain and suffering. This bill corrects that anomaly by stating that any damages for pain and suffering and loss of amenities of life recovered under the terms of the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act are not repayable to an employer.

Honourable members will be interested to learn that a similar problem exists with the Commonwealth government Employees Act which covers both federal and Territory public servants. As a result of my representations, the Commonwealth Minister for Social Security has agreed to correct that anomaly by available administrative discretion. The bill removes a clear inequity in the legislation and I commend it to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

PAY-ROLL TAX AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 255)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

A recent review of the Pay-roll Tax Act has indicated the need for some minor amendments to ensure that the original intent of the legislation is achieved. This bill amends 2 sections of the act, the first concerning the liability of group employers and the other concerning offences under the act. I turn first to the liability of group employers.

The Pay-roll Tax Act provides that, where employers are related to each other, they are a group and under part IVA. They may then appoint one of their number to be a designated group employer representing them all for the purpose of the act and receiving the general exemption on their behalf. However, the act as presently worded does not indicate who is liable to pay the group's outstanding tax if no designated group employer has been appointed and circumstances can arise where the collection of tax is inhibited. The amendment to section 24 makes it clear that any one member of a group could be deemed liable for the tax.

I now turn to the second amendment relating to offences in section 37. This corrects a technical weakness. Failure to provide information or the provision of false information is an offence under the act. However, the section does not provide a time period within which the convicted person must then supply the information. This amendment enables the court to set such a time limit in the circumstances of the case. Failure to comply becomes a further offence of wilful avoidance of the tax under section 40.

Mr Speaker, these amendments do not represent any change in policy. They will improve the effectiveness of the act and, accordingly, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

DISASTERS BILL
(Serial 256)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

As honourable members will no doubt be aware, the existing Northern Territory Disasters Act was introduced prior to self-government in 1976 and, while some amendments were made after self-government to take account of constitutional change, a need has been seen to reorganise counter-disaster arrangements to take into account significant developments which have occurred since self-government. The counter-disaster organisation has undergone considerable development since its inception and this has necessitated several amendments to the act to take account of changes within the Territory and other circumstances which have arisen. With the benefit of 4 years' experience of counter-disaster operations under the Territory's control, together with lessons learned from Cyclone Max, the government considers it now appropriate that this experience, together with that gained from interstate and overseas sources, be incorporated in new legislation. Changes in terminology have been made to coincide with those used elsewhere in Australia.

The most significant feature of this bill is that it reinforces the counter-disaster organisation under the control of the minister to supervise all counter-disaster activities in the Territory. These include the production of counter-disaster plans, the conduct of counter-disaster public education and training programs, the testing of counter-disaster plans by way of exercise and the conduct of counter-disaster operations.

Under the new bill, the minister has a choice in selecting the key position of Territory Controller who was formerly automatically the Commissioner of Police. The Territory Controller in future will be the Chairman of the Counter-Disaster Council instead of the Director-General of the Chief Minister's Department. The automatic appointments of the departmental heads of the Department of Health and the Department of Transport and Works have been changed to allow for 3 ministerial appointments. The minister also has power to appoint such additional members as may be necessary in light of particular circumstances.

Responsibility for the preparation of counter-disaster plans, together with the associated training, public education and testing of these plans, falls to the Director of the Northern Territory Emergency Service and his staff while the control of counter-disaster operations falls to the Territory Controller in conjunction with his regional and local controllers. The government considers the preparation of adequate counter-disaster plans to be vital to any effective counter-disaster response. The Northern Territory Emergency Service has been producing counter-disaster plans for communities throughout the Territory and, in order to accelerate the planning program, Cabinet approved the appointment of another planning officer in March of this year.

This bill takes account of the necessity to facilitate the planning program by providing that each planning committee shall have an executive officer who shall be a member of the staff of the NT Emergency Service. The key to the formulation of any successful community counter-disaster plan is community participation in its preparation. Provision is accordingly made in the bill for appropriate public representation on local and regional counter-disaster planning committees.

Following the production of counter-disaster plans, there is a requirement for training and public education programs to be conducted. The bill recognises this requirement. The bill retains provision for the raising of local volunteer units within communities where there is a local controller. These units provide the structure for coordinated response by members of the community in support of the local controller during counter-disaster operations. A number of volunteer units have already been established and several new units are in the process of being formed. It is the government's intention that these units and their volunteers who give so much of their free time to the service of the community should be given the fullest support possible. Units are being provided with the most up-to-date equipment consistent with their role as well as appropriate training. In order to improve the organisation and efficiency of the volunteer units, the bill makes new provision for the appointment of unit officers to lead volunteer units. Such officers will be accountable to the Director of the NT Emergency Service.

The bill provides that the responsibility for counter-disaster operations rests with the Territory Controller who will also be the Chairman of the Counter-Disaster Council. He will work in close cooperation with the Director of the Emergency Service whose responsibilities will include the coordination of resources available within the Territory and, if necessary, from the Commonwealth and other states as may be required during operations. As we all know only too well, it is necessary to be continually aware of potential disasters in the Territory and so be ready to respond when a threat materialises. The experience of Cyclone Max showed that the counter-disaster organisation is capable of responding well. However, the objective of the bill is to ensure that the response hopefully will be even more effective.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

PHARMACY AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 262)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr TUXWORTH (Health): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The Pharmacy Act provides for the establishment of a Pharmacy Board, the registration of pharmacists and the conduct of a business as a pharmacist. It safeguards the public by ensuring that only properly qualified pharmacists may apply for and be granted registration as a pharmacist. Several similar acts such as the Medical Practitioners Registration Act and the Nursing Act provide for suitably qualified persons who have applied for registration to be granted provisional registration until such time as the application has been duly considered and a full registration has either been granted or refused. This enables the applicant to perform all the functions of a registered person without restriction until the board has met to consider the application.

The Pharmacy Act has no such provision. A newly qualified person or a qualified person newly resident in the Territory may not conduct business as a pharmacist until such time as the board has met to consider his application and has granted full registration. The consequence of this is that the person may be severely disadvantaged financially by not being able to practise his profession for several weeks. The intent of the amendment now before us is to remove the anomaly by providing for suitably qualified persons to be granted provisional

registration for a period of up to 3 months. The amendment will enable the chairman of the board to issue a certificate of provisional registration to a person who has applied to be registered and who appears, to the chairman, to be eligible to be registered. The professional qualifications which entitle a person to apply to the board for registration as a pharmacist are already clearly stated in the act.

Other amendments provide for the minister to appoint a registrar and for the board to delegate any of its powers and functions other than the power of delegation. The functions of the registrar will be to provide administrative support to the board, carrying out such duties as maintaining the register, preparing certificates of registration and routine correspondence, and other duties associated with meetings of the board. These functions may be delegated to the registrar by the board.

Mr Speaker, these amendments have been requested by the Pharmacy Board to overcome anomalies in the Pharmacy Act. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

ANNUAL LEAVE AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 199)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister): I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Honourable members will recall that the Annual Leave Act 1981 passed by this Assembly last August was assented to on 18 September 1981. Since its commencement on 11 December of that year several minor flaws have been discovered in its construction and the necessary amendments are now proposed.

In the application clause of the act, proposed section 4(d) specifically excludes casual employees. Proposed section 5, the interpretation clause, includes in the definition of 'employee' the phrase 'a casual employee'. In order to avoid the consequent confusion in interpretation, it is proposed to delete the reference to a casual employee from the definition of 'employee'.

Proposed section 8(3) is intended to allow the employer to deduct, at the time of termination before the annual leave is accrued, any payment made in advance of the date of accrual. Unfortunately, the word 'not' has been omitted after the word 'employment' first occurring, and before the word 'served', making nonsense of the whole section. The purpose of this amendment is to insert the word 'not' in the appropriate place.

The Annual Leave Act does not provide for a time limit for the laying of any information and consequently the Justices Act, which prescribes a period of 6 months, prevails. In many cases this length of time has proved insufficient to carry out investigations, seek preliminary legal advice and lay charges. The Limitations Act, recently introduced, prescribes a 3-year limit and it is proposed that this length of time be introduced into section 16 of the act. A consequential amendment to the provision in section 16, which requires the retention of employment records from 2 to 3 years, will be required.

I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

INDUSTRIES TRAINING AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 260)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr ROBERTSON (Education): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

In introducing this bill to amend the Industries Training Act, I wish to canvass the issues that have caused the government to take steps to establish a body with a combination of functions which will be unique throughout Australasia. A very significant proportion of training for industry and, indeed, training generally, takes place in colleges of technical and further education. Traditionally, governments have established separate policy authorities for training and technical and further education to meet those needs. In practice, this separation has resulted in very considerable duplication of effort and, at times, conflict over role definition, as TAFE authorities also make their own assessments of community needs, including training needs.

Of course, this is an oversimplification of the role of a training authority. It is quite properly concerned with manpower and training needs assessments, analysis of occupational tasks to facilitate training courses, design, maintenance of standards in training, supervision of training, especially in apprenticeship, and overall apprenticeship control generally. It is also an oversimplification of the role of the technical and further education authority, which is concerned with much more than training in the narrow sense. Nevertheless, the fact remains there is a very considerable convergence of interest between the 2 types of authority.

In the Northern Territory, Mr Speaker, there are 2 technical and further education authorities. The largest, in terms of the range and level of the services it provides, is the Darwin Community College. The other, which is perhaps more diverse in the nature of the services it provides, is the Department of Education. This Assembly is aware that the Council of the Darwin Community College is responsible, rather loosely, to the minister and is completely outside the controlling interest of the office of the Secretary for Education. The government would be reluctant to alter this arrangement. However, because of this arrangement, there is a real need to coordinate the formulation of policy and planning advice on technical and further education as it relates to the Territory as a whole. The government is alert to this need. Therefore, this bill seeks to draw together, within a single organisation, the functions of the Industries Training Commission and those concerned with the coordination of technical and further education policy and planning formulation. We hope thereby to achieve the twin goals of rationalising related functions and providing an appropriate coordination mechanism, whilst preserving the separate delivery systems of the 2 TAFE sectors.

The new organisation, as proposed, would be representative of all partners in training and technical and further education processes, namely, employers, employees and educators. It is expected that any duplication of effort and the potential for conflict of interests should be largely eliminated.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to consider the specific provisions of the bill. Clause 7 provides for the Industries Training Commission to be renamed. The government considers that 'Vocational Training Commission' aptly conveys an impression of the totality of functions proposed for the new body. Technical and further education is principally, although not exclusively, concerned with

the imparting of vocational skills, and the phrase 'vocational training' quite naturally subsumes the name 'industrial training'.

The bill provides for a revision of commission membership without increasing the size. The proposal behind the change is to ensure that adequate representation of the appropriate interests, having regard to the totality of functions proposed for the commission, is made available. In consequence, the Secretary of the Department of Education, the Council of the Darwin Community College, employer and employee organisations, are to be represented. In addition, it is proposed to include a nominee of the Council of the Community College of Central Australia which, although a departmental technical and further education institution, is allowed considerable freedom to govern development of this college in Alice Springs. There is also provision for one ministerial nomination which will allow flexibility to appoint a person with particular expertise.

The bill also provides for the appointment of a deputy chairman, which is a particular omission from the present legislation. Under the existing arrangements, the minister does not appoint the acting chairman when the chairman is absent. The commission elects one of its own to act. The government considers that this situation is unsatisfactory and the amendment, as proposed, will allow control over the appointment of an acting chairman to be vested in the minister, where it properly belongs.

Mr Speaker, the government is aware that the small membership as proposed for the commission cannot be expected to be expert in the totality of functions proposed. For this reason, it is intended to provide in the legislation for the establishment of specific advisory committees for industrial training and for technical and further education. Provision already exists, of course, in section 25 of the legislation for the establishment of committees, which are advisory to the commission, and it may be argued that the government's intentions can be achieved without amendment to this section. I concur with that argument but suggest that specific provisions proposed may allay fears that interest groups may see their particular interest become subordinate to another.

Clause 28 provides the commission with specific powers to effectively coordinate the formulation of policy and planning advice relating to the development of technical and further education in the Territory. It also establishes the commission as an authority for accreditation or official recognition of technical and further education courses, which is consistent with the functions already performed by the Industries Training Commission in respect of apprenticeships and other training courses. In other words, by this amendment, the commission will become the single accrediting authority for all technical and further education and training courses conducted in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I said at the beginning of this speech that this is a bill to establish an organisation with a unique combination. Whereas the states have organised themselves along traditional lines and in structures which quite naturally they find difficult to change, the Territory is youthful enough to capitalise on the experience of others and not be bound by traditional structures. This bill is a positive step towards the rationalisation of related functions of industrial, training and technical and further education, and I commend it to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1982-83
(Serial 235)

Continued from 12 October 1982.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to the Appropriation Bill, there are a number of areas I would like to address specifically. I would like to address the area of housing and subsequently pick up a couple of issues that have been raised in comments made by other members.

The opposition is pleased to note the importance placed on housing by the government. As in previous years, the proportion of total expenditure taken up by housing is significant, and appropriately so. Adequate housing remains a prerequisite for the continued development of the Northern Territory. Compared to the rest of Australia, the Northern Territory has a rapid population growth rate and, desirably, the growth rate in housing stock should exceed the rate of population growth. This can only occur through a mix of public and private enterprise. In his budget speech, the Treasurer announced that the Northern Territory Housing Commission plans to commence 894 new dwellings in 1982-83 at a cost of \$42m. The average cost per dwelling, including a significant proportion of medium density units, is \$46 979 - this figure being a reminder of the difficulties with which the housing industry is faced in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, housing is expensive, but it must remain a priority. In 1982-83 the commission plans to commence 894 dwellings made up of 611 through the general public housing scheme, which would be new commencements, and 283 new commencements through the staff housing scheme. In 1981-82 the respective estimates were 592 for general public housing and 262 for the NTPS staff housing scheme. This made a total of 854 dwellings. The actual commencements for 1981-82 were 530 for general public housing and, for NTPS staff housing, 273. This gave us a total of 803 dwellings.

Mr Speaker, in the areas of NTPS staff housing, the estimated number of commencements was exceeded by 11 while the general public housing estimate was 80 above the actual number of commencements. The number of dwellings commenced in 1981-82 in the so-called remote communities is included in the estimates. The discrepancy is reduced to 62. Eighteen dwellings were commenced in remote communities under the general public housing scheme, but, at the time of the 1981-82 budget, the number to be built had not been determined.

Mr Speaker, it concerns me that overall there was a discrepancy of 51 dwellings between estimates and commencements. This represents a substantial amount of money and, more importantly, a substantial loss of accommodation for the Territory. The 1982-83 estimates by locality for general public housing and NTPS staff housing are: Darwin, 675; Alice Springs, 126; Katherine, 25; Tennant Creek, 48; and, in other areas, 20. It is interesting to note that Darwin, with a population of about 3 times that of Alice Springs, has about 5 times the number of commencements planned. That is a figure that the honourable member for that electorate perhaps could take into consideration. We should note that the rate of population growth in the 2 centres is approximately the same. One wonders at the reason for this disproportionate allocation. It is rather difficult to accept that the Centre's housing situation is any less critical than that in Darwin.

It is, Mr Speaker, useful that the estimates of general public housing, being the new commencements, are broken down into single unit housing and medium density units. In Darwin, there are 359 single unit houses and 100 medium density units planned which gives us a total of 459 dwellings. This

represents an increase of 71 over the 1981-82 figure of 388 commencements. The estimate was 391. The percentage increase, therefore, is 18%. In Alice Springs we notice that there are 60 single unit houses and 36 medium density units planned which gives in Alice Springs a total of 96 dwellings. This represents an increase of 71 over the 1981-82 figure of 388 commencements. The estimate was 391. The percentage increase, therefore, is 18%. In Alice Springs we notice that there are 60 single unit houses and 36 medium density units planned which gives in Alice Springs a total of 96 dwellings. This represents an increase of 20 over the 1981-82 figure of 76 commencements. The estimate was, however, 95 and the number of commencements in Alice Springs was significantly below the estimate - 19 dwellings, in fact. In Alice Springs, the estimate for 1982-83 is 25% up on the actual commencements in 1981-82. Hopefully, it will be achieved. The 1982-83 estimate is in fact only one more than the 1981-82 estimate. In Darwin, the 1982-83 estimate for general public housing is 65 more than the 1981-82 estimate which was almost achieved. Therefore, it could be argued that Alice Springs is at least to some extent the poor relation when we consider proposed commencements. In your home town, Mr Speaker, in 1981-82, 41 single unit houses were built and this exceeded the estimate by 1. Fifteen are planned in 1982-83.

In the electorate of the honourable but largely absent member for Barkly, there are 7 single unit houses to be built and 19 medium density units are planned which gives a total of 26 dwellings. This in fact represents a decrease of 40 dwellings in 1982-83 from the planned estimate of 66 for 1981-82. But only 7 dwellings were commenced. I repeat that it was estimated that 66 dwellings would be commenced while only 7 dwellings were actually commenced. I think that that is one issue the minister could pick up in his reply at the end of this debate. Quite reasonably I think that people in Tennant Creek and members of this Assembly can ask what happened to those 59 dwellings which were proposed but were not built. The savings to the government in that case would be quite substantial.

In relation to NTPS staff housing, the new commencements are as follows. In Darwin, actual commencements were 188 which exceeded the estimate by 2. The 1982-83 estimate is up 28 on the 1981-82 commencements. The commission intends building 162 units houses and 54 medium density units. In Alice Springs, NTPS staff housing - and we are talking here about actual commencements - were below the estimate of 33. We noted that in Darwin they were in fact greater than the estimate for the previous financial year. The estimate for 1982-83 is 30 which is the same as the actual commencements in 1981-82, so that in Alice Springs there is in fact a decrease in the estimated number of commencements from 1981-82 to 1982-83 where 20 single unit dwellings and 10 medium density units were planned. It will be remembered, Mr Speaker, that we said, and I do not think that anybody can disagree, that the crisis in the provision of housing accommodation in the 2 centres is pretty much the same. When we turn again to Tennant Creek, the actual commencements under this scheme exceeded the estimate by 4 dwellings. In 1982-83 the estimated commencements are 15 down on the actual commencements in 1981-82.

I would like to turn my attention now to the Northern Territory Housing Commission Home Loans Scheme which, as you will remember, was the subject of debate during the last sittings of the Assembly. We were able to point out considerable anomalies and problems in the administration of the Home Loans Scheme. I think at that stage it was pointed out in answer to a question on notice that, for part of the 1981-82 financial year, there were 488 loans given out at an average of \$42 500, which meant that, in that financial year, \$20 732 1982 was spent - approximately \$21m.

The minister has stated prior to our raising this issue in the Assembly that there was about \$5.45m left unspent in the 1981-82 budget. As you will recall, Mr Speaker, we were able to suggest that this was not quite the coup that the honourable minister has suggested it was. We suggested that the underspending of the housing allocation in this regard, given the critical situation of the shortage of housing accommodation, was at least maladministration bordering on scandal and deserving of, I believe, a better explanation than the minister was able to provide at the time.

Adding these 2 figures up - the \$20.7m that the minister said had been spent and the unspent allocation of \$5.45m - we find that the allocation for 1981-82 was in fact \$26 182 192. We note with concern that the allocation for 1982-83 is in fact only \$24m which is in fact \$2m less than the allocation for the previous year. The rate of population growth and the rate of demand for housing units in the Northern Territory, particularly in Darwin and Alice Springs, is certainly such that such a decrease in the allocation is hardly justified.

The government underspent in 1981-82 because of its restrictive eligibility criteria on home loans. We noted in question time this morning that the honourable minister is quite prepared to accept that those concessional home loans funds are being directed at one end of the market to people who can afford to get finance elsewhere and who can afford to put up \$97 000 deposit. As you will be aware, Mr Speaker, the average price of homes in Darwin and elsewhere is well below that figure. So I would say that the Northern Territory Loans Scheme should not be directed to providing upmarket accommodation when quite clearly, and from the minister's own admission in debates in this Assembly, there were certain people unable to obtain loans because they did not meet the criteria set down by the commission. In that case, I believe that the minister has a responsibility to adjust the criteria. It is with regret that I noted from his answer to a question this morning that he is quite happy and would apparently have no intention of adjusting the criteria in that regard.

No doubt the minister will say, as he has in the past when confronted with these particular facts, that not one applicant for a loan has been refused. As I have demonstrated in the past, Mr Speaker, that assertion does not clearly stand up to the light of day because applications are only received from those people who will be successful. So it is fairly easy to suggest that the success rate is 100%. However, the truth of that matter is somewhat otherwise. I certainly hope that the minister will give more consideration to eligibility criteria in that regard.

Still addressing the issue of housing, I would like to turn to the issue of funds being provided through the TIO. In his budget speech, the Treasurer paid credit to the Territory Insurance Office. He noted the role of the TIO in providing finance of some \$3m to the local building society. I am pleased to note that this particular opposition initiative which the government has taken on board is fulfilling a useful function in providing housing finance.

Another area that the minister addressed in his budget speech was the low-cost housing village in Darwin. I have said before that I believe that that particular initiative was very welcome. As the erstwhile Chairman of the Housing Commission noted, the long march commenced with the first step, the implication being that the low-cost housing village was a step in the direction of expanding people's expectations of housing and what might be desirable in the tropics. During the previous sittings in relation to the low-cost housing scheme, I asked the minister a question about the possibility of such a scheme for central Australia. As I recall, the Treasurer suggested that he would take that into consideration. I certainly hope that that is in train.

One of the key problems in providing housing for Territorians has been access to finance. Along with the minister, the opposition shares concern about the failure of traditional sources of housing finance and the failure of traditional institutions to lend in the Northern Territory in particular and elsewhere generally. The Treasurer in his budget speech referred to the additional \$400m the major banks had agreed to lend for housing and the fact that this amount will be increased further when the Reserve Bank decides to release statutory reserve deposits it holds from all major trading banks for the special purpose of lending for housing. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, this is not happening. We note in an article printed in The Australian last Friday that the Treasurer, Mr Howard, had announced on budget night that a further 1% of the trading banks' statutory reserve deposits would be released for housing. The article goes on to say that the Reserve Bank has been resisting the use of these funds for housing and it may be many months before the money is released. But certainly it is to be hoped that such an additional source of finance is made available for housing in the Territory so that Territorians may benefit. I hope that the minister will take on board some of the comments I have made. I do not want to suggest that the government's initiatives in the budget allocation for housing do not have some merit. There are initiatives, not just in the housing area but in many areas, which greatly involve the public sector. One could suggest that they are bordering on socialism. Of course, the honourable minister would be horrified at the thought but, quite clearly, the proportion of public versus private sector involvement in many areas, and in housing in particular, would be typical of a socialist country rather than a capitalist country. I just mention it as a cause for wry amusement because it does not stimulate me one way or the other, I am afraid.

There is one suggestion I would like to mention relating to medium density housing units. Given their success in certain areas and since there has not been a great deal of medium density accommodation in the Territory for public rental, perhaps greater emphasis could be given to this area. The Housing Commission builds mostly single unit housing. This has been traditional and I wonder why. Perhaps a greater emphasis on quality medium density housing may be a better allocation of resources and I see no reason why a little more encouragement could not be given in this area.

The second point I would like to make in closing, Mr Speaker, is the discrepancies between the estimated commencements and the actual commencements in certain areas. I hope the minister will be able to give us some explanation for those discrepancies.

In the debate yesterday, there was considerable mention of the government's responsibility to create jobs. This is largely a federal government responsibility but I certainly welcome the initiatives of the government in attempting projects that are designed to create jobs for Territorians. Yesterday, the member for Victoria River referred to the disastrous situation of unemployment that pertains in many Aboriginal communities. That is a matter of great concern to me. I believe that it is not just an issue of providing people with jobs; there is much more associated with it.

The government has not neglected its responsibility entirely in this regard. There have been training schemes set up. Earlier this year, Mr Martin Ford, an expert on Aboriginal affairs, was appointed to assist in training programs for Aborigines. I notice also that there has been progress on the commencement of pre-apprenticeship courses for Aboriginal people at the Priest Street complex in Alice Springs. Those initiatives are to be welcomed. I would say that a situation where the cultural expectations of people about employment and the recent history of employment that people have had means there has

to be much closer connection between the training process and the employment associated with that training. Of course, we are very familiar with on-the-job training. One of the reasons for that, apart from satisfying employers' requirements for labour, is that people learn better under those circumstances. Whenever theory is associated with practical training, people learn much better. That is a principle I do not think anybody here will disagree with. That is recognised with the apprenticeship courses.

What I suggest for Aboriginal people undergoing training is that the principle has to be taken into consideration to a much greater extent. There has to be a much greater understanding of the people who are doing those courses and the jobs they will be going back to, not just what machinery they will use and what specific actions they will be required to perform in their jobs. There must be some understanding of the people with whom they may have to interact in the application of their training.

I think I have indicated that the issue of employment is an important one. I want to quote some statistics from my electorate. I believe these will indicate just how serious the problems are. I think that unemployment in the Australian community is running at something like 6% at the moment. My figures date back to September last year. Taking Papunya for example, of a population of some 1000, 150 are receiving unemployment and special benefits. These unemployment and special benefits are quite separate from family allowances, age pensions and any other pensions. They go basically to people who cannot get work. If we take away from that 1000 the people who are not in the workforce and make the 150 figure the people who are potentially part of the workforce, we are not looking at 6% or 7%; we are looking at an unemployment rate of 50% or 60%. I do not need to repeat the social implications of rates of unemployment like that. What I am suggesting is that there is a critical need for job creation schemes in various areas. They have to be well thought out. They have to be directed towards people and money has to be allocated from them. Perhaps I am somewhat out of order in bringing it up in the context of a debate on the NT budget but I have no doubt that it is of great importance, certainly to the people in many of the communities in my electorate. I was speaking to one office worker at Yuendumu who is responsible for the organisation of social security payments. I asked him how he would estimate the unemployment rate at Yuendumu because other communities had a rate of 60% or 70%. He said that it would be at least that there. That is a great problem for both the present and the future in the Territory. Many of the other social problems can be attributed, in part, to that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I move that an extension of time be granted to the honourable member.

Motion negatived.

Mr STEELE (Primary Production): Mr Speaker, I am pleased to speak in this debate this afternoon in support of the government's budget. Obviously, a lot of work and time goes into the framing of this and every budget presented by the government. The process normally is that, as soon as one budget is delivered, the little moles in the departments start formulating the next one and somewhere along the lines decisions have to be taken about the amounts of money available for certain priorities within government. In March of every year and again in July very important Cabinet meetings take place to decide the distribution of funds and the priority of those funds for the forthcoming budget appropriations.

Mr Speaker, I was very pleased that the Leader of the Opposition reminded me of some of the problems I mentioned in the statement on rural policy which I made in November 1980: low productivity compared with southern Australia, cost price pressures, disease, weeds, feral animals and bushfires. If anything, Mr Speaker, some of those problems have become slightly worse and, in some cases, any amount of money will not completely rectify some of the problems. I think it is fair to say that the importance of primary industry is fully recognised by the government, particularly in day-to-day operations.

The impact on and the significance of the budget for primary production cannot be gauged by looking at the Department of Primary Production, Fisheries and ADMA in isolation. There is a significant capital works program in progress in support of these vital industries. This includes, in the education area, \$2.2m for stage 1 of the Katherine Rural Education College. In the Department of Primary Production, the capital works component is \$2.34m for new and continuing work. This includes the Douglas-Daly Experimental Farm: \$350 000 for services to new accommodation and construction of an office, laboratory and ablution complex. There is \$277 000 for the upgrading of the access road to Tortilla Flats and \$1m for bridges on Douglas River and Middle Creek. Further support is being reflected in increased areas being planted with crops and the purchase of modern equipment by farmers. The fact that government has recognised the needs of the industry and continues to provide adequate funds in successive budgets will lead to further growth and expansion of the agricultural sector.

Mr Speaker, the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority has doubled its budget this year and has increased its staff and capacities with 6 additional positions in the marketing and finance areas. The management of Mataranka, and grain handling and storage facilities will involve about \$1.5m in the Douglas-Daly region. In the farm development area, a further 1800 hectares is to be cleared for project farms together with the associated soil conservation and other land management practices.

Mr Speaker, the Department of Primary Production did have a very significant increase in certain areas, and in other areas the increase was only minimal. The main increase, and there is very good reason for this, is in the brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication arena. In this area we are showing 152% increase over last year. I am convinced that, although the industry is in a very serious state at this stage, unless these diseases are eradicated, we will not have an industry and all the effort and work that we have put into our various activities, research and other experimental extension work will all go for nought unless these diseases are eradicated and the market is again secure. We have been under attack by the system. There has been a lack understanding by the federal government in respect of these diseases. Of course, now that we have created an awareness, we seek to maintain it in the form of getting increased funds for our eradication program.

Mr Speaker, I wish to speak about the various component parts of the research stations and services that the honourable Leader of the Opposition raised. After examination of the figures that he provided, we were somewhat mystified by his arithmetic and have done our own calculations. The total allocation for research stations and services for 1981-82 was \$3 195 386 and not \$1.153m. That was only the salary allocation for research services. The allocation for research services and stations in 1982-83 will be maintained at this level. The research services and stations combined staffing levels for 1981-82 were 74 employees and for 1982-83 the staff will be 76, an increase of 2.

Important research functions of the Department of Primary Production continue. Better utilisation of funds and greater productivity will be employed by

the department. In the horticultural area, 2 additional officers have been appointed: a research extension officer in Katherine and a research assistant in the CPRS experimental fruit plantation which involves 400 trees of different species. Further support has been in the form of 2 experimental headers, one for the rice program at Tortilla Flats and one in the Katherine area for maize and sorghum.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned funds for destocking which he said were not applied last year. He said that producers were not made aware of these funds. This point has been fairly well covered by the industry. I am advised that \$684 000 was available last year for compensation for reactors. The department did not get the number of reactors expected. In May the department used the balance of funds for destocking. I think the officers were doing their best in difficult circumstances. The alternative to an earlier start to the program was the risk of forfeiting funds and this was not acceptable to the department nor would it have been to the industry.

Mr Speaker, turning to the fisheries area, there has been a modest overall increase of 12.2% but the operating expenses of the Fisheries Division have been increased up to 28.27%. This involves the biggest single activity by the Fisheries Division: research into the prawn, barramundi and pelagic areas. This research has been supplemented by the Fishing Industry Research and Development Trust Fund and the Commonwealth Research Trust Fund grants. The money that has come into that trust fund in the last 3 years now stands at \$504 809.39. Some of the approvals that have taken place during the year or have been recommended recently include: branch operations of the Northern Territory Australian fishing industry branch in Darwin - \$27 000; manpower training needs survey - \$19 760; fishing industry documentary film by the industry training committee - \$18 980; and prawn monitoring in the western gulf - \$40 923. This latter money is to pay the salary and operating costs of a scientist who is assessing the distribution, abundance and status of tiger and endeavour prawn resources in the eastern gulf and a scientist who is based at Groote Eylandt. The main thrust of his research is directed at better assessment of prawns of an age that are normally fished.

The Commonwealth prawn money this year of \$90 000 involves a tiger and endeavour prawn closure study. These funds are from the Commonwealth Fishing Industry Research and Development Trust Fund. The project is designed to more clearly define the areas and times the prawn fishery should be closed to protect juvenile prawns. Federal funds will be used for the charter of a trawler and the Fisheries Division will cover salaries of officers involved and any minor operating costs. Closed areas have been declared since 1981 on the advice of earlier research, a log book system and advice from commercial fishermen. The results of this project will give precise information on when and where juvenile tiger and endeavour prawns are located.

Mr Speaker, one of the bright things that has occurred during the last couple of years is the activity by the Tourist Commission, particularly within Australia, in attracting visitors to the Northern Territory. A couple of years ago we were under attack for attracting too many tourists to the Northern Territory because, when they arrived here, they could not get jobs. Obviously, that is not our role. Our role is to attract the cash-paying type of visitor; I think we have done that successfully.

During the year the Tourist Commission has employed consultants to further assess the direction in which the Tourist Commission is heading, applying the how, when, where, who and what to the allocation of funds in various areas of promotion and marketing. Although we believe we are mainly on the right trail, it is important that we do a reassessment from time to time and look at just

where we are going. Mr Speaker, the marketing and promotion increase is some 63% over last year, a significant increase in Australian terms, although the cost of promotion in Australia, in some cases, was more than doubled in the print media during 1981-82. The extra money we have obtained for promotion of tourist visitation in the coming year is just able to keep up although the increase itself was very significant.

This budget increases assistance to the Regional Tourist Promotion Association by some \$33 000. There is a \$39 000 expansion of advertising in 7 tourist bureaux, \$85 000 press and TV media advertising, \$600 000 in straight promotion funds, which I just mentioned, and \$100 000 specifically for the marketing of Yulara.

I think that the Tourist Commission has played a very significant role in the development of the Northern Territory over the last few years. I believe that, with its policy of looking where it is going throughout the years ahead, its contribution will continue to be a major one.

Mr Speaker, just going back over a couple of things I have said in reference to the policy statement of November 1980, I think it is important that I again look at what sort of statement should be presented to the Assembly and to the public. Some serious changes have taken place in the rural industries in the last couple years. In fact, very simplistically, I was advised the other day by a pastoralist that 20 years ago the price a pastoralist obtained for a bullock would pay a man's wages for a month but the price he gets today will pay a man's wages for a week. On that simple analogy, it has gone down 300% in 20 years. I think there is a need to prepare a new statement and examine the rural industries.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about research stations. What I would like him to consider is something a little more constructive than what he had to say in the debate yesterday. If he wants us to take note of the opposition in a policy context, I think it is only fair that he should offer something constructive for a government to bite on. I have had a close look at the Victoria River Research Station. Certainly, it has been suggested to me that it should be closed down. I have stalled for a considerable time on this suggestion. The weaner trial that has been undertaken at Kidman Springs may have some significant information to pass to us. It may be that the information that the study provides the pastoral industry will not be of much benefit to the industry in its parlous state. All things considered, the government will take a decision in respect of Kidman Springs and it may be that a new role will evolve for that research station. It may be that the Conservation Commission should be involved with an establishment like that and that the activities there should be varied to meet changing situations.

Just talking about changing situations, Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Barkly brought to my attention the prospects of a regular industry in respect of the killing of horses for meat for overseas markets. I have accepted the information he has given me and commissioned a feasibility study to go forward into that industry. It may be that, on some of these low productivity stations, further horse herds should be developed if the market is stable enough for us to get established. Mr Speaker, I support the budget.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I want to address myself to a couple of points on the budget this afternoon. I went through the summary of special appropriations and picked out some of the areas that I am particularly interested in. After reading the explanations relating to the police, I was left with a couple of puzzling questions and I have drawn certain conclusions. I hope this afternoon in committee that the Chief Minister will be able to answer my questions.

The appropriation for 1982-83 for the police was about 3.8% more than in 1981-82. I thought that was not a great deal considering the level of inflation. I presumed any cuts would be in the areas of administration or capital works. I then went through the explanations in the budget and had a look at the 2 biggest divisions of the police: the northern command and the southern command. We do not hear very much about the various administrative arms of the police force. The people we tend to see on the street, the people in uniform, tend to be attached to either the northern command or the southern command. I found that the allocation to the northern command had risen by a magnificent 0.03%. I thought this need not necessarily be just for wage increases; it could be for other areas. After doing a little arithmetic, I found that in fact the percentage increase for 1982 for salaries for the northern command was 1.5%.

I am left with a couple of conclusions. Either there is to be a decrease in the number of police constables or there is to be a cut in overtime. If neither is the case, then perhaps there will be some marvellous saving in salaries for policemen. Quite certainly, inflation will overtake that 1.5%. I would suggest that that will probably happen in the next 6 months. So I am somewhat puzzled as to how the allocation for the next 12 months for salaries for policemen in the northern command can only be 1.5% higher than last year.

It is unfortunate that, in these times of rising unemployment, it is inevitable that there will be an increase in the crime rate. I think most people accept that that is inevitable. It would be unfortunate if the budget allocation for police salaries was to be cut to such an extent that the police were unable to pursue their normal patrols or function as policemen.

There is an increased allocation for administrative expenses for the southern command. However, the salary increases for the police will in no way keep up with inflation. Most people consider that inflation will probably run at around 10% yet we find police salaries will in fact be increased by only 1.5%. Perhaps this will be redressed in a mini-budget early in the new year. If mini-budgets are to be pursued, salaries should be given a worthwhile allocation. The increase in salaries should at least be recognised in the budget. The budget seems to indicate virtually no increase.

The allocation for firemen's salaries over the next 12 months as opposed to the expenditure last year shows an increase of 3.8%. That simply will not keep up with inflation. I think the Minister for Transport and Works, as hard as he might be on salary increases, will have to be realistic and expect that there will be salary increases above 3.8%. To make those savings, there will have to be a decrease in the number of firemen or fire services or there will have to be a decrease in the amount of overtime offered. One way or another, it will affect the effectiveness of that service. I would ask the minister for a reply. There may be some logical explanation for that but I cannot think of it.

I would like now to spend a little time discussing the budget allocations for the part of the world that I come from. It would barely rate as part of the universe if you consider the minister's second-reading speech. To see what Nhulunbuy would gain from the budget for 1982-83, I thought one way of finding out would be to whip through the minister's speech. I went right through his rather copious speech but I did not see Nhulunbuy mentioned once. The third biggest town in the Northern Territory does not even rate a mention in the minister's budget speech. There is a reference to Gove but Nhulunbuy does not rate a line.

I went through the various budget papers and I was pleased to see that the Department of Education has recognised the plight of teacher accommodation in Nhulunbuy. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, it is very gratifying to see that at least the Department of Education has recognised the plight of accommodation in Nhulunbuy. Unfortunately, the Housing Commission has not recognised that plight. I understand that there are problems with land tenure, and I accept that. I understand that there are problems about the ownership of the houses that the Housing Commission builds there. There is no allocation for a single stick of furniture to be put into Nhulunbuy by the Housing Commission unless it is covered in the item 'Other'. To the best of my knowledge, I could not see any allocation for extra housing to be built in Nhulunbuy by the Housing Commission.

The only other capital expenditure I could see for Nhulunbuy was under the capital works program for the Northern Territory Emergency Service. Thankfully, the remoteness of Nhulunbuy from certain community services has been recognised. I see that the NT Emergency Service is in the process of spending \$155 000 on a complex there.

I have very little more to add to the budget debate, Mr Speaker. I have spoken long enough in the Assembly on the problems of Nhulunbuy: housing, accommodation and certain internal roads. I will devote some time this afternoon in the adjournment debate to the allocations that seem to be going to councils in other towns and which Nhulunbuy never sees. Other than that I have very little to add to the budget debate.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I wish to make brief comments on the budget generally. However, before I do I would like the Minister for Transport and Works, when his turn comes, to clarify one matter which particularly affects my electorate: the future of the water gardens project. The budget papers reveal that a sum of over \$900 000 has been allocated to stage 3 or stage 4 of the water gardens project. But I understand that, in some public utterances, the minister cast some doubt on whether extra money will be spent on the water gardens project in the near future. I would appreciate it if the minister would address himself to that. I think it would be disastrous if the government stopped the development of the water gardens now. I know a lot of people have had some reservations about this development. I was probably one of them. At this stage I think it is still a very formal recreational structure and its attraction to Darwin people at present is reasonably limited. But it has been undertaken and I think a full and proper development of it, particularly of more informal recreational aspects like playground equipment, will increase its use to the community considerably. I urge the minister to complete the job and spend the money set aside in the budget this year for that purpose.

More generally, Mr Speaker, I think speakers on both sides have commented that the budget has been framed in the context of a downturn in the world economy. I would be one of the first to admit that that downturn has not affected the Northern Territory at this stage as much as the rest of the world or, indeed, the rest of Australia. But it is clear to me from my wanderings around Darwin and, in particular, in my own electorate that the downturn in economic activity is having a considerable effect on the population of the Northern Territory. It is particularly affecting some well-established, small businesses. Some of the big businesses also have had troubles and, in fact, some of them have gone to the wall. That is not necessarily a bad thing because there is always room to expose the inefficient and allow the efficient to survive. However, I would like to spend a little time discussing the problems of some of the small business men in my electorate.

I have a constituent who is a welder. He is well qualified. He has been an active and busy member of the Northern Territory community for a number of years. In my view he has been a very responsible member of the business community. Although he has only employed 1 or 2 people other than himself, he has consistently employed apprentices to give them a chance to get into the industry and to provide a reservoir of skilled people in the welding area. With the present downturn in the economy in the Northern Territory, he finds that, in tendering for government projects, and obviously he only tenders for the smaller projects being a small firm, he is being consistently undercut. He is undercut so badly that he has no hope of competing on the figures that he is providing. The people who are winning contracts have tendered basically on the cost of raw materials with a very small margin on top. With his overheads and his commitment to the employment of apprentices, he is finding at this stage that he cannot compete. Amongst the people who get the contracts, he is finding a fairly consistent and disturbing pattern. One is that many of them - indeed most of them - are recent arrivals to the Northern Territory. It would not be too unfair to describe them as fly-by-nighters. They have no commitments here. Quite often the money they make leaves the Territory. Secondly, he has found that the standard of work of these people is often very shoddy. In fact, he has been called in by various government departments from time to time to repair the work of the original contractors. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, they do not employ any apprentices and are not doing anything to add to the pool of skilled labour in the Northern Territory.

I think it behoves the government in these hard economic times to take cognisance of factors like these when looking at awarding contracts and making other decisions that determine how people can compete in the Northern Territory.

Yesterday, I asked a question concerning the position of new air charter licences. I think the same sort of principle applies there. It is very easy to have an open-skies policy and to be very liberal in the granting of new air charter licences but what the government has to take into consideration, and I was encouraged by the remarks of the minister yesterday on the matter, is the infrastructure of the air charter industry. Some of the established operators, in the provision of their service, have developed quite large overheads in terms of maintenance facilities etc to make sure that they were running an efficient, effective and safe service. The government has a duty to make sure that people wishing to obtain a charter licence can meet those high standards and realise the extent of operating costs, particularly in the maintenance area.

The concern of taxi drivers in Darwin has been expressed to me over the last couple of days. Since the minister has allocated in the last few months a number of extra plates, unfortunately, the taxi business has been caught in the downturn as well. There is quite some concern amongst taxi drivers about the future of the industry. Of course, those concerns lead to rumours and I would appreciate it if the minister in his response could confirm or deny the rumour that he is considering issuing even more taxi plates in the next few months.

Getting back to my small business man, the welder, and other small businessmen, there is no easy answer to the question of how to protect people who are prepared to offer more to the community than a very basic job. Obviously, the tender board cannot be instructed not to accept the lowest tender, but to accept the second or third tender. It is very difficult to instruct the tender board to consider factors other than price because that could cause problems. But I would suggest that government should look at registering tradesmen. From my discussions with the Master Builders Association, I know it is examining that proposition. I think the registration of tradesmen will allow people both

at government level and private level to be sure that, when a tradesman is employed or given a contract, that tradesman is qualified and has the level of skill and expertise necessary to complete the job.

I think also that, in the registering of tradesmen, some sort of pressure, even if it is only moral pressure, can be put on the tradesmen to make them understand that they do have other obligations than those of just making money. They have an obligation particularly in the area of trade training. To take up the point that the member for Nightcliff made yesterday on trade training, I again was encouraged by the news that the Master Builders Association, as I understand it, is having discussions with the Housing Commission about making it a requirement that contractors who take up tenders with the Housing Commission must agree to take on apprentices and train those apprentices. Obviously, that area must be developed.

The question of apprentices of course always comes to the fore when there is a downturn in the economy. What happens then is that private firms feel the cost pressures and feel less able to spend the extra dollars on the training of apprentices. The numbers that they can employ subsequently drop off. It was disturbing to hear the member for Nightcliff read the figures for apprenticeships in both NTEC and the Department of Transport and Works. I would have thought that the reverse situation would apply at this time when the private sector too is reducing its apprentice intake. I hope that the government will address itself to this matter and make the necessary orders to ensure that both NTEC, the Department of Transport and Works and other government departments, where appropriate, take on extra apprentices in the next 12 months.

It has been put to me that one of the main reasons why there are so few apprentices in the private area is the subcontract system. I think there cannot be any doubt that that is true. The subcontract system passes responsibility for buildings all the way down the line. It is clear that the people involved in it are interested only in cutting their costs as much as possible. Of course, in that context, the training of apprentices is seen as an extra and unnecessary cost. It is appropriate at this stage to recognise that the subcontracting system has gone further in this country than in any other western country. We probably need to look at why that is so. It is a very complicated area and it involves having a look at the Companies Act and other associated acts of parliament both at federal and Territory level. In this political climate, it would be appropriate for the government to have a look at the problems with the employment of apprentices in the private sector to see what long-term solutions there are. The band-aid solutions have been tried and clearly are not working. It is time to look at the long-term solutions to see if structural changes are needed in the operations of the private sector to encourage it to employ more apprentices.

Mr Speaker, there are 2 main issues concerning local government at present: one is connected with the budget; the second is not. The second is the question of the devolution of planning powers. The minister has made comments from time to time which make it clear that the government has been examining the devolution of planning powers and has been less than enthusiastic about such a devolution. I as yet have not seen a clear and comprehensive statement from the minister on this particular issue. I understand that recently in Alice Springs he did make some comments to the Centralian Advocate, and it would be appreciated by all concerned if the minister could make a formal statement on whether the government has reached a final decision on the devolution of planning powers.

The other matter relating to local government and relating to the budget is the vexed question of the allocation of money for roads. It was interesting

on Monday night when I attended a Northern Territory Motorcyclists Association meeting and the question came up about roads. I would have thought that the association's comments would have been directed to the need to improve roads in the rural areas. However, its main concern was the need to improve roads in the urban areas. In the view of the motorbike fraternity, as expressed at that meeting, some of the roads within the urban areas are not up to scratch. That does not only apply to Darwin but it also applies to Alice Springs. As I understand it, one of the most striking examples is in the Alice Springs area where the council has identified a major need to upgrade Smith Street. The cost of improving Smith Street would be about \$1m but the council this year is getting from the government in terms of road grants the sum of about \$200 000. Obviously, with that sum of money, it cannot upgrade Smith Street to anywhere near the standard required.

What essentially upsets the local government people is that there has been no proper formula established for the provision of road grants to local government. As I understand the situation, 2 or 3 years ago, both local government and the Department of Transport and Works were told to put in their bids for road moneys. Local government put in a realistic bid but the Department of Transport and Works, being used to the wiles of government, put in what could be called an ambit claim. On the basis of the \$20m that the Department of Transport and Works claimed and the \$2m that local government claimed, it was decided that local government should receive 10% of road funds. As the Leader of the Opposition says, that should teach it. Hopefully, it will learn from that mistake.

I think the time has come where the government should sit down and determine, on a more realistic basis, what level of funds should be given to local government for roads. I think it should be remembered that 80% of the population of the Northern Territory lives in formal local government areas. I realise it is a difficult problem because certainly 80% of the roads are not in local government areas but local governments would appreciate a much better defined formula than the present rule of thumb. The Darwin City Council to its credit has recently completed a survey of the conditions of all the roads within its control and obviously that should form the basis for discussions on this question. I would urge the government to take that matter up in the near future.

My remaining few comments will concentrate on the area of youth, sport and recreation and the puzzling inconsistencies that I have found in government statements on the question of how much money will go to sport and recreation in the future. When the announcement was made that Sports Lotto was to take over from the previous lottery games, the Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation said that he expected funding for sporting organisations to double and that, in the first 12 months of Sports Lotto's operation, the government would earn more than \$2m. In his second-reading speech to the bill to establish the Sports Development Fund, the Treasurer said the bill 'provided for a Sports Development Fund to be established with some \$2m to be raised in 1982 and 1983'.

We have the belief that over \$2m will be raised in the first 12 months of its operation and, secondly, that funding for sporting organisations will double as a result. Compare those statements with what the Treasurer said in his budget speech: 'Revenue collection for the year from Sports Lotto should exceed \$1.5m, most of which will go to sport and recreation in the Territory'. He said: 'More than \$1.5m will be available to sport and recreation from Sports Lotto and Instant Sports Money'. There is possibly a contradiction even within his budget speech between those 2 statements but, more importantly, within a period of 2 or 3 months, the estimate of how much money is going to be raised from

Sports Lotto has decreased from \$2m to over \$1.5m which is a decrease of about 30% to 33%. That is a fairly significant decrease in estimate for that period. I would like the Treasurer in his reply to give us a realistic assessment of how the Sports Lotto scheme is going considering that his own estimate has decreased so dramatically in the last 2 or 3 months.

Mr second concern relates to the amount of money that will actually go to sport and recreation. Budget Paper No 4 of the Department of Community Development shows that \$2.33m was spend on youth, sport and recreation and, of that, about \$400 000 was spent on youth. You can take from those figures that approximately \$1.9m was spent on sport and recreation. That figure is confirmed by a note to the sports and recreation section of the budget paper which says that a reduction of \$1.9m is due to sport and recreation grants-in-aid being funded from the Sport and Recreation Development Trust Fund.

We have a situation where, 2 or 3 months ago, the minister said that sports funding would be doubled. We have a statement in the budget papers that, last year, \$1.9m was spent on sport and recreation and we have a statement in the Treasurer's speech that only about \$15m will be spent this year. I cannot possibly see how that can be called a doubling. In fact, it is a reduction in the amount of money that is available for sport and recreation. There may be some explanation but, if so, it is not obvious from reading the budget papers.

This is my first attempt at reading the budget papers, and certainly, they are very tantalising documents. They lead you so far and take you no further. Certainly, I would hope that next year the government would consider providing more information in the budget documents so that a more realistic look can be taken at them by members of the opposition. The other alternative is the one that has been proposed by the opposition over a number of years: to establish a committee system to allow a thorough study of the budget papers in a situation which provides more time for it.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, in rising to support the budget, I will pick up the point first of all regarding the Department of Community Development's Community Services Division for which I have some responsibility in the youth, sport and recreation area. The honourable member for Millner once again went off at a tangent to try to instill confusion in the minds of the people both in Darwin and other parts of the Territory. In fact, a statement that was made 3 months ago regarding Sports Lotto was that eventually the amount of funds which are derived from Sports Lotto would certainly double whatever funds that were being put into it at that particular time.

Mr Smith: That's rubbish.

Mr DONDAS: It is not rubbish, Mr Speaker. The Treasurer is being very conservative in his budget papers and he has to be conservative. He can only go on facts. There are no facts as yet on what revenue will be derived from Sports Lotto. There is only an indication of what the monthly return will be. The indication at this stage is that revenue from Sports Lotto will be \$1.8m on the monthly returns of July, August and September.

The honourable member admitted that this is his first attempt to try to delve into the meanderings of the budget papers. Sometimes they do meander; I admit that myself. It only takes a certain amount of determination to get to the bottom of each particular figure that is presented.

I will outline a little of the history of grants-in-aid to community organisations in the context of present day funding. In 1977-78, prior to self-government, the only funds that were being disbursed to community organisa-

tions via funds from the Betting Control Board were in the vicinity of \$70 000 to \$80 000. In the first year of self-government, the Country Liberal Party government put \$750 000 into community organisations and sporting organisations in the Northern Territory. In 1981-82, a total of \$2.33m went to community organisations and sporting organisations, plus the infrastructure expenses of another \$400 000-odd. For the honourable member's information, the breakup for 1981-82 was this: youth - \$147 481; sport - \$1 297 933; recreation - \$664 571; the Life-be-in-it Campaign - \$22 000; vacation care - \$85 945; and other community services \$112 715. We are now looking at the Treasurer's conservative estimate of \$1.5m plus an allocation of another \$400 000 which is a committed amount for salaries to community organisations in the NT such as YMCA, YWCA and Somerville homes. All the information we have says it is correct. The \$1.8m and the \$411 000 which have been allocated this year total \$2.2m. Last year it was in the order of \$2.3m. Actual total expenditure last year was \$2.6m but I am not including the infrastructure of the administrative services and wages and other expenses associated with that particular division. But last year there were some very large amounts: grants to the Motor Sports Council to enable it to make the necessary shift from Bagot Park Speedway to Hidden Valley and loans to the Northern Territory Football League for its club, the Nightcliff Club. Indications are that this year almost the same money has been put into youth, sport and recreation as was last year. The difference is that the large grants to the Motor Sports Council and similar club loans will not be needed this year.

Mr Speaker, with the Northern Territory government's attempt to provide infrastructure facilities, administrative expenses and training expenses to community organisations, sport is certainly on the move in the Northern Territory. In fact, the record is starting to show that the moves and the direction we are taking are the right ones. We are talking about money for youth, sport and recreation. We know the success of Graeme McGufficke at the recent Commonwealth Games, of a young lady by the name of Angie Frazier who won the world cup in water-skiing at the age of 9 in the United States and of a contingent of our schoolchildren who participated in the Pacific Games in Brisbane recently. We know that a Northern Territory pistol shooter will represent Australia at the pistol championships in Venezuela later this year and that 2 Northern Territory girls are to be in the Australian team to participate in the world judo championships in France later this year. The story of success of Territorians is going on and on. Funds are being put into the area at this stage. In capital works we are providing infrastructure by way of the indoor sports stadium at Marrara and proceeding with stage 2 of the stadium for basketball. I will pick up that point a little later when we talk about the water gardens at Rapid Creek.

The honourable member opposite has the capacity to twist things and put them out of context. Always he tries to sow the seeds of doubt in people's minds. I understand from the Racing and Gaming estimates what appropriation has been made. The same amount will be going to that particular division this year as last year. Hopefully, it might even be a bit more, but we will not know until about the end of December.

My other responsibility is the Department of Transport and Works. The honourable member for Nightcliff homed in on the point that support for apprenticeship training by the Northern Territory government left a lot to be desired. That must be considered in context. There are 86 apprentices in the Northern Territory government. In 1982 first-year apprentices were as follows: 10 with NTEC, 8 with Transport and Works, 5 with the Commonwealth and 19 with private enterprise. Before speaking about apprenticeships as a whole, the honourable member for Nightcliff made reference to the same 1000-odd students who will leave school this year to seek to enter the workforce. That happens every year.

The number is not as high as 1000. It is anticipated that it will be in the high 700s, early 800s. Every year we are faced with the same problem. About this time every year, the end of October and early November, figures are provided from the Bureau of Statistics of the number of school leavers from the preceding year who are still out of work. In most cases the number is not very high. Normally, it is between 60 and 80.

What the honourable member for Nightcliff did not say yesterday was that many school leavers, in the order of 150 to 200, go interstate for higher education. Many others take up training courses such as nursing and many proceed to higher education in the Darwin Community College. That accounts for a great number of the 1982 school leavers that she spoke about. We are certainly concerned that there are not many jobs for the young people. She made out yesterday that there would be 1000 walking around unemployed by the middle of next year. That is not true.

The honourable member also spoke about a particular scheme operating in Western Australia. I am not very familiar with that scheme and I have asked for information regarding it. The Department of Transport and Works is attempting to encourage numbers in the apprenticeship area. Private enterprise finds it very difficult to take on first-year apprentices. It is very expensive and it cannot be 100% certain that a student will complete the year or even complete his 3-year or 4-year apprenticeship course. Many private employers are very reluctant to take on apprentices in this particular instance. They get no benefit from the apprentice in his first year because he is usually training, sitting at the Industries Training Commission office or doing a course at the Darwin Community College. As far as the employer is concerned, the first year is a total write-off.

If we can find employers who are willing to take on apprentices, the Department of Transport and Works will pick up first-year apprentices' expenses. Hopefully, employers will take on apprentices in their second and third year. These arrangements are still at a very early stage. We are concerned that the intake of apprentices into the government is not as high as we would like it to be. At the same time, we have to realise that the CLP government has a philosophy whereby a lot of work should be done by private enterprise. It is no good our putting on apprentices if there are no jobs for them at the end. This is why we are looking at the proposal to pick up the tab for the first year.

The member for Millner mentioned the problem of nominated subcontractors. Many of the major contractors rely on subcontractors to do their work. I have often spoken to the department about ensuring that contractors or nominated subcontractors employ a certain number of apprentices. My advice from the department is that it is very difficult to have these preferential clauses inserted. In fact, the tender system has come under criticism within the last 5 minutes by the member for Millner. If we start to impose preferential clauses on the type of people who are going to be able to tender for the various jobs, we will get ourselves into a bigger mess than we are already in. I admit that we do have problems with the tendering system. Cabinet is addressing itself to those particular problems. It is not just the tendering system within the Department of Transport and Works that I refer to.

The honourable member for Victoria River referred yesterday to Aboriginal essential services and the failure of the Northern Territory government to provide some infrastructure for employment in those areas. I really do not know whether the honourable member for Victoria River was really 100% sure of his direction yesterday because, in 1981-72 and 1982-83, current works in progress and estimates in the budget put \$24m into Aboriginal essential services. Where

possible, the Department of Transport and Works provides financial infrastructure to the councils to be able to do the work themselves. In fact, every couple of weeks I am signing certificates of in expediency to go to the Treasurer to allow work to be done by a particular community. Money of course is very limited. There are priorities but, when you consider there is \$24m for works in progress in the current program, I think that there certainly will be a lot of work for the people in those Aboriginal communities.

The honourable member for Sanderson also referred to my area of responsibility. However, the Chief Minister certainly has a primary role to play in the development of the rail link and the Gove road. We must convince our federal colleagues to put large sums into the budget this year for work next year. The Chief Minister made a statement in the last 24 hours that next week-end he intends to take this funding up with the federal government in the hope that we would be able to push this particular project forward as a matter of urgency. Once we are successful, it certainly will create jobs.

The honourable member for Sanderson also referred to the Gove road. We would like to be able to commence construction on the Gove road which will create employment. There has to be consultation with the Aboriginal communities in those areas and that consultation is taking place at this moment. We hope that we will have the Gove road, which has been described as the Numbulwar-Roper corridor, well on its way before the end of the next financial year so that it can be completed as a bicentennial program for which we will receive additional funds for its construction.

In 1981-82, \$198.5m was spent by the Department of Transport and Works, the highest of any department. I would like to take this opportunity to compliment my department for a very good job. The Department of Transport and Works has responsibility for many wide-ranging functions. If you compare it with similar departments in the states, it is unique. In 1982-83, we propose to spend \$218.9m which, in real terms, is \$20.4m more than last year. The capital works allocation is \$9m more than last year. I really could not understand what the honourable member for Sanderson meant when referring to a 6% decrease in real terms. I had \$198.5m to spend last year and I have \$218.9m to spend this year. How can it be a decrease?

The honourable member for Nhulunbuy referred to the fire service. He hoped that we would not see a decrease in fire services throughout the Northern Territory because there is only about a 3% increase. He asked me for an explanation. On page 14 of Budget Paper No 4, the salaries and allowances for 131 people for 1981-82 is given as \$3.386m and, for 1982-83, \$3.516m. Last year, there were 13 pay periods. I do not know whether the honourable member for Nhulunbuy has taken that into consideration. There were 13 pay periods last year and we are back to the normal 12 pay periods for the 1982-83 financial year. Nevertheless, salary commitments are \$130 000 more than in the budget last year and administrative expenses have been decreased by \$23 000. I think that that would be noticeable in all divisions of the Department of Transport and Works. We have been trying to reduce the administrative expenses to allow us to spend more money in other areas. I do not know whether that is the right explanation. I believe that that could be it. I do not believe that there will be a decrease in any fire services throughout the whole of the Northern Territory. In fact, we will be spending additional funds this year on more equipment. I believe that we have one of the best-equipped fire brigades in Australia.

The honourable member for Nhulunbuy said that Nhulunbuy was not mentioned very much in the budget. Whilst I sympathise with him in some respects, the point is that we look at the Territory overall and decide where our priorities

lie, especially those of the Department of Transport and Works. If money has to be spent for essential services, then money is spent. If there is no need and things are going along in a hunky-dory manner, which I believe is the case in Nhulunbuy, being a mining town, then I believe that our resources must be placed in those areas where they will provide the most benefit to the people of the Northern Territory.

A point that I would like to make is that the federal government in this year's budget allocated \$1.7m to Nhulunbuy for the construction of a control tower which will certainly alleviate some of the aviation problems there.

The honourable member is interjecting and I cannot hear what he is saying. I think he is asking what we have to do with the federal government. The important thing is that the Chief Minister has lobbied hard for the federal government to provide funds for the upgrading of the facility. So that is what the Northern Territory has done in Gove.

The honourable member for Millner picked up a point on the water gardens. My information is that a maintenance contract will be ready to let by the end of the month. The honourable member said that there is a reduction in the works program for the water gardens. Well, that is true, Mr Speaker. There was an additional \$950 000 allocated in the 1981-82 financial year for the Rapid Creek water gardens. \$100 000 is for the completion of stages 2 and 3 but the other \$850 000 that was earmarked for that development has been deferred. The reason is that a restaurant at Holtze Cottage in the botanical gardens was not considered feasible. The \$850 000 for Rapid Creek was for facilities, restaurant, kiosks etc. I believe that the decision to defer that for a couple of years to see the impact in the botanical gardens area with the council's infrastructure might be just as well. We do not want to finish up with a restaurant in every major facility if we can avoid that.

In 1980, when we first made the decision to proceed with the 4-stage development of Rapid Creek, it certainly appeared to be a very good idea. I think the honourable member for Millner said that the Rapid Creek garden area, which is in his electorate, will certainly be a boon for our community once it is established. It is still in its early stages and I believe it might need another 1 or 2 wet seasons to really come to fruition as pride of place, in the Millner electorate anyway. The point is that the sum of \$850 000 has been deferred and I am not in a position at this stage to indicate to honourable members when we are going to proceed. When the time comes that another infrastructure is needed in that area, then the government will make its decision accordingly.

The honourable member for Millner also spoke about taxis. He said that taxi drivers were complaining and he wanted an assurance from me that I would not be issuing any more licences. Before moving to that particular point, I would like to advise the honourable member that we advertised and received 5 successful tenderers for those 5 licences at an average of \$32 000 each. That is \$160 000 for the Northern Territory government. If the taxi industry were in such dire financial straits, then I would have thought that we would not have received anything like that amount for those licences. In response to the member for Millner's request that I make a statement in regard to the issuing of further licences, the only thing that I can say is that, as the community demand arises, the situation will be evaluated. It is not on my mind. I am not aware of any departmental advice to issue more licences. The indication that I gave the taxi industry was that we would issue 5 licences and most probably would not look at it for another 12 months. In fact, the other thing that we did for the taxi industry was to give it an increase in the flagfall and also an increase in the mileage rate because the cost of fuel, cars and everything else has gone up.

With regard to the local government allocation for roads, the formula of 10.9% has been set. In most cases we get \$20m or \$30m from the federal government. We are never happy; we want more. When you consider the federal government gave \$365m to the states in the 1981-82 financial year out of the \$3400m that it received in road and fuel taxes - only 16% - you will see that the 10.9% from our allocation is a fair formula. As well, local government has other funding avenues, usually on a dollar-for-dollar basis. It has special grants. In fact, the 1958 roads agreement has only just been finalised.

The current survey will indicate the final situation regarding roads. The Northern Territory government has a commitment and I think we have indicated to the council on more than one occasion that we will fix up all the roads. The honourable member mentioned that he spoke to motorcyclists the other day and he wants urban roads repaired. There are not too many urban roads in Darwin that I have been over, apart from perhaps Totem Road and old MacMillans Road, that are really in bad shape. They are the types of roads that we will fix up. Once they are fixed up, they will be handed over to the council for their continued maintenance. Of course, we have accepted responsibility for maintaining 307 roads.

Mr Speaker, I hope I have picked up the points that have been raised by honourable members. No doubt in the committee stage there will be further questions asked. I certainly hope I have enough information here to provide members opposite with that information as required. I commend the Treasurer for what I consider to be a very good budget. It has not been said that it is not a good budget. In fact, the honourable member for Sanderson said yesterday that the budget was in the right direction. In 5 budgets, that is the first time I have heard opposition members say that. We must be on the right track.

I look back to 1978-79 when our first budget was \$250m. Mr Speaker, you were there that day. We are now talking about a budget of \$1000m. I believe that the people of the Northern Territory have confidence in the budget. It will give confidence to industry. Even though we have some problems with high interest rates floating throughout the whole of the continent, I believe that the Northern Territory is on the right track and I commend the bill.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I will touch on a few of the matters raised by honourable members. However, by way of overview, the budget debate this year was quieter than in previous years, not that that displeases me. It seemed that almost everyone had the opportunity to speak on it for as long as he wished to. Many of the matters raised do not require a specific and detailed response and, in a couple of instances, ministers have responded to questions raised.

The first speaker on the budget was the honourable member for Sanderson, which is logical enough because she is shadow treasurer. She said perhaps the government should have adopted the style that it followed some time back. I think she mentioned 1980 when we introduced the Appropriation Bill and provided some projects which we said would assist employment specifically. However, in this budget, we have not allowed for any projects which are specifically employment related. We believe the impact of the whole budget is the best medicine for a falling employment situation because it is designed to promote vigorous development of the Northern Territory across the board rather than raise artificial schemes, not that the schemes mentioned in the 1980 Appropriation Bill were in any way artificial.

I point out to honourable members such an Appropriation Bill, or mini-budget as it is often called, is usually brought down by governments for a specific

reason not just to change the philosophical direction of the budget during the course of the year. By the end of the year there are many items of overexpenditure and underexpenditure on any budget, and estimates change. The reason that mini-budgets are brought down - or supplementary Appropriation Bills - is usually to distribute additional, unexpected income.

The honourable member for Sanderson said we had spent about \$400 000 on special projects such as urban beautification. That served the practical purpose of making the place a bit prettier as well as employing people who were not necessarily permanent public servants. People engaged in beautification programs are often day-labour workers who are not necessarily permanent staff. Certainly, it is very helpful to them. I can inform the honourable member that those programs are indeed continuing. They were not a one-off exercise. Although \$390 000 was spent in the financial year 1979-80 on such programs, the allocation for urban beautification throughout the Territory in this budget is over \$1m. We have in fact, trebled or quadrupled the amount of money going into these programs.

The Conservation Commission appropriation allows for continuing landscape and development works at Holmes Jungle and Casuarina Beach, rehabilitation on the Todd River and the second stage of the Darwin Botanical Gardens Development Project. Further urban beautification work is proposed along several Darwin streets; for example, Smith Street west, McMinn Street, McMillans Road and Bagot Road. For Alice Springs, including the Undoolya Road buffer strip, there will be assistance in landscaping the showgrounds and the Heavitree Gap interchange. In cooperation with the Katherine Town Council, the urban beautification program is being extended there this year. Extension services to provide tree-planting assistance to Aboriginal communities will also be increased and the commission has just appointed a full-time extension officer to provide tree-planting advice to remote communities in the southern region.

Mr Speaker, this indicates to honourable members that the schemes the member for Sanderson was talking of are not only continued, but they are continued on a vastly increased scale - well over \$1m this year.

The honourable member said one sour point she found in the budget was the massive concession to casino operators through the reduction in the tax liability which was to have been imposed this year. She did not give the whole of the story which is not surprising because it is not quite as bad as she led us to believe. If I recall correctly, in the first year of operation of the Alice Springs Casino, the arrangement for government revenue was that we would get a flat \$100 000 from a combination of taxation and licence fees. Established in the casino licence agreement was the fact that, after year one, a tax on gross profits of 15% would apply. As I mentioned in the budget speech, the government, for various reasons, reduced that tax liability from 15% to 5%. In fact, that 5% will still return to the Territory 50% more than we received last year from the casino operation in Alice Springs. We expect in the vicinity of \$150 000 which will more than cover the government's casino inspectorate operation in Alice Springs. Certainly, we want to do that at least.

The honourable member did not mention as I did in the budget speech that the company not only had difficulties in cost overruns of building the casino and hotel originally but had also undertaken to the government to commence the construction of further, high-standard accommodation units in Alice Springs adjacent to the casino during the course of the financial year. The honourable member said that this was a massive concession to casino operators but I do not believe it was. She seemed to purvey the view that casinos were brought to the Northern Territory for their revenue-producing capacity for the government. That was not the case. The government made it clear many times during the

casino debate that the taxation to be received from casinos was a small part of the benefits we saw them bringing to the Northern Territory. Indeed, when you consider the gross government revenue received from casinos in the Northern Territory vis-a-vis the size of the Territory budget, you can see the factor involved is fairly small. To say it was lost money is quite wrong except in the sense that, when the government reduced payroll tax from 5%, the usual figure in Australia, to 4½% a couple of years ago, that was lost money as well. I think it is the wrong way to express it. However, the opposition will use whatever opportunity it can.

The question of unemployment raised by the member for Sanderson was addressed by the Chief Minister. I wish simply to add that, as has been said many times in the Assembly, when considering the unemployment situation in the Northern Territory, one must consider the fact that the unemployment factor across Australia is an extremely mobile one. I think most people will accept that. There are times of the year when the north is certainly far more attractive than the south, particularly to the unemployed. Additionally, perhaps there is a belief down south that the north is moving a little better economically than the south, and perhaps there is a better chance of picking up a job here than there is south. I have always regarded these claims with great scepticism. Our local unemployment figures, as announced from time to time, have demonstrated a very fluctuating permanent workforce in the Northern Territory. As the Chief Minister said, the thing to watch is the job creation rate not the unemployment rate.

Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Victoria River - in one of the most disgraceful performances I think most members have seen in this Assembly and if ever there was a case for broadcasting the proceedings of the Assembly I guess that was it - obviously did not put a great deal of thought into what he was saying. He said that the Northern Territory government had, in this budget, absolutely and totally overlooked one third of Territorians. Of course, he was referring to the Aboriginal population and claimed that we had simply ignored them. Quite clearly he has paid no regard whatsoever to the tens of millions of dollars which this government, in addition to other governments and the federal government, apply to budgetary processes, through the public service and through statutory authorities, to assist Aboriginals in their advancement - tens of millions of dollars. He did not offer one suggestion as to how those funds should be redirected to assist Aboriginals in better ways. We would be happy to learn of them. Governments are very pleased to hear from anyone who claims he has answers to the very difficult problems that face the community and Aboriginals in their plight. Obviously we are doing what we feel should be done. We are happy to hear from others with different views.

To just expand a little on the point made by my colleague, the Minister for Transport and Works, one of the ways we assist Aboriginals is by having them undertake all work in their area that it is believed they can carry out themselves. Indeed, contrary to normal government policy that all public works should be tendered for the interests of the taxpayers, I sign certificates of inexpediency weekly to allow jobs worth hundreds of thousands of dollars to be awarded directly to Aboriginal groups; that is, to give a job straight to an Aboriginal group where the Department of Transport and Works has provided a certificate saying that it believes there is the capacity within that group to undertake the work or at least most of it. No doubt, part of this work is subcontracted out, particularly where expertise is required. But that is just one example. No doubt it costs the taxpayers because some of that work could be done more cheaply. However, it is this government's policy to help where it can with employment in these areas. Quite clearly, there is virtually no prospect of any real sustained employment other than through government works. I believe it is irresponsible to accuse the government of totally ignoring one third of the population of the Territory.

Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Sanderson became quite tied up with capital works spending. In the first press release she put out after the budget was introduced, she claimed that the capital works program had fallen from \$98.3m to \$98m. In fact, both figures were wrong. Last year the program involved \$89.3m not \$98.3m. So she was only \$10m out. The program for the current year is \$98.1m. That figure is about \$10m up this year on last year. It is in fact wrong to look at a specific capital works program within even the largest department, the Department of Transport and Works, and use that as a real guide to the amount of government works being placed out in the community. One must take into account the work of all the statutory authorities, the major projects in the NT by the Commonwealth government as well as the private sector which initiates projects exceeding \$30m. When one considers the impact of the capital works program on the amount of work going into the community in the Northern Territory, it is somewhat false just to take a single department and its capital works program. To accurately compare 1 year to the last, one would have to do a great deal of arithmetic. However, I can assure honourable members that the level of work that is available under this budget from this government in the Northern Territory is as high as it has ever been. In fact, it is obviously higher. We have certainly never spent as much money as we spend today.

The honourable member for MacDonnell as usual went on at some considerable length. It was quite impossible to follow the figures that he was using in the first part of his speech. Before I speak a little about housing and the loans scheme, I noticed in evidence provided to me following the Victorian budget which was introduced not very long ago by the new socialist government of that state that the Victorian government made great play about its housing expenditure going up by 82% over the previous year, which indeed is a massive increase. However, the expenditure went to \$321m or a per capita figure of \$80. In the Northern Territory, we are spending \$118m on housing which is a per capita figure of \$915 or 10 times that which the Victorian government is prepared to put into housing.

Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell continued on the wrong tack that he began in the last sittings when commenting on the loans scheme. He made a great fuss about the fact that last year's estimates for the government Home Loans Scheme were not completely taken up by applicants and how he considered it to be a maladministration outrage that we actually had funds left over at the end of the year. He obviously believes that the government should set aside a certain sum of money and then design a set of criteria that would allow sufficient people to apply for that money so that it would all be used. Well, this government does not see it that way. We would see the boot on the other foot. The first thing to do is to determine eligibility for people to apply for a government loan then set aside what is estimated as sufficient funds to cover all the applicants who will come forward in that particular year. Of course, it is very difficult to estimate these things a year ahead because there are so many variables. We are doing the same as we did last year; that is, setting aside sufficient funds to service all the applicants who come forward for a loan. One thing we have always been adamant about is that the government will not reject applicants for want of funds. If more applicants come forward than there are funds allocated for in this budget, then additional funds will be found from wherever so that applicants are not rejected. Surely that is the principal point we should be concerned with here instead of the tack taken by the opposition: if you have any money left over, just bend all your rules at the last minute and do not let it stay there so that other people, who formerly were not eligible, should suddenly become eligible. Never mind the inequities that might occur. We are advised to get rid of every last dollar otherwise we will be criticised.

The honourable member also proposed that perhaps we should cut the scheme at the top level and not assist the rich, and then add to the bottom level of the scheme. That obviously is an option which the ALP would probably introduce if we were ever unfortunate enough for it to come to power. It certainly seems to fit its philosophy very well. As I explained this morning, we have scaled the scheme so that the people at the very top of the income scale are entitled to \$25 000 not \$50 000. They are entitled to that at 12.5% not 4%.

The honourable member went on at great length about the number of houses which were supposed to be built last year in various centres - commencements which did not quite commence. We had a quick search to determine where he found his figures but we did not do very well. I think perhaps he invented a few of them. Katherine was one. He said that there were something like 59 proposed commencements for Katherine last year and only 12 actually started. I am advised that, for last year, we proposed the commencement of 40 houses in Katherine under the general public scheme and 41 were commenced, one more than we proposed. Under the NTPS scheme, 10 were to be commenced and 10 were commenced. So we commenced one house more than we promised to build in Katherine. The member claimed that we were 30 or 40 short. If he was that wrong about Katherine, I guess he would have been that wrong about most of the other areas he mentioned. He asked why, if Darwin has only about a 3 times larger population than Alice Springs, on this year's figures we are building 4 times the houses in Darwin than we are building in Alice Springs. On the face of it, it could appear that an inequity existed.

However, in developing a construction program for houses throughout the Northern Territory and trying to maintain equity in estimates where one can, the Housing Commission has many more factors to take into consideration than simply the population difference. In addition to population growth, there is the nature of the population growth. Honourable members would be aware that, other than public servants, the general public housing program does not house single people in the Northern Territory. If a significant component of population growth in any centre was single people, obviously that would bear on decisions on how many houses it would build. Specific requirements for specific projects such as possible defence upgradings or the opening up of the major projects which could have a specific impact on the housing situation in any area are taken into consideration.

The number of people on waiting lists is very important. The waiting lists in various centres can vary markedly. In some centres, there is a much greater vacancy rate, as the Housing Commission calls it, than in other centres. You could not base a building program simply on the number of the people on the waiting lists because people may be reaching the top of one waiting list far more rapidly than any other waiting list. I am sure there is a significant difference between Darwin and Alice Springs in that regard. The amount of private accommodation available also has a bearing.

The aim is to achieve some parity between waiting times in all centres. It is a matter of weighing up the issues. As an illustration, I am advised that current waiting times for 1-bedroom units in Darwin is 18 months and, in Alice Springs, 14 months. One can obtain accommodation in that category more quickly in Alice Springs than Darwin despite the construction program. The waiting time for 2-bedroom units in Darwin is 10 months and in Alice Springs also 10 months. For 3-bedroom units, the waiting time is 12 months in both places. This would tend to indicate that the past practice of the Housing Commission has been relatively on target.

It is also interesting to note that, for 3-bedroom houses, there are 4 times as many people on the waiting list in Darwin than there are in Alice Springs.

However, Alice Springs has one third of Darwin's population. That is an example of the sort of inequity that can creep in by taking the bald view the honourable member did.

The member for Nhulunbuy obviously had not listened to the budget speech and I do not blame him. I guess it was a bit long and boring. Obviously, he had not read his papers afterwards either. The votes for salary increases during the present financial year are entirely within the Treasurer's Advance and I made some play of that in the budget speech. He need not be concerned that the police or fire brigade or anyone else will not be paid. He could have saved us all a lot of time.

The member for Nhulunbuy was also concerned about an item which should have been included in the budget speech. I refer to 4 blocks of land which were recently acquired by the Housing Commission in Nhulunbuy and programmed to have 8 flats and 3 or 4 houses built on them. These are in the Housing Commission's program although they are probably not listed separately. That is an oversight which is unfortunate. A press release was issued on this matter a couple of weeks ago.

The honourable member for Millner suggested that tradesmen be registered. Whilst that may look a very easy way to solve some problems, I am afraid that the registration of tradesmen would create enormous problems for the bureaucracy in any government. You do not simply stop at registering boilermaker-welders, refrigeration mechanics or whatever. Where do you stop? The size of the bureaucracy necessary to monitor such traders would be almost absurd. The registration of tradesmen to ensure that they have appropriate qualifications really does not bear enormously on the quality of work that is done or the prices that are charged. The tradesmen who are able to operate out of the back of a utility can have quite a significant effect on more established businesses. The prices you get from people operating out of the back of a utility are certainly far more attractive than some of the prices that have been demanded in Darwin in past years. There are also quite a number of people who are not tradesmen but who have reputations for quality work in excess of most tradesmen in their own particular field.

Certainly, the government is anxious to encourage the employment of more and more apprentices. We have tried different schemes to assist in this matter and so has the Commonwealth. In some cases, these schemes have done more harm than good. They have meant that some unscrupulous employers have worked the scheme to put people on and off entirely at their whim in order to pick up government contracts. We are still trying to work out a truly equitable system which will indeed encourage employers to put on and maintain apprentices.

The matter of planning devolution does not seem to have much to do with a budget but the honourable member for Millner raised it. Local government has a very clear statement of this government's attitude to the devolution of planning and building powers. It was spelt out in a long letter from myself to the local government association a month or two ago. After giving detailed reasons, I said: 'Not now'. There should be no confusion whatsoever. Since that time, we have held talks on the matter with the city council here.

The honourable member said that we arbitrarily picked a figure and said to the local government that that is all it could have for roads. The local government councils have made great play about not getting a fair deal from the present system of road grants. I can assure them that they are very wrong and have so assured them in correspondence. Be it miles of road in the municipality, standard of roads or numbers of vehicles, there is no formula that

they can produce that will not show that the Northern Territory local government groups are getting more under the Northern Territory distribution of road grants than any local government area in Australia. They think that, if they keep badgering us in the press, we will buckle and give them more funds. They have to learn to demonstrate a case for more funds, the same as we have to do when we go back to the Commonwealth on these matters. Local governments will have to come to grips with some of the hard decisions in changing their budgetary directions. That is part of their problem. It is difficult to sit down with a budget proposal that does not make ends meet and start working it so that it does make ends meet. You have to make some very unpalatable decisions at times. Local governments are no different from other bodies. If they want more money for roads, they can find it at a cost to other projects.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Appropriations for divisions 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 25 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 30:

Mrs LAWRIE: Mr Chairman, I listened very closely to the Minister for Transport and Works and some of the comments he made in reply to suggestions and perhaps implicit criticism which I have of his government. I would suggest to him that he and his colleague, the Minister for Education, get together some time so that the Minister for Education can tell the Minister for Transport and Works how the apprenticeship system works because the Minister for Transport and Works does not seem to have much idea. For that matter, neither does the Treasurer.

The honourable Minister for Transport and Works foreshadowed, as I had, the scheme whereby his department would take on first-year apprentices with the idea of farming them out to private enterprise for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th years of their indentures. It is a pity the honourable minister had not read what I said yesterday because I was speaking in defence of private enterprise which at the moment is in a slump. Unless he can be assured that the necessary private enterprise position will be forthcoming, his first-year scheme will not have the validity which he feels that it should have and which he has recommended in this debate.

I also bring to the attention of the committee the honourable minister's statement that his department has cut back on the training of young Territorians because it cannot guarantee all of them a job. I bring to the attention of the committee that it has never been my government department's contention that it shall ensure continuity of employment. All that has been said is that these government departments will train the young people to trade qualifications. They may or may not remain with the department depending upon the availability of a position. However, having obtained a trade qualification, they are better able to enter the workforce.

I have raised this again in committee because I feel strongly that it is a pity the Minister for Transport and Works, whose department has a large intake, could be so ill-advised as not to understand his own department's policy on the matter. I would have thought that, as minister, he was setting the policy. I say to him again that it has never offered permanent employment. It takes on the young lads on contract for 4 years. It is an excellent scheme and one which benefits private industry. I am making a plea for that excellent scheme to continue.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Chairman, the honourable member for Nightcliff was not listening when I said that we were looking at a proposal whereby the Department of Transport and Works picks up the cost of training an apprentice for 12 months. It would not pick him up and run with him for that 12 months unless there was a guarantee of a job with an employer for the second and third year and, in some cases, even the fourth year. I am aware that the honourable Minister for Education has responsibility for the Industries Training Commission. Whatever we do would be in consultation with the Industries Training Commission.

As I said earlier, we are looking at this proposal because, in 1980, the Department of Transport and Works had 20 apprentices; in 1981, 30; in 1982, 15; and, in 1983, possibly only 9 or 10. Now, I am aware of it and the honourable member for Nightcliff is aware of it. The reason why we are not going to have a large intake at this moment is because the Department of Transport and Works, over the last 3 years, has been shifting much of its responsibility to private industry. We are hopeful that the private sector will pick up a further lot of apprentices. The first year is the most expensive to any employer because he is not 100% sure whether an apprentice will finish the first year, or even the second year. There is return from a first-year apprentice because most of his time is spent at the Industries Training Commission or even at the community college. It is not spent on the floor as the honourable member for Nightcliff makes out.

Mrs Lawrie: You ought to talk to your colleagues before you make comments like that.

Mr DONDAS: At the same time we do foresee that there is a problem. There will be some school leavers in 1982 who will be looking for employment in industry and we are trying to help them as well as the others whom we will be taking on.

Mr LEO: Mr Speaker, my question to the honourable Minister for Transport and Works is to do with the receipts in Budget Paper No 2 on page 8. There is an item under 'Other Revenue' called 'Other'. Last year the return was \$1.152m. This year it is \$150 000. There has been a drop of \$1m. I wonder if he could explain what that 'Other' involves and why it has dropped.

Mr DONDAS: Just very quickly. I think that the \$1m the honourable member is talking about is funds that we originally were to get from the Tertiary Education Council for construction of some of the TAFE Institutions and that money was not forthcoming this year. I will find out and provide that information to the honourable member at a later date. I vaguely remember that the \$1m was not forthcoming this year because there were other avenues of funding for it.

Appropriation for division 30 agreed to.

Appropriations for divisions 40 and 41 agreed to.

Appropriations for divisions 42 and 43 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 44:

Mr B. COLLINS: I rise simply to indicate to the honourable Minister for Education that I have some 30 detailed questions on this division none of which are more important than the others. I simply wanted to say to the minister that I will write to him with the list of these questions. I do not think it is appropriate to ask 15 questions in 2 cracks in the committee stage. I will

write to him and, if necessary, depending on the answers, take the matter up at the next sittings. I would like to thank the honourable Minister for Primary Production for the answers that he gave me in his reply to the questions raised in that aspect of my speech.

Appropriation for division 44 agreed to.

Appropriations for divisions 46, 47, 48 and 49 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 50 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 51:

Mr LEO: My question is in relation to receipts on page 4 under the heading 'Lotteries'. There has been a drop of some 65%. Would that be the result of the introduction of the Territory Sports Lotto? If not, would the minister indicate why there has been an anticipated drop in revenue?

Mr PERRON: As I recall, the reason for the apparent discrepancy is that the funds from Sports Lotto will be shown as revenue for the Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation. Therefore, the figure here is in fact for lotteries other than Sports Lotto and Instant Money games.

Appropriation for division 51 agreed to.

Appropriations for division 52 and 53 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 55:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I have one question of the Minister for Lands and Housing. It concerns revenue from land sales. There has been a dramatic drop of about \$15m to about \$6m in there revenue anticipated from land sales. Could he please explain.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, this in fact reflects the success of the government's move towards private enterprise in the subdivisational field. The situation in the past was that the government was virtually the only subdivider of urban land in the Northern Territory and sold almost all the raw land available. What has evolved over the past few years is that the government sells land through the Housing Commission in fairly large quantities to private developers to build houses on. The government has less land to sell each year, which is quite understandable. It results from the fact that we are no longer subdividing land. Of course, there is a corresponding reduction in the allocations for land turn off, which used to be very high. Nowadays, the private developers pay for that; we pay for the land.

Appropriation for division 55 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 56:

Mr BELL: Mr Chairman, I would like to make a comment on the allocation for the Housing Commission. In my second-reading speech I mentioned that the allocation for the Home Loans Scheme in 1981-82 came to some \$26m. It was made up of some \$21m that had actually been spent and another \$5.45m left unspent. So the allocation for 1981-82 was clearly in the vicinity of \$26m. I am concerned - and I do not believe the minister explained his reasons in his second-reading speech - why, out of some \$69m allocated in division 56, less than \$24m was being budgeted for the Home Loans Scheme for 1982-83.

Mr PERRON: As the honourable member said, although \$26m was allocated in last year's appropriation, about \$21m was actually drawn down by people taking the loan. This year we are providing more funds than were actually drawn down last year, even though we are not providing as much funds as were allocated. Clearly, last year we overestimated the allocation.

Appropriation for division 56 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 57 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 60 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 62:

Mrs O'NEIL: Mr Chairman, as I indicated in my second-reading speech, I am interested in the Minister for Health's comments on some variations in the grants-in-aid for health services. In the past, it has been the practice in the explanations to the Department of Health appropriations to provide some details as to grants-in-aid. Since this is not available at the moment, I would ask the minister if he could explain some substantial expenditures of last year which have not been repeated this year. I refer particularly to \$19 000 to the Handicapped Persons Association last year, \$25 000 to the Missionary Franciscan Sisters last year, and a substantial sum of \$90 000 for old timers in Alice Springs for which there is no equivalent this year. It could well have been that they have been transferred to another department. I would appreciate an explanation.

There are also some allocations to new organisations this year which have not been mentioned in the past. One particularly comes to mind: St Marys Child and Family Welfare Service - \$55 000. Perhaps the minister could explain to the committee what is the intended purpose of this grant.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the honourable member did give me notice yesterday on this matter and I am grateful for that. There are explanations for the points that she has raised. Mr Speaker, I think the honourable member said yesterday that she was concerned that there was a slight drop in this year's expenditure. Indeed, there is a slight drop in the allocation. But, overall, the amounts allocated to those people who have previously received money have in the main increased.

The honourable member just touched on the organisations which will not be receiving funds this year. The Handicapped Persons Association is now funded by the Department of Community Development. The Missionary Franciscan Sisters operation has moved from Tennant Creek to Western Australia. There is no funding for that. Also, there is funding to the Church of Christ the King in Tennant Creek which received a one-off grant of \$70 000 to establish the Little Sisters of the Poor, an alcohol and detoxification group in Tennant Creek. That was paid last year and will not recur again this year. Also, last year the department paid the sum of \$251 000 to the Old Timers' Home in Alice Springs which was an expenditure that we picked up because the Department of Social Security had failed to assist the old timers. I am happy to say that the Commonwealth Department of Social Security is now doubling the level of activity at the Old Timers' Home in Alice Springs. That amount of \$251 000 will not show again in this year's expenditure because it will not be required.

Mr Chairman, for the honourable members' benefit, I would make the point that, this year, the isolated nursing staff received an additional \$37 000; Guide Dogs for the Blind, an additional \$20 000; the Forster Foundation, an extra \$15 000; Amity House, an additional \$8000; and the Northern Territory

Spastic Association, which is now being sponsored by my colleague, will receive an additional amount but I cannot comment on how much it is. The Salvation Army Sunrise Centre will receive an additional \$12 000; the Women's Community House in Alice Springs an additional \$8000; the Downs Syndrome Association of the Northern Territory, an additional \$8000; and the St Mary's Child and Family Welfare Home in Alice Springs, about which the honourable member made special mention, is to receive \$55 000 this year from the Department of Health.

St Mary's has assumed the responsibilities from the Department of Health for the care and welfare of disabled and incapacitated children. Formerly, these children were accommodated in the Alice Springs Hospital, clearly not a proper environment for those children. St Mary's provides a very good environment off the main road at the top of Alice Springs. The department believes that the assistance the children will receive at St Mary's is something that we should be very pleased about and we have no qualms about contributing the money to St Mary's on this occasion.

The Darwin Halfway House for Alcoholics and Drug Addicts is to receive a first-time grant of \$76 000; the Kiwanis Association in Katherine, an organisation dear to the Speaker's heart, \$47 000; the Katherine Alcohol and Drug Association, \$42 000; the Angurugu Council, \$5000; and the Alice Springs Spastic Centre, which I believe conducts activities for spastic children on behalf of the Department of Health, will receive \$61 000 as a first-time grant. The new nursing home in Tennant Creek, while it is sponsored by the Uniting Church, will also receive a first-time grant of \$42 000 for its care of the aged. They were the points the honourable member raised yesterday that I just wanted to mention.

There were a couple of points made by the honourable member for Nightcliff and I am happy to cover them now. The honourable member raised the point of health screening in schools and that will be addressed in a paper I will table tomorrow. It will need further discussion throughout the community. The member mentioned her concern that Darwin's dietetics service had been reduced. The information I have received is that, since the creation of the new Katherine region, full-time dietitian, Mrs Hobson, has moved to Katherine to provide dietetic advice in that region. Two full-time dietitians are serving the Darwin region and I am advised there is no problem there. At the Darwin Hospital, there are normally 2 full-time dietitians. However, at present, 1 is on leave and has, in fact, resigned. The hospital is actively recruiting to fill this position. I am advised that, to recruit dietitians is not that easy. Nevertheless, the hospital will keep trying.

Mr Chairman, the honourable member for Fannie Bay raised the matter of Aboriginal health and expressed her concern that she could not see any figures in the budget covering this area. A note I have from the department says that funds have been allocated under the Aboriginal Health Division to cover the redeployment of 81 persons to the Katherine Institute for Aboriginal Health. In conjunction with this redeployment, administrative funds of \$278,000 have been transferred from the regions to the institute. A further \$300 000 has been allocated to the Aboriginal Health Division over and above operational expenses for the purpose of further developing Aboriginal preventative health and other activities.

Mr Chairman, I think that covers the points that honourable members raised with me yesterday. If there were any others, they might remind me of them.

Mr DOOLAN: Mr Chairman, I would just like to ask who is now funding the Little Sisters in Katherine who look after Aboriginal people?

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, my understanding is that the Little Sisters in Katherine and in Tennant Creek do not accept operational contributions from government or from anyone else. They fund themselves although, from time to time, they are happy to receive establishment assistance in peculiar circumstances.

Appropriation for division 62 agreed to.

Appropriations for divisions 63, 64, 65, 66, 67 and 68 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 70:

Mrs O'NEIL: Mr Chairman, as I think I indicated in the second reading, I requested information from the Minister for Community Development regarding the dollar-for-dollar and special grants to local authorities which are outlined in division 70 of the budget. Is that information available? I would also be interested to know the details of the grants-in-aid under the arts and cultural affairs section of his department's budget.

Mr ROBERTSON: Mr Speaker, I think perhaps, with the honourable member's concurrence and for the sake of the committee, it would be better to deal with this in the manner suggested by the Leader of the Opposition. I know that my colleague, the honourable Minister for Health, was able to detail the grants-in-aid there. I think it is useful information for this Assembly to have complete details of all welfare grants-in-aid as well as those for cultural affairs. I think it would be best if I tabled the information at the next sittings by which time I can have it all prepared. I might say on the dollar-for-dollar subsidy scheme to local government, Mr Chairman, that there is no fixed figure. There is a notional figure against that. It is then a matter for negotiation between each individual town or city corporation and the government as to those dollar-for-dollar schemes which will be admitted. I think that local government ought to recognise that such schemes or projects ought not normally be the responsibility of local corporations but are nonetheless desirable to the local corporations and the government.

For the information of the committee, we are at this moment reviewing the procedures of recommendation for dollar-for-dollar subsidy schemes. Certainly, I will keep the Assembly informed as to how that develops. The grants for the councils themselves are self-explanatory in the documents. If there is any further information the honourable member for Fannie Bay wishes, I will most certainly be pleased to provide it.

Appropriation for division 70 agreed to.

Appropriation for division 71 agreed to.

Remainder of the bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

In Assembly:

Bill reported; report adopted.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, as I ran out of time in the second-reading, I would like to take this opportunity to give credit to the officers of the Department of the Treasury and also finance officers, in particular, throughout all the government departments and statutory authorities - and the Government Printer of course - who have put a great deal of effort into the preparation of this budget. They do so in the preparation of all budgets.

Few people realise the amount of additional effort that is required during the final budgetary process. Quite a number of officers work right through weekends, weekend after weekend, and also spend many long hours at their desks after hours, day upon day, to try to boil down the massive amount of paperwork to the few documents we have before us today. With the explanatory notes, of course, it is quite a pile. When one considers the background information that must be produced every year before these documents can be tabled in the Assembly—all the sums must be crosschecked and the whole thing has to balance — there is an enormous amount of work. I pay credit to those officers who without complaint perform this arduous task every year.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 244)

Continued from 2 September 1982.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, whilst the majority of the amendments to the principal act contained in this bill are mechanical, there is one major amendment to the Electoral Act: the increase in the number of seats — and therefore the number of members of the Legislative Assembly — from 19 to 25, an increase of 6 seats. I will spend some time in the second-reading discussing that particular aspect of the bill before us.

Mr Speaker, the opposition indicates that it is opposed to the provision in clause 10 which aims to abolish the practice established under section 57 of the principal act whereby postal votes are sent automatically to eligible voters who request them. The opposition strongly supported the introduction of the mobile polling booth system. As was discovered by the ANU team which researched the last elections, by and large, they worked remarkably well. I would be interested to have some further elucidation from the Chief Minister as to why he considers this particular change necessary.

In respect of this matter, I would like to say that a reference to the record of elections in the Northern Territory does not show that postal votes favour the Australian Labor Party in the Territory across the whole of the electorate and so it is certainly not for any partisan reason that I raise this matter. For example, in my own electorate, as the Chief Minister would know, the majority of the people living away from the major communities are now covered very effectively by mobile polling booths. Automatic postal votes apply very largely to pastoral properties these days. The reason that I raise it is that this change in the Northern Territory's electoral legislation would appear to have more relevance to places other than the Northern Territory. When one travels around the Northern Territory — and I know that the Chief Minister does so — one of the things that is constantly brought home is the difficulty of communicating from isolated areas. It is a real hassle. Principals of small schools and various other people engaged in a great deal of correspondence tell me the hassles they have with correspondence and the problems with communication. It seems to me quite unnecessary to saddle people in the Territory's isolated communities with an unnecessary burden.

I do not think that it can be demonstrated — certainly I have never claimed so — that there have been any gross abuses of the system of automatic postal voting in the Northern Territory. If there were, they have largely been removed by the introduction of mobile polling booths. This seems to be an unnecessary imposition considering that, as the Chief Minister knows, many of these places are so far from the action. Quite often, it comes home to you when you thought-

lessly say to somebody in one of these very small communities out in the bush: 'You may have noticed the other day in the NT News so-and-so'. Of course, he looks at you and says: 'Look, we see the NT News once every 6 weeks'. To a very large degree, things like elections pass these people by. Receiving an automatic postal vote form has for them the same beneficial effect as receiving a motor registration form in the mail has for me. Without it, my motor vehicle would never be reregistered. If it was left to me to remember when the registration was due, it would never be registered. It is very handy to receive that little slip in the mail which says that it is time to reregister my car.

That is precisely the kind of beneficial effect that automatic postal votes have on people in the bush. A form arrives in the mail and they know they have to fill it out and send it in. If it is a question of remembering some weeks before the election to sit down and pen a letter to the Electoral Office asking for a postal vote, that does not reflect the realities of the Territory's isolated communities in 1982. It is a real hassle for people in the bush to have to do things like that. It has not been demonstrated by the Chief Minister that there have been exposed in the Northern Territory any gross abuses of the automatic system. In fact, I know there have not been.

A reference to the records will show that there certainly could be no partisan reason for the opposition raising this question. I can remember a couple of federal elections where it was because of the postal votes that we were nipped at the post. I was present at the scrutiny when that happened. While keeping in mind the overriding consideration of keeping the system honest, the primary aim should be to provide every eligible elector in the Northern Territory with the opportunity to cast a valid note.

I still remember conversations I had with professional presiding officers who were appointed by the Electoral Office, some from as far away as Sydney, for the last Northern Territory elections. It was commented on again by the ANU team that the regulations governing voting should be interpreted and practised in such a way that people who are eligible to cast a valid vote in the Northern Territory should be given the maximum assistance by the system for them to cast a vote for the candidate of their choice. Surely that is the purpose of our whole electoral legislation. In my view, this places a quite unnecessary burden on people to whom correspondence is already a burden. I suggest that the same benefits in the voting system should continue to be provided to those people as the Motor Registry office provides to us for the registration of our motor cars.

These people do not get the NT News, the ABC or the commercial channel. In many places, they cannot receive ABC transmissions. Until the short wave service starts, they will not be able to. All of these things pass them by. They should not have to think: 'It's election time; I must write to the Electoral Office for a postal vote'. We will be opposing the introduction of that system because we do not think it is relevant to the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, we consider the provision in clause 18 of this bill to amend section 85(9) of the principal act weakens the existing prohibition against the display of candidate and party propaganda inside polling places. I am very disturbed to see this change in legislation. It is unnecessary and it is also unwise. To quote one example, we are all aware of the T-shirts that are produced by all of the major parties and candidates in elections. They are bright yellow with black letters and they generally have such things as 'Vote 1 Bloggs ALP' on the front and back. They have always been prohibited, and rightly so, inside the polling booth where people are waiting to vote. People are not allowed to wear that sort of clothing inside polling booths yet this change to the Electoral Act will make it possible. The voters will be able to wear these things. Everybody knows that that will happen.

We already have the nonsense of how-to-vote cards. I have said what I think about how-to-vote cards over the years and of the forests that must be cut down all over the world in order to provide reams of them to be thrown on the floor immediately afterwards. I still remember a local government election where there was a line of 18 people who thrust these things in your face. You ended up with a carrier bag full of how-to-vote cards which you then threw in the rubbish bin. As well as that nonsense, we will now have parties and candidates organising not just their how-to-vote reams but also voters. They will say: 'You will vote at 1 o'clock. You will vote a 8.15 and you will vote at 8.30'. At any one time in the polling booth, you will have somebody standing in there with a T-shirt saying: 'Vote 1 CLP' or 'Vote 1 ALP'. That will be the practical effect of this amendment. I know the CLP will do it first and we will have to do it to keep up. It is not my idea; it is the government's legislation. I am quite happy to take bets on that happening. We oppose that. It is not appropriate that that sort of stuff be worn inside polling booths by anybody and that party propaganda be displayed in any manner whatever in the place where people actually vote.

Mr Speaker, we oppose the major provision of this bill which will enlarge the Assembly from 19 to 25 members. We will continue to oppose it even though I will take bets on the outcome of the vote now. I want to reiterate the opposition that the Labor Party has to this proposal. Measured by the number of voters, the Legislative Assembly constituencies in the Northern Territory are already by a mile the smallest lower house electorates in Australia. There are wide disparities in enrolments in particular electorates and the current boundaries of some electorates fail to take account of community interest criteria. We are not persuaded that it is necessary to create 6 new electorates to overcome these problems.

Notwithstanding the population growth in the Northern Territory, it is difficult for me to see that the existing workload in these electorates warrants the addition of another 6 parliamentarians. I have said before that I think the Northern Territory has just about as many politicians as the market will stand at the moment. I do not think that the quality of legislation will be any better and the degree of service that is provided to our constituents will be any better by the provision of these 6 extra members. It will simply cost a lot more.

I will argue with anyone the point raised by the Chief Minister about increasing the quality by increasing the quantity. I know what the situation is in Australia and it is echoed in Westminster systems around the world. There is massive evidence available in England, which has a very large parliament, of how the breakup works. There are numerous political treatises on the Westminster system which establish that the quality of parliamentarians depends far more on the preselection processes of the 2 major political parties than it does on the result of the elections. It does not matter whether we have 19 members in the Legislative Assembly or 25. We will obviously have more members from whom to choose our Cabinet - 3 more because, to win government, a majority of 13 will be required instead of 10. As I say again, the major problem in the quality of parliamentarians lies in the candidate selection methods that are used by the 2 major parties.

There is no need for additional members and I know that we do not require any additional ministers; 6 are enough and will be for the foreseeable future. In this context, the achievement of good government is not constrained by the demands upon ministers. Rather, it is handicapped currently by the failure of the existing ministry in the Northern Territory to make proper use of its controls and the public service.

Recently, a senior Northern Territory public servant, one in a long list, resigned. I do not know whether he jumped or whether he was pushed; I think the consensus is that he was pushed because of disagreements he had with one Northern Territory minister. I am not singling anyone out for personal criticism on this but he is certainly one in a long line. One of the observations made in the study done on the Northern Territory's Cabinet, 'Team at the Top', is that this extraordinary turnover of senior public servants is not good for good government. I thought that was a fairly restrained statement and I would agree with it.

I am not going to say that Mr X was a good bloke and should not have gone. I have not done that. What I say is that, if these people are not doing their jobs properly to the extent that they cannot remain in those positions because they do not see eye to eye with the minister, there is something grossly wrong with the selection processes being used by this government to choose those people. It is not just 6 well-paid ministers and a well-paid Leader of the Opposition; it is a large army of well-paid senior executive officers.

Everyone knows that the public service is a different ball game these days. We need corporate managerial people in the Northern Territory Public Service. They have to be very good. Perhaps you could blame somebody if the selections had been made by a previous government but the appointments have been made by this government. This extraordinary turnover of senior public servants in the Northern Territory at the very least must make people comment - and it does - that, if these people are so inefficient or incompatible with their ministers, there is something wrong with the selection processes which are being used by this government because it does not bear comparison elsewhere in Australia.

Mr Purcell said very recently: 'I believe that government ministers can fulfil their responsibilities with their present workload but I believe that they will have to learn to delegate and trust their public servants more. They will have to learn the rudiments of being leaders and managers and that is something that comes with experience'. There have been 5 years for them to gain that experience. However, and I am the first one to agree that that has not happened because this government has had a paranoid obsession - probably because of its smallness - with retaining control of everything to the point of almost checking requisitions for paperclips.

I will say something, which I have said before, about how that demonstrates itself to me in a very positive way. It varies from minister to minister. We have protocol imposed on us by the government with which I am happy to comply but, certainly, as Chief Minister for the Northern Territory, I would never want to impose it on anyone in my Cabinet. If a member of the ALP Caucus wants a briefing from a Northern Territory public servant, one would expect it to be reasonable that the shadow spokesperson in the Caucus could simply write to the responsible Northern Territory minister and ask for an interview with Mr Smith in his department. What has to happen is that the Caucus member concerned has to approach me and I have to write to the Chief Minister. I have to ask the Chief Minister if the member for Fannie Bay can have a briefing with a public servant who is under the control of another minister.

Only a few weeks ago, we asked for a briefing on some completely innocuous subject and we had an excellent briefing from the Department of Mines and Energy. When we received permission for the briefing, we were told that it would be necessary for one of the ministerial staff to be present. A federal shadow minister, Paul Keating, who has been in parliament for a long time and a very able man indeed, was appalled by that. He could not believe it. He said:

'What is wrong with your senior public servants? Why do they cop rubbish like that? You have a bloke at the head of a department earning \$50 000 a year and he cannot be trusted to discharge a very simple guideline'.

There is one guideline that can be used for briefings of a general nature. I could understand it if it was some highly controversial subject. When it is a general briefing on the mining situation in the Northern Territory, it is ridiculous that a senior public servant cannot simply be trusted to obey a simple guideline. I have heard it reiterated in this Assembly by ministers that briefings are to be conducted using only public government policy. Briefings will not be given on confidential information, information that is controversial or on government policy which is under review by the Cabinet. We do not argue with that. We agree that those restraints are necessary. All we want is public information that we are entitled to as members of the Assembly. However, a senior public servant is placed in the ridiculous position of having a political commissar from the minister's office - in effect, the minister himself because it is a political appointee and not a public servant sitting in the room. There is the unspoken message that everything the public servant says will go straight back to the minister.

If I were a senior executive officer on a very large salary running an entire department, I would be most offended to have that ridiculous check. In a letter I wrote to the Chief Minister, I asked: 'Could I please have a general briefing on the Northern Territory mining industry for the benefit of the federal shadow minister for mines and energy, Paul Keating?' We received a bunch of glossy pictures, a very nice packet of prepared papers and a general chat about what is going on where. It was an excellent briefing yet we had to have a ministerial officer sitting in the room. He was sent by the minister to report back directly. I say that it is an insult to a senior executive.

It is no wonder that there is this incredible strain of dissatisfaction between ministers and senior executives. Not only do the ministers not trust their public servants to have enough good sense and discretion to operate within those very easy guidelines of only discussing public policy, the Chief Minister does not even trust his own ministers to have the discretion to allow those briefings. I have to write to him first and ask him if they have permission to give briefings to my colleagues. We have gone along with that protocol for years and I do not object to it. We will continue to comply with it. I simply point out that it is nonsense for these same people to keep on insisting that they have horrendous workloads. We all have horrendous workloads. If it is too tough and you do not like it, go and do something else. As the Chief Minister often says, if you cannot stand the heat, get out of the kitchen. Do not bitch and whinge about what a hard job it is, how hard you work and how little you see of your families. I have heard it all before and I have done it myself.

Mr Speaker, much is made also of the multiplicity of roles that ministers have to play in departments. There is another fact that is never talked about but it is relevant: these departments are tiny departments. The Minister for Education is responsible for X schools. The Minister for Education in New South Wales, who is looking after the 30 000 schools with the 30 000 sets of problems, has a bigger job that necessarily occupies his full time. I say the workload of ministers in the Northern Territory government is not excessive. I say that it is well compensated and I say we do not need any more than 6 ministers in a Northern Territory government in the foreseeable future. We have 130 000 people. The whole of the Northern Territory is one of the smallest federal electorates in the whole of Australia. There are not many people here. I think we have a good parliament which works well. I do not think 6 additional members will make it work better. I am not convinced of that.

The cost must be considered; it cannot be simply brushed aside. Politicians do not come cheap in the Northern Territory, Mr Speaker, as they do not come cheap anywhere else in Australia, and neither should they. It is not simply the salaries of the politicians which must be considered. It is no good appointing politicians if you do not give them the tools to do the job. It is no good just putting them in there. You have to give them an electorate office and the tools to do the job. You have to give them staff. They have to have housing. You have to give them travel. You have to let them use a telephone. You must provide them with the tools to do the job. I quoted \$0.5m and that was the bare cost of salaries. Perhaps I included the salaries of the electorate secretaries but I did not include the offices, the telephones, the stationary, the travel and everything else. I would say that \$1m would be a lot closer to the mark. Everyone else says that is only a certain percentage of the Northern Territory government's budget. If a case cannot be established that it is necessary, that it will result in better legislation and better representation - and I do not think it will - then it should not go ahead. We do not think it is necessary at this point. We think the Territory at the moment needs many things before it needs more politicians.

I must say again that I agree, from my own observations, that there is a demonstrable lack of trust between the Northern Territory Cabinet and the senior executive arm of the public service. The fault for that lies at the top as it always must. You do not go to the top of the pile unless you are prepared to wear it. If an organisation is rotten, and I have been involved in many schemes in the Northern Territory that have not succeeded, you can always go straight to the top to find the problem. If the staff are doing a poor job, they are only able to do a poor job because they are allowed to do so. The person at the top has to wear that responsibility. I do not believe that the Northern Territory government trusts its public service enough. If it is not trusting its public servants, there is something wrong with its selection procedures. They are paid well enough. If it cannot trust them with simple guidelines, there is something wrong. The public service feels that distrust and resents it, and so do I. I think it is offensive to sit in a room for a very productive briefing and have in the corner a political appointee of the minister. I am not reflecting on personalities in any way. In effect, we have the minister sitting in the room. That has to stop. If that happens, the government will become a lot more efficient. What we need in the Northern Territory is better ministers, not more politicians.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, I am not surprised that the opposition opposes this particular aspect of the bill. When the bill was introduced into the Assembly, the Leader of the Opposition commented through the press that the extra cost would be too great for the public. However, I believe that the comments that the opposition has made over the last few days have supported the increase in the number of members of this Assembly. The opposition has continually commented about the lack of scrutiny of the executive. It has on 2 other occasions moved motions in this Assembly relating to setting up a committee specifically for the purpose of overseeing the executive. It has also made comments that the workload on the ministers is great. I cannot recall all that the Leader of the Opposition said but I am sure that, at some stage, he commented that the workload on the minister was great.

I wish to direct my comments specifically to clause 24. There has never been any argument that, at some stage, the size of the Legislative Assembly would have to be increased. The question is when should that occur and what should the number be. The proposal suggested in the bill before us is that, as from the next general election, the size of the Assembly be increased to 25 members. I believe that is necessary so that the Assembly is able to work as

it should. When we are looking at the number of seats that are required to give the Assembly the opportunity to work as it should and, at the same time, seeking to arrive at a number acceptable to the electorate, I believe there are a number of experiences that we can call on. For example, we know that, when we were setting the present number of electorates for this particular parliament, the figure of 2000 constituents per electorate was used as a base. That has been used from before 1977 and it has been accepted. The tolerances have been broken but the base of 2000 constituents per electorate has been accepted by the community at large and that is not changing in anyway whatsoever. By a straight mathematical calculation, it adds up that there should be 25 electorates if we have 2000 constituents per electorate. I believe that that figure has been accepted by the public generally.

As for reasons to increase the size of the Assembly, I believe that there are 2 very good ones. Firstly, there will be greater opportunity to oversee the activities of the government of the day - to scrutinise the executive - and to spread the workload between the ministers. At one stage or another, we have all agreed that there has been a need for closer scrutiny of the Executive. Everyone in this Assembly, at some stage, has made the comment about scrutiny of the executive. I think the only way this will occur is if the size of the Assembly is increased. The second reason is the workloads placed on the ministers. Not only has the opposition commented on this but political commentators have commented also on the enormous workload that is placed on our ministers.

Mr Speaker, up until now, I have believed that the operations of the Assembly have been working reasonably well. The Assembly as a whole has been able to work effectively, as effectively as one with a large committee system. It took me quite some time to realise that this was the case. The opposition has acted on many occasions as a review committee; it has acted on many occasions as a normal backbench of a larger parliament would. It has introduced amendments on many occasions that would have been picked up by the backbench committee of a larger parliament. Examples of that are the Education Bill where all of the amendments would have been picked up by a backbench committee had there been one. Another example where the Assembly worked as a whole was with the Liquor Bill. In that case, ministers were involved. We sat down and discussed the bill before it came before the Assembly. The Housing Bill was another one where the whole committee worked together. I believe that this is something that has to continue. There is a need for the executive itself to be scrutinised and there is a need for an effective backbench committee to oversee aspects of the executive which the whole Assembly cannot do.

Mr Speaker, the problem we are faced with now is that the budget is increasing every year. This year it is worth \$1000m and warrants a great deal more scrutiny than it is getting at the present time. There is no way that that can occur unless the size of this Assembly is increased.

Most of the debate today - and in the press as was commented on here this afternoon - has been about the extra cost to the taxpayer that an increase in the number of members will cause. I would say that the figures that are being thrown around are somewhat conservative.

Mr B. Collins: They are very conservative.

Mr HARRIS: I agree with that. But to take advantage of the increase in the size of the Assembly, to have it work as it should, I believe a lot more money is required. With an increase in the size of the Assembly comes the opportunity for us to establish the conventional committee system that exists in other parliaments. Such committees will have to be serviced.

At present, the staff of the Legislative Assembly does a wonderful job. It performs a variety of tasks. That situation must continue. But to take advantage of an increased membership will require additional staff and that additional staff will have to include professional people. Therefore, in discussions so far about the cost of an extra 6 members, the figures that have been mentioned are conservative.

I do not believe the second reason for increasing the size of the Assembly has been disputed: the workload on the ministers.

Mr B. Collins: I disputed it.

Mr HARRIS: The Leader of the Opposition disputed it in this debate. But the opposition and its leader have commented about the workloads on the ministers. As I have already mentioned, political commentators have mentioned the workloads on this government.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I would just like to say that we all agreed at some stage that there is a need for greater scrutiny of the executive. We have all agreed at some stage that there is a large workload on the ministers. I believe that 2000 voters per electorate, which is the basis on which the current system is set up, has been accepted by all the people in the Northern Territory. I believe it imperative that we increase the size of the Assembly so that it is able to operate in the manner that it should. I believe the cost to the taxpayer will be insignificant compared to the benefits that all Territory people will receive from increased representation. It is important that the size of the Assembly increase as soon as possible so that we are able to do the work properly.

Mrs O'NEIL (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I shall go backwards through some of the points raised by the honourable member for Port Darwin and the Leader of the Opposition.

With relation to the workload on ministers, it seems to me that the Leader of the Opposition made 3 very pertinent points. Ministers do it because they want to. We are all here because we want to be here. Most of us like working reasonably hard. If the ministers do not like it, they are free to resign. They are well paid to do the work. I agree that they work hard and I think they should. I do not believe they work harder than ministers in other parliaments in Australia. I do not suggest that they would suggest to us that they do. Certainly, there is no argument that we have to increase the number of ministers for those reasons.

If ministers are finding that workload heavy, it is frequently because, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, they are doing things they have no need to do. If they had more confidence in their public service and established their systems better, they would not feel they had to do so much. I do not believe that that argument was demonstrated, in any sense, by the Chief Minister in his introductory speech or by the member for Port Darwin. Certainly, ministers have a heavy workload and so they should have. They want the job. They are well paid to work hard and we expect them to work hard. I hope they continue to do so. If they are working too hard perhaps they ought to trust their public servants more and allow themselves more free time.

Another point was raised earlier in the debate which relates to the removal of the existing provision prohibiting the wearing or displaying of party political posters and emblems within a polling place. I was quite surprised to see that provision removed. I cannot understand the reason. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that voters, God bless them, when they go to vote very

often feel that they are running a gauntlet: rows of candidates and candidates' supporters, placards, tables and pieces of paper thrust at them. It is very nice for us to see them but when they get within the polling booth where we cannot get at them, they breathe a sigh of relief. They are so pleased to leave all of that party political stuff behind them, and enter neutral territory. That is the way it should be when they go in conscience to cast their votes. I think that we should keep those polling booths as strictly neutral as possible without slogans and without candidates wandering around in them except when they have to cast their own votes. Certainly, they should not be allowed to solicit votes within the booths.

Outside the polling booths, the voters put up with the sort of display that political parties feel necessary to mount in an attempt to solicit their votes. Once they get to the polling booth, they should be free of that influence. As I said, they breathe a sigh of relief once they hit that 10 m line and know that they have left us behind. That is the way we should keep it.

Finally, there is the size of the Assembly. I agree wholeheartedly with the member for Port Darwin that we need to improve the scrutiny of the executive in this Assembly. I do not agree with him that we need to increase its size in order to do that. We all like to think we are unique. Within the Australian system, we look at our Assembly in the Northern Territory, its size and its problems, and we say: 'Oh, we are unique'. Along with the member for Port Darwin, 12 months ago in Fiji, I had the opportunity to attend the first Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference of members from small legislatures. The honourable member for Stuart is attending the second one at the moment.

We came together from that vast range of places: Gibraltar, Dominique, the Isle of Man, the Bahamas, Cayman Island and the Solomon Islands - all sorts of small legislatures within the Commonwealth. We had great number of things in common. We are small legislatures with small populations, but we suffer diseconomies of scale and frequently are very distant from markets. Those legislatures do not automatically say: 'We have to increase our numbers in order to deal with our problems'. They do not say: 'We have to increase our numbers in order to have committees and in order to ensure the scrutiny of the executive'. As the honourable member for Port Darwin knows, there are parliaments within the Commonwealth with 15 members which have 4 or 5 committees: finance committees and others. Gibraltar comes to mind as one in which ministers sit on committees where there are no government backbenchers at all. They make that committee system work to their satisfaction.

We must not be narrow-minded about this and look only to the Australian system. We must look beyond our own shores to benefit from adaptations that have been made in other small parliaments. We do not have to increase our numbers. We have simply to be a bit more broad-minded and imaginative. It can be done, Mr Speaker. There are plenty of examples throughout the world of parliaments smaller than ours. Every one of them that I have come across has more systems for enabling scrutiny of the executive than this one has.

Mr Speaker, I know that you have been in this parliament very many more years than I have. You have told us that, for years, you have had to say the same things in this parliament. I feel the same in saying this. I am conscious of it. I have said it on a number of occasions in this Assembly. It is something I have devoted some thought to. I have attended a number of gatherings to discuss it. I have said in the past, and I will have to keep saying it, that we do not have to model ourselves on other parliaments in Australia; we do not have to automatically increase our numbers. We will never catch up with them anyway. We have to be innovative in our approach to the problems that smallness creates. Increasing the numbers in this Assembly will not solve any of our problems.

Mrs LAWRIE (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, in this debate, I am not in agreement with the Leader of the Opposition nor with the government. I understand some of the arguments put forward by the Chief Minister for raising the number of members of the legislature from 19 to 25. Since we have a unicameral system, perhaps his argument has some validity. I gave evidence to the joint committee which came to the Territory prior to the establishment of a fully-elected Legislative Assembly in 1974. At that time, I was a member of the Legislative Council. I was asked for my views on the best method of setting up a system for a fully-elected Assembly. At that time, I went for our present system which was a single-member constituency. But I changed my view. I have watched this parliament in operation in the ensuing years. What I would have liked to have heard was an announcement by the Chief Minister that amendments to the act were to be made at a sittings, say the February sittings, and that public submissions would be called for prior to that time as to how the system could be better improved.

I say this because I wish now we had multi-member electorates. I know there are many people in the community who share my views. Whether they are a majority is certainly suspect. But I would have liked the issue to have been discussed publicly prior to the passage of this bill. We have not had that time because of the fait accompli. As a rule of thumb, I would have preferred 5 electorates of 5 members each. I believe that this system would have had 3 distinct advantages over what we have at present. It has been stated previously that the same service would not be provided to the electorate because the responsibility would be divided between 5 people and the electorate would then not know to whom to turn. I would say, given that we have ministers bearing onerous responsibilities within a small population, it is very difficult for ministers to adequately service their electorate as well as do their ministerial duties. But if there were others representing that electorate, they could be left to do more of the day-to-day electorate work freeing ministers for the business of governing the Territory as a whole.

There is another reason why I believe it would be of assistance to the people within the electorate. Many of them, 49% of them in some cases, did not vote for the person who eventually represented them. They might not like a party and not feel like going to its member because they disagree with its policies overall. With multi-member electorates, one would be assured that there would be a representative from at least 2 parties so the people would have that choice. For simple day-to-day electorate problems, many people would prefer that system. I know that because I get representations from people who live in adjoining electorates. They come to me as an independent because they do not particularly want to go to their member who is a member of a party which they do not like. I might add that that goes for both parties. With multi-member electorates, they would not have that problem.

The third advantage is that it would guard against the inherent danger of pork-barrelling. With ministers having a constituency of only 200 members, it is an omnipresent threat to their independence that they must pander to what could be a local interest which is not necessarily in the wider interests of the community of the Northern Territory. Again, a multi-member electorate system would free ministers from that restraint so that, in at least 2 of the points which I have raised, it would advantage ministers from whichever party they came. Mr Speaker, none of these things will happen because we are continuing the present system of single-member constituencies.

In looking at the bill, I share the concern regarding the change to the postal voting system. I had not looked until I listened to the debate this afternoon at that section dealing with the display of T-shirts and materials by voters; that is, by people other than officers and candidates' representatives.

Certainly, I would not want to see the polling place cluttered with political propaganda and I do not say 'party political' because I am not a member of a party. But I certainly put out my own propaganda. I think it is refreshing to keep the polling booth as free from that kind of thing as is possible. In that context, I would support the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Fannie Bay.

I approve of the innovation of allowing photographs on the ballot paper. I would have liked another amendment. I did not think this bill was going through at this sittings or I would have proposed it. I would like the place on the ballot paper determined by ballot and not by name. That would stop Aardvark Anderson Arkwright standing simply to get the donkey vote and to mess up what would otherwise be a relevant and reasonable vote.

Mr Speaker, before the Territory election ensues, there will be some months of preparation. I appreciate the desire of the Assembly to get this legislation through to allow a redistribution committee to be set up and everything else to be put in train. But given that the election is not scheduled till 1984, and it will be at least 6 months, I would ask the Chief Minister to indicate whether he would take on board my suggestion of the ballot system of determining the places on the ballot paper of the various candidates, particularly when they are identified by photographs which I think is a distinct advantage.

With those few comments, Mr Speaker, I certainly support some parts of the legislation. I am only sorry there was not more time for public consideration.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Alice Springs): Mr Speaker, the wearing of party political material in the polling booth has been raised. I do not say that I am madly keen on the idea. There is one point that has not been raised, however: if a lady comes into a polling booth wearing a T-shirt, it is rather embarrassing for someone to have to tell her to go out and remove it.

Mrs Lawrie: Turn it inside out.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: I am sure that you could read it from inside out anyway. I am not madly keen on the idea but that is one thing I believe that has not been raised that I think should be considered.

The Leader of the Opposition raised a couple of points. I was very interested in his logic on the automatic postal vote. If you get an automatic postal vote, it reminds you to vote. However, this particular clause states that, if, because a mobile booth is going to be within 20 km of a particular place, then a warning will be given in good time stating the status. I believe that serves exactly the same purpose. People will get a warning anyway. Whether they get a postal vote or whether they have to travel a distance of 20 km, it will no doubt tell them where and when and so forth. So I do not really think that point had a great deal of relevance. There must be a limit for postal votes. Twenty kilometres may be arbitrary but so is any other figure so I believe his logic was somewhat astray.

The Leader of the Opposition told us that the ministers are not overworked and yet, in the past, he has said that ministers have a heavy workload. I wish the gentleman would be consistent. He says what suits him on a particular day.

The third point he made was about trusting public servants. That may be well and good but it was only yesterday in the debate on the NTDC that he said that much greater control was needed over the NTDC by ministers. In fact, he did a great deal to denigrate the NTDC officers. It is difficult to follow his line of reasoning. One moment we must trust implicitly and then we are told not to dare trust anybody. I really find him a little difficult to follow.

Getting back to the bill, there are many procedural matters which have not raised much comment from members. I am not madly keen about photographs designating ballot positions. Instead of getting the donkey vote by going 1, 2, 3 down the card, a vote might be cast upon beauty. As a beauty, I am not a great start. There are others more handsome by far. I do not mind my face because I am behind it. It is the people up front whom I jar.

I wish to comment on the proposal for 25 seats. The arguments put forward in this particular area interest me. There would definitely be a larger backbench because the minimum size for a government to operate would be 13 instead of 11. One could say that, at the moment, we have an executive of 6 and a backbench of 5, which is not common. I have even heard it discussed as not being in the Westminster tradition.

At a study of parliament group meeting in March this year, the topic for discussion was backbench party committees and their particular role. The honourable Geoffrey Giles spoke on the operation of backbench committees in federal Parliament on the Liberal Country Party side. I forget the name of the gentleman on the Labor Party side. He was a doctor. They both agreed that the subcommittees or backbench committees served a very useful purpose indeed. That would not work as well with the size of our particular backbench. Both these men claimed there is a great chance for grassroots input into legislation before it went to Cabinet. In the federal House, each minister has his own subcommittee which he feeds information to about legislation and it makes recommendations and meets with him before the legislation gets to Cabinet. That would be very difficult in our small system. It is also used to generate backbench support for legislation. The backbench is happy because it feels that it is making a useful contribution.

Another point raised was that such committees act as a check on the public service. The public service is large in the federal system and originates many bills, no doubt from discussions with ministers. It has a considerable input into how bills are drafted. Both these men suggested that lay people in the community should have an input. They may not be experts but they can ask questions and offer a lay person's view on just how legislation will affect people out there in the electorate. That was considered to be a very important role which these backbench committees performed.

I have already mentioned that the normal thing in Cabinet is for Cabinet to persuade its backbench. The executive arm is generally smaller than the backbench. I will go on record as saying that, in my short time in the Assembly, the executive has given me and every other backbencher every opportunity to discuss every bill in full. I am grateful to it. The possibility exists to steamroll legislation should it want to. If we had a larger parliament, then the executive would have to persuade its backbench that its plans and policies were for the benefit of the government as a whole.

The Chief Minister made the point that, as ministers are away from their electorates, often the backbenchers should be able to be relied upon to give grassroots information to the Cabinet, and then to disseminate information back to the electorate. That is a role which the backbench can and must play. If it was bigger, it would be able to do it even more effectively. I totally agree with the member for Nightcliff that it is not just a matter of one member. In the southern region, the 3 of us work pretty well as a team. If someone happens to be away, as the honourable member for Stuart is at the moment, people from his electorate can come to see me and I know it works the other way. Even people from the electorate of MacDonnell come to see me and I have no doubt that some of the Labor supporters in Alice Springs go to see the member for MacDonnell.

Much has been said about Cabinet size, implying that the ministers really are not working hard enough. I believe that 6 is the absolute minimum. The ministers have a very heavy workload. They could be in some danger of being snowed under or put in the mushroom club by the public service. They are well aware of the possibilities and they keep a fair eye on that particular area. Each one has 2 major portfolios. Even if we do not have as many schools in the Territory, they are as spread out as any in New South Wales. Trying to observe those and play a ministerial role is a large job.

Another point which the Chief Minister raised was the matter of travel. In the Territory, you can spend up to the best part of a day travelling from A to B. Also, there is the very heavy load that the ministers have in meeting with interstate and federal parliamentarians on their various areas of responsibility. This is an extremely heavy load when you have 2 portfolios to look after which no other ministry of any other Australian parliament has.

Our ministers always seem to have people coming to see them. Very few people interstate would think to try to see a minister but, in the Territory, the ministers have been extremely accessible. That certainly adds to their workload, particularly when people want to have a long chat before they get down to the crux of the matter. It certainly makes their work more difficult.

We also have a very large legislative program. The states have been going for a long time. Much of their legislation is well established and they do not introduce a great deal of new legislation. We certainly put much more legislation through at a greater rate here. Whether that is always good remains to be seen. We know that we can always amend legislation if it is not doing the job that we thought it would do.

Mr Speaker, I believe that there is something to be gained for the people of the Northern Territory. This Assembly can be strengthened by an increase in numbers.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, while there are elements of this bill that the opposition supports, there are aspects about which we have been critical. Both the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition have mentioned that. I rise to make some further comments on those points, particularly after I heard with amusement some of the comments of the honourable member for Alice Springs. He mentioned the cooperation of 3 colleagues. In fact, it is 5 when you take into consideration Senator Kilgariff, a resident of Alice Springs, and the perambulations of the Territory member for the House of Representatives. It is scarcely a wonder that there is a sole ray of light in central Australia. One occasionally feels somewhat beleaguered.

Be that as it may, the areas that I want to comment on are the matter of seats, the issue of postal votes, the amendment to the section of the act dealing with the impersonation of an elector and the display of material within a polling booth.

In my electorate, it is quite important that postal votes be as readily available as possible because of the large extent of the electorate of MacDonnell and because of the many Aboriginal people who live in my electorate and who are not perhaps as deeply aware of the electoral process as other people in the Territory. For that reason, I would suggest that the proposed amendment which puts an obligation on the voter to apply for a postal vote instead of requiring the electoral officer to send him a postal vote when he is 20 km from an appointed polling place is not really desirable in terms of involving as many people as possible in the electoral process in the Northern Territory. I wish to oppose that as strongly as possible.

The further issue that I wish to mention is the wearing of material bearing candidates' visages or names within the polling place. I do not believe that this is appropriate. I note with interest that the honourable member for Alice Springs does not seem too enamoured of this particular idea. I think the wording of this particular clause says that no officer or candidate's representative shall wear or display an emblem, poster, representation or other identification of a candidate or a political party in a polling place. That is pretty broad, Mr Speaker. We have mentioned that we expect that to apply to T-shirts and we are all very familiar with T-shirt politics in the Northern Territory. It need not necessarily apply only to T-shirts. One can imagine that the wording 'emblem, poster or representation' could mean a statue or an effigy. It would be wonderful if people were carrying all sorts of representations of their chosen candidate or were rigged with disgraceful effigies of the candidate whom they were going to vote against. The simplest and most appropriate course to adopt in this area is for the status quo.

The honourable member for Fannie Bay gave a very lucid description of the plight of the poor voter. In this Assembly, we tend to be overwhelmed with the plight of the poor member. It is not unreasonable to pause occasionally to think of the plight of the poor voter. Every one of us has had the experience of handing out how-to-vote cards outside of polling booths and the unmistakable sigh of relief from the aggressive voter as he barges past saying: 'No cards, thank you'. Fortunately, he can get past that particular section of the polling area and be delivered into the neutral bliss that the honourable member described for us.

The other area that I wish to mention briefly is the change in the wording of the act whereby references to the Divisional Returning Officer are to be replaced with references to the Chief Electoral Officer who is with us in the gallery today. The reason for this was given by the Chief Minister in his second-reading speech when he referred to certain operational problems that had arisen with the act. He said that this required the rationalisation of the functions of the Chief Electoral Officer and the Divisional Returning Officer. That may be quite reasonable. As a political representative in central Australia, I would like to be assured that, for example, processes of nomination and administrative arrangements surrounding the various aspects of the electoral process will not disadvantage candidates or voters in central Australia or any other area outside of Darwin where the Chief Electoral Officer is based. That is an issue I would like cleared up.

The point that has been discussed at length is the increase of seats that this bill will introduce. The Leader of the Opposition has placed his views on public record and I have endorsed his sentiments in Alice Springs. I really cannot accept any of the arguments that have been put forward to justify an increase of 6 seats in this Assembly. The Northern Territory population of some 120 000 is not large. There is a limit to the amount of work that is required of the Assembly. I really cannot accept that the cost will be justified. The cost has been estimated. Certainly, the Chief Minister did not raise the matter in his second-reading speech but it is suggested that it is likely to be in the vicinity of \$250 000 to \$500 000.

Workloads of ministers have also been touched on as a possible justification for this increase. I believe that the contributions from this side have certainly suggested that that particular argument does not hold water. It was rather interesting to hear the member for Alice Springs suggest that there was some contradiction between the opposition sponsoring a motion to inquire into the operations of the Northern Territory Development Corporation and then refuse to give the Legislative Assembly the increased numbers that would enable the increased surveillance that we were requesting. He, of course, totally missed the

point of yesterday's debate and one is forced to wonder if he was listening at all. The issue was not one of ministerial control; it was the propriety of the operations of the department itself. It was totally unrelated to the issue of ministerial control.

The issue of the size of the electorates has also been put forward. It has been suggested that there is something about the figure of 2000. I really cannot accept that, given that there are rather wide differences between the sizes of electorates at the moment and problems may result which will require the redistribution which is due before any future election. That of course is reasonable. But I think that it is rather stretching the point to suggest that there is something magical about this figure of 2000 voters that was referred to by the Chief Minister when he was quoting the report of a joint committee on the Northern Territory in 1974. One really finds it difficult to accept that one has to stick to the figure of 2000.

With those comments I would like to finish by suggesting, firstly, that the issue of 25 seats is not acceptable; secondly, the obligation should be on the electoral officer to issue postal votes where people meet the appropriate criteria rather than the person having to apply for them himself; and, thirdly, the issue of the wearing of material bearing candidates names or photographs within the polling booth is not acceptable either. There was a final question about the implications of a Divisional Returning Officer's responsibility now being taken over by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I wish that I was like the member referred to by the honourable member for MacDonnell who did not listen to something the honourable member for MacDonnell said at another time. Unfortunately, my ears are unable to turn away the piercing speeches, if they can be called that - rather diatribes - of the member for MacDonnell. I must see if I can acquire the technique of not being able to hear what he says because there is very little meat. In fact, one could have said that he was rather like his master's voice just now because there was not one fresh thing that he added to this debate.

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, after jumping to his feet and swelling himself, if that be possible, with righteous indignation ...

Mr B. COLLINS: Oh, isn't that charming?

Mr SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr EVERINGHAM: ... started into an attack as usual against myself. He presaged that attack with comments on 2 particular sections of the Electoral Act that we propose to amend by the legislation. The first relates to postal voting.

Mr Speaker, the system that we are proposing to introduce, or something very like it, presently operates in South Australia:

Any person who enrolls and resides in South Australia who will not throughout the hours of polling on polling day be within 8 km of the nearest practical route of any polling booth may, at any time, lodge an application in writing with the Chief Electoral Officer to be registered as a general postal voter.

This system appears to be working in that state. In the Northern Territory, of course, we have the current system. But the system that we have here in the Northern Territory depends upon the Australian Electoral Office. I am informed

by the Electoral Office that, at every election, each party makes a number of allegations that the postal vote system is being manipulated. The Electoral Office is sensitive to this and it believes that claims that manipulation is taking place can be eliminated by the adoption of the proposed system.

The claim cards at the present time are held by the Australian Electoral Office. It is difficult to check signatures, delays occur in the counting and processing of votes and cards are lost. The new system would mean that the records would be held by the Northern Territory Electoral Office and would give that office much better control of the system. Once a person's name appears on the roll, the Electoral Office will be in contact with him to ascertain whether he wishes to be registered as a postal voter, so I am told by the Chief Electoral Officer who has been sitting here listening to the debate this afternoon.

Mr Speaker, I think the second point relates to section 85(9) of the act. It is proposed to delete the words 'a person'. Again, although the Leader of the Opposition talks about seeking briefings, no briefing was sought in respect of either of these matters that he now complains of. The situation is that the Electoral Office is embarrassed by the law as it currently stands. People in fact to get into polling places, particularly in rural areas, wearing electoral material. There is nothing short of force that the Electoral Office can use to prevent this. I suppose police officers could be posted in polling booths. Unfortunately, this would lead to scrimmages and polls would probably be aborted.

The Electoral Office informs me - and I have no complaint with its attitude - that, if the law remains as it is, the polling clerks and other polling officers will not undertake to enforce it. They do not believe that they are in a position to do so other than to perhaps, in certain circumstances, issue cautions and warnings. They cannot be outside inspecting everyone who is likely to enter the polling place to see that he is not wearing some sort of electoral material. It was in an effort to be honest and sincere that the electoral officers again put forward this proposal. I do not think that the opposition gains much credit by rubbishing the government about this because it is a fact that both political parties and independants print and distribute huge amounts of material. We give it away and, if these people turn up wearing it, well who are we to criticise? The Electoral Office has a valid complaint and, although I am prepared to concede his point, I really have a great deal of sympathy with the office.

Mr Speaker, regarding the increase in numbers, the honourable member for Nightcliff spoke of the Hare-Clarke system or the multi-member constituency. I am surprised that she espouses that system since it really amounts to a Senate-type election. Of course, as she said a few years ago, the Senate really is not a democratically-elected chamber. Her views seem to have moderated as she has grown older.

The honourable member for Fannie Bay said: 'If you do not like the job you are doing and it is too hard, you can always resign'. That was in respect of increasing the number of Assembly members and decreasing the workload of ministers. What a responsible attitude for someone under pressure to take: just resign. Mr Speaker, that is a totally negative and unrealistic attitude. However much one might at times feel like quitting, one is under considerable pressure and not just public pressure. Imagine how one would be pilloried if one simply said: 'It is all too much, I am resigning'.

Mr B. Collins: Right.

Mr EVERINGHAM: The member for Fannie Bay, as the Leader of the Opposition just acknowledged, is talking utter rubbish. You just cannot walk away from something like that.

The next complaint was that ministers were doing things that they need not do. We heard this from the Leader of the Opposition in his tones of righteous indignation and his best pulpit manner. But we really were not told what things ministers were doing that they do not need to do. I am really interested to hear that because, if the members opposite can tell me specifically what I am doing that I do not need to do, I can assure you that I and other ministers who also will be happy to hear it will cease doing those tasks forthwith because we will have the opposition's carte blanche for not carrying them out in the future. I really would like to know - and I place the Leader of the Opposition on notice since he has really carried on at length here this afternoon - to tell us what ministers are doing that is unnecessary. We were not given one specific detail whatsoever. We were simply given the usual diatribe and generalisation. The honourable member for Fannie Bay said: 'They do not work any harder than state ministers anywhere'. I say that, in 9 cases out of 10 of other state ministers, that is rubbish. Most state ministers have one portfolio. In fact, state cabinets range in size from, I think 10 in Tasmania to over 20 in New South Wales. The state ministers generally, as I say, only have the one portfolio. For instance, the Attorney-General is almost invariably nothing else but the Attorney-General. They simply have the one range of activities to oversee. They do not have to be changing their mental outlook to cover all sorts of diverse subjects as do ministers up here in the Territory. Quite frankly, on my observations of state ministers and state ministers' activities, there are only a few of the more senior ministers in larger states who actually have anything like the workload of the Northern Territory ministers.

I am not complaining about that workload. I believe that it is in the best interests of the people of the Northern Territory. I personally thrive on work. It is my hobby. But the people of the Northern Territory deserve better than harassed ministers because they need decisions to be taken as far as possible in an objective and semi-judicial fashion by ministers. They do not get that when ministers are hounded from pillar to post by the weight and press of decisions and activities that they have to undertake. I really am disappointed at the attitude of the Leader of the Opposition here this afternoon because he came into this place after the departure of the former Leader of the Opposition and said, as I recall it, on a number of occasions that he believed that parliamentarians and especially ministers in the Northern Territory had a great deal to do and were overworked. Now that this bill has been introduced, opportunism has taken sway of him once again and we hear that we are not overworked and really we do not have very much to do at all.

It is in the interests of the people of this place that the government is pursuing this legislation. They deserve the best possible treatment they can get. Additionally, in my opinion, whether the ministry is increased or not, and no one would say that we could have a smaller ministry, it is important that we have as large a backbench as possible so that the backbench can bring the ministers to account if necessary. That is only potentially possible under the proposed figures. However, there would be a better potential for it.

We departed from the workloads of ministers and the problems of members to roam footloose and fancy free around the ridges of fantasy and supposition in respect of the executive of the Northern Territory Public Service. We were told that the selection process in which the Northern Territory Public Service must be engaging is obviously an unsatisfactory one. I will be interested to see this list the Public Service Commissioner is preparing for me of people in the executive area who have departed hence in the past few years. Quite frankly,

the numbers who have departed other than voluntarily at the permanent head level are in the order of 3 or 4 in the whole period of this government's tenure of office. The former Public Service Commissioner, Norm Campbell, resigned entirely of his own accord. He could have stayed here as long as he wished. The same applied to the former Solicitor-General, Ian Barker. It is true that the government had differences of opinion with at least 3 departmental heads. I have not been privy to the situation in relation to Mr Purcell. I understand that he resigned. I think that, when the government came into office, we had very little middle management. In effect, we took over the Department of the Northern Territory which was not renowned for the quality and strength of its management. We have managed to build up a reasonable degree of middle-management skill and experience. We have selected departmental heads from places all over Australia. At that time, perhaps there was not the breadth of talent to pick them from the ranks of the Territory, although a number of members of the Northern Territory Public Service were appointed as departmental heads.

We have not had the advantage available elsewhere of seeing a person's performance over a period of years before elevating him to the highest of positions. That is something that is only gradually happening in the Territory. In the last few cases where departmental heads have been required, as in the Department of Transport and Works, we have been able to appoint a member of the Northern Territory Public Service as the successful applicant. The Leader of the Opposition wrote to me the other day to ask me why we had not appointed a person from the Northern Territory Public Service as Crown Solicitor. I point out to the honourable member that the post of Solicitor-General has been occupied by Territory solicitors. The heads of the various branches of the Department of Law, by and large, have been occupied by people who have been there for some time. In fact, the post of Crown Solicitor is a very difficult one to fill in a place like the Northern Territory where people are making quite huge amounts of money in private practice. They do not feel inclined to apply for positions in the Department of Law which may not be as well remunerated.

I will be interested to see this list because I cannot recall any extraordinary turnover of public servants. At the most, I recall 4 people I have had harsh words with. In at least one of those cases, the reason for the harsh words was a plain, straightout impropriety. I would hope that the Leader of the Opposition, and the opposition generally, would expect me to deal reasonably briskly with someone at that level who was guilty of serious impropriety.

As to briefings, the Northern Territory system in relation to briefing of members of the opposition is modelled on the New South Wales system. I suggest that the honourable Leader of the Opposition, if he is dissatisfied with that system, speak to Mr Wran. If Mr Wran is prepared to amend his system in favour of the New South Wales opposition, then the Northern Territory government will obviously look at what he would consider to be improvements in the system with a view to implementing them itself. I might say that the same system prevailed in Tasmania under the former Labor government there. I really would have thought that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Mr Speaker, I do not feel that there is any need to go on at greater length to justify the decision taken by the Cabinet and by the government party to introduce legislation to increase the number of seats for members of this Assembly. Certainly, we have had experience of government, which the opposition has not. It has always been my paramount consideration in occupying this office that the good of the people of the Territory is the most important thing. Whatever the population figures may be, I am convinced that this Assembly needs an increase in its size to enable it to do the best job possible, within the strictures upon us, for the people of this Territory. I commend this legislation to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2:

Mr EVERINGHAM: I move amendment 128.1.

This amendment is introduced to accommodate the possibility that new clause 16A may come into operation at a time later than the other amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clause 4:

Mr EVERINGHAM: I move amendment 128.2.

From the former wording, it was possible to interpret the clause as meaning that 2 electors could not witness each other's applications. We believe the amendment removes this ambiguity.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 5 to 9 agreed to.

Clause 10:

Mr B. COLLINS: I rise briefly, Mr Chairman, to make 1 simple point. I am very pleased that the Chief Minister was able to advise me that the objections the opposition has to this clause will be satisfied by the Electoral Office. I was glad of such a prompt response. However, I make the point that I have made previously: I would appreciate receiving this kind of advice in the speech which supports the legislation, so that we are able to establish our position on legislation on a maximum amount of information. That is what ministers' second-reading speeches are for. The Chief Minister knows full well that the procedural matter he raised is not contained in the legislation nor is it contained in his second-reading speech. I thank him for it. The one objection that I had to automatic postal votes was the inconvenience that may be caused to people in bush areas.

I do not want to go on at any length about this. Both sides of the Assembly have spoken before of the extremely commendable job carried out by the Electoral Office. I have no doubt it will do efficiently what is proposed. I thank the Chief Minister for his advice on that. It satisfies the objections we had to the clause and I am pleased to hear it is to be done. I would have appreciated that piece of information earlier.

Clause 10 agreed to.

Clauses 11 to 16 agreed to.

New clause 16A:

Mr EVERINGHAM: I move amendment 128.3.

There is a proposal Australia-wide to amend the franchise criteria to omit British subjects, apart from those presently entitled to vote. This change is to be effective from an agreed date. The present scheme of the act is that any changes to Commonwealth franchise criteria are automatically reflected in the act. However, minor consequential changes are required to section 75(2)(b).

New clause 16A agreed to.

Clause 17 agreed to.

Clause 18:

Mr B. COLLINS: I want to make the point to the Chief Minister that I appreciate the problems the Electoral Office has with this particular matter. I am concerned about a new problem being created by it. In deleting this amendment and retaining the status quo, I would like to indicate to the Chief Minister that I am extremely interested to have discussions with him and with the Electoral Office to seek another approach to the solution of the problem that was outlined and perhaps satisfy our objections at the same time.

Mr EVERINGHAM: Mr Chairman, I am quite happy to invite defeat of clause 18.

Clause 18 negatived.

Clauses 19 to 23 agreed to.

Clause 24:

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Chairman, we all have our own little quirks of style. As members know, one of the things I have commented on a number of times over the last 5 years is that, when the Chief Minister gets down into the old personal abuse bit - and I mean personal abuse - it is a clear indication that he has nothing of any substance to say. It proved to be the case again today.

Passing on from that, I want to put the record straight as to what some members seem to think has been a conflict or contradiction in statements I have made on a subject that seems to have diverted most of our attention regarding an increase in the number of members: the workload of people on the frontbench of the government.

Mr Robertson: Read Hansard.

Mr B. COLLINS: I have no need to read it. I know precisely what I have said over the years. I acknowledge the extremely heavy workload of the frontbench of this Assembly. It is not restricted to the frontbench of the government; it is on this side of the Assembly as well. All I can say is that I certainly enjoy being in the Northern Territory's political system. The reason I enjoy it, and I guess it is shared by other members of the Assembly, is that I have been in the Northern Territory for 16 years and I shall spend the rest of my life in the Territory. It is extremely personally stimulating and exciting to be in Territory politics. I do not mind working 7 days a week if I am doing something I enjoy.

It is just a question then of a value judgment. It has to be made. The Chief Minister says his ministry is overworked. I say that it is heavily worked.

I have said that before. I think a reference to Hansard will show that. In my view and the view of my colleagues, the Northern Territory Cabinet is in fact capable currently, with the number of members that it has, of adequately and properly discharging the responsibilities that are upon it.

The Chief Minister, when he spoke on this matter, compared us with other states and said: 'Most state ministers have one portfolio'. The reason that I mentioned the area of education is not because I am singling out the Northern Territory Minister for Education. It is one of my portfolio areas. It just happens to be an area for which I have very little time. I wish I had more time to go interstate and liaise more with the ministers in Labor governments around Australia. Certainly, one thing I have been able to do is to have some contact with the New South Wales Minister for Education. He certainly does have only one portfolio. As the Northern Territory Minister for Education knows, he has responsibility for a whole lot of schools, universities and CAEs. There is a staggering array of educational facilities in New South Wales compared with the Northern Territory and there is no getting away from each one of those individual institutions. It is just common sense. We discuss individual problems in here that impact on the area of the Northern Territory Minister for Education. We talk about problems that are occurring at the Darwin Community College and the Alice Springs Community College. That is it. We talk about this high school or that high school or this primary school and each one of those educational institutions create problems. There is always something going on somewhere. If you have 20 of those to deal with, I suggest with the greatest respect that that is a lighter workload than if you have 36 000 of them to deal with. I think that is common sense.

At least for the purpose of this debate, I do want to nail this because it is the one thing that is never addressed when this subject comes up. There is the question of scale involved in workload. It would be a person spouting nonsense who suggested anything else. The frontbench of this government is worked hard and it should be worked hard. I think it has a very heavy workload. I am not suggesting that it has too much to do. I do suggest, as I said before and I will certainly take up the Chief Minister's invitation, that, perhaps by ministers changing some of their attitudes, they could make the burden a little easier on themselves and divert more time to other things. But that is another subject. The Chief Minister's comparison with the number of portfolios held in other states is a ridiculous comparison to make.

He then accused me of opportunism because I am opposing an increase of 6 seats in this Assembly. I would like the Chief Minister to explain to me because he has lost me: what is opportunistic in that for either me personally or for the opposition? I really do not see what it avails us in political terms. I have been asked that question publicly and I have answered it publicly. People have asked me: 'Do you think the reason the government is creating these extra seats is because it will advantage them in a gerrymander?' That has been in the public press, and I have said that I do not think that that will happen because the opportunities to do it in the Northern Territory are far more limited than they are elsewhere. How the Chief Minister can accuse the opposition of opportunism for opposing the increase, I do not know.

It is a familiar tactic of the Chief Minister and the Minister for Mines and Energy that, when they do not have an answer for what is said, they simply manufacture something that was not said and answer it. The Chief Minister stated that I had said that ministers in the Northern Territory Cabinet do not have very much to do at all. That was nonsense. I said nothing even approaching that. I suggest to the Chief Minister that it is pretty easy to set up such a nonsensical statement, attribute it to me and then answer it. He also misquoted me as

saying that the selection process of the Northern Territory Public Service must be an unsatisfactory one. A reference to Hansard will show that I said nothing of the sort.

Mr Chairman, I want to make a comment on the final comment made by the Chief Minister. It was the injured, innocent, bleeding-heart argument that the Chief Minister always resorts to: he leaves aside all the technicalities of the argument and appeals to the emotions. The only reason he has done this is because he has had the good of the people of the Northern Territory at heart. Let me tell this Assembly and the Northern Territory that the Chief Minister and his government do not have a mandate on that particular area. I have lived here as long as the Chief Minister. We both arrived in the Northern Territory in the same year and I intend to spend the rest of my life in the Territory because I have a deep commitment to this place. The Chief Minister does not have a mandate on the good of the people of the Northern Territory and I am afraid that we will simply have to say in this debate that his idea of what is good for the Northern Territory people on this occasion is somewhat different to ours.

Mrs LAWRIE: In the second-reading, I proposed an alternative system for comment. The Chief Minister pulled what is becoming a common trick of his. Knowing that I could not reply in the second-reading, he dressed up a statement and gave it to the Assembly as a fact that I had made a certain comment which I never made. He is becoming prone to doing this and I would prefer him not to. I would prefer him to keep his remarks to suggestions on the legislation made by honourable members and on the legislation itself. I do not intend to let it pass without correction as it was dealing with the system of election and the number of members.

I have never said that the Senate voting system is the one that I am proposing here because 50% of the Senate retires at the end of each 3 years and that is not what I am proposing. I am proposing 100% retirement. That was a most misleading and mischievous comment by the Chief Minister.

Secondly, I have never said that the electoral system for the Senate is undemocratic; I have never said that although he would like to think I had. What I have said is that the Senate's assumption of the right to deny fiscal responsibility to the lower house is undemocratic. If the Chief Minister cannot remember what I said, I wish he would just shut up and not purport to repeat my statements. I find it unedifying and ridiculous.

Mr EVERINGHAM: Mr Chairman, that was a fairly amusing bit of hair-splitting which could not have been bettered before the full High Court. I refer to the statements of the member for Nightcliff in justification of her distinguishing the statements I have made in respect of her past assertions in this Chamber and elsewhere.

The Opposition Leader really hit the nail on the head when he first got up. He should have said that and sat down. He said that it is a value judgment, and so it is. He said that there should only be 19 members and this side says there should be 25. I think we have rather more experience of the workload. Whatever the workload on the opposition, it does not have the considerable burden or responsibility of administration. It principally has the job of observing what the government does, criticising it and servicing the members of its electorates.

If it has to be a value judgment, then I am quite prepared to stick to mine. I believe 25 members in this Assembly will increase its effectiveness and increase the effectiveness of the ministry. If the ministry can be increased, I believe ministers will be able to make more dispassionate, objective

and better decisions for the people of this Territory. For instance, at present, I frankly think that by travelling throughout Australia and elsewhere I could be raising considerable investment funds for the Northern Territory. There is no possibility that I can do that because I have too much administrative work. When I get away from administrative work, I have to go to ministerial conferences to keep the Northern Territory out of the doghouse and keep our end up. I also have to travel around the Territory to keep my eye on things and see that the opposition is not getting up to too much trouble.

Mr Speaker, as well as effectively being directors of a billion dollar company, the ministers of this government spend whatever time is necessary each year in the Assembly and that means that administrative work tends to get behind. Administrative work is rather more slipshod probably when the Assembly is sitting. Whenever one travels to the south from Darwin, one has to spend at least 3 days away whereas ministers down south can get the job done and return home in the same day. It is things like that that really impose a considerable additional burden on the very diverse workload on the ministers of this Assembly.

Clause 24 agreed to.

Remainder of the bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

The opposition asked a series of questions this morning in relation to certain transactions of the NTDC relating to certain companies known as North Brick Industries Pty Ltd. Whilst, the Minister for Industrial Development will no doubt be giving the details to the Leader of the Opposition later in his adjournment debate, I would like to raise a few points in respect of those companies because, at another time in this Assembly, the Leader of the Opposition very considerably impugned the standing of those companies and indicated in short that the Northern Territory Development Corporation had virtually no effective security for the advance of \$600 000 that it had made to enable this clay brick factory in the Northern Territory to get off the ground.

Perhaps I might just refer to a copy of the feasibility study that was supplied to or commissioned by the NTDC. It is a feasibility study in relation to this particular clay brick factory project. The first part that I would like to refer to relates to personnel requirements. From page 13 of the document, it appears that there will be a total staff requirement of 30 with a total annual payroll of \$700 000. I am quite prepared to make this document available on a confidential basis to the Leader of the Opposition. On the page 14, there is the question of capital commitment. It appears that the total capital commitment towards the construction of the project would be \$3.5m.

Later on, there are details of the operating cost estimates: annual salaries, \$700 000; water, \$3000; additives such as manganese - a Territory product - iron and other colouring agents, \$30 000; packaging - supporting another Territory industry, ACI out at Berrimah - \$50 000; repairs and maintenance, \$90 000; office supplies and overheads, \$20 000; sales promotions, \$10 000; rates and taxes, \$4000; audit and legal fees, \$15 000; and contingency items, nil. Those are the basic figures in relation to the project. You will see that it is obviously a project that the Territory can well do with. We have no clay brick works at the present. In fact, there had not been one since before

the cyclone. One ceased operations and has never recommenced. I understand that the product of this brickworks will not only sell readily in Darwin but will also probably be able to be sold interstate.

The Leader of the Opposition yesterday indicated that some of the companies associated with this project were straw companies. I have to concede readily that one company associated with the project at the present time is nothing more than a \$2 shelf company. However, it is 1 of 4 companies involved and is merely a vehicle. The other 3 companies, without mentioning their names, are companies of substance. It is difficult to name things without almost identifying the people concerned. Yesterday, in an attempt to start hares, the Leader of the Opposition said: 'Mr Speaker, the security of the loan, again being based upon what is available on the public record, appears to rest on the substance of the shareholders'. In fact, that last loan is secured by a first mortgage over real property and I have the document here. I have the 2 title deeds. I have the 2 mortgages disclosing the record of their endorsement by the Registrar-General and, as well, I have the charge to which the Leader of the Opposition referred.

If he or his staff had in fact gone to the office of the Registrar-General and ascertained from that office that there was a registered charge by way of security to the NTDC, then they must have searched the company records. Whilst they were in that office, I wonder why they did not search the titles to the property which were readily ascertainable from the public plan.

Mr Speaker, I believe that the Leader of the Opposition yesterday in the Assembly cast unwarranted aspersions in respect of the people associated with this enterprise, the sort of aspersions that drive investors away from the Northern Territory. He did so because if he, or a member of his staff, were in the office of the registrar, he did not carry out a thorough search. In fact, I question whether any search was carried out at all or whether in fact yesterday the Leader of the Opposition was acting on leaked, inaccurate information that he used without verifying. The Leader of the Opposition misled this Assembly and its members. He brought or attempted to bring into disrepute the people connected with this company and with this transaction. Mr Speaker, I believe that the conduct of the Leader of the Opposition in relation to North Brick Industries and North Clay Industries has been little short of contemptible.

Earnestly, I ask the Leader of the Opposition to consider that the Northern Territory is not by any means an easy place to attract investment to. We have been sitting here for 70 years under Commonwealth administration - and longer under South Australian administration - and, if we are such a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, it is surprising that greater things have not happened yet. We are working desperately at this difficult time to try to attract investment to this Territory. The impression that might have been given from what was said yesterday was that this was a company controlled totally by Asians. In fact, the majority of the people involved, as far as I can ascertain, appear to be Australians.

Mr Speaker, we have enough difficulties without the sort of embarrassing fiasco that occurred yesterday. If the Leader of the Opposition really believes that he has evidence of malpractice at all, in any field in the NTDC, I ask him to put that evidence in writing before me as Attorney-General. I assure him that I will have that conduct investigated by police officers or, if the Leader of the Opposition prefers, I will have it investigated by somebody like the Crown counsel or the Crown Solicitor - a statutory official - or the Solicitor-General. I believe that is the way to deal with these particular problems without dragging through the mud, the mire and the media the sort of people we

are working overtime to get. They are hard to attract at a time when Australia, and the Territory particularly, needs money coming in. Without money there are no new projects and, without more projects, there are no more jobs, apprenticeships or more of anything. You start to go backwards. That is the connection so many members of the opposition see to find hard to grasp. I appeal to the Leader of the Opposition at least to come forward first and give me complaints in writing that I will refer to a statutory law officer or the Commissioner of Police. If the Leader of the Opposition is then not satisfied with that investigation, he can do what he likes. But at least give us that opportunity before driving these people - one of whom is the world treasurer of a church - away from putting their money into the Northern Territory.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I cannot allow that sanctimonious rot to go without reply. I interjected when the Chief Minister produced those documents to say that he need not do so because I already had the information. I received that information today, very readily I might add, from the corporate sector of the Darwin community. I should have received it from the honourable Minister for Industrial Development in whose portfolio the Northern Territory Development Corporation lies. Once again we see the ball taken up by the honourable Chief Minister.

I want to nail this down a little more tightly than that, Mr Speaker. Again, within 10 minutes, we have the honourable Chief Minister putting words into my mouth that I did not say - accusing me of making allegations about Asian connections in respect of this company. I condemn him for it. I point out something else to him. Yesterday, I asked about the security of a NTDC loan. I spent 10 minutes talking about it. The honourable Minister for Industrial Development may have had an excuse yesterday - he may have but I do not say he did have - for not knowing the answer to that question. After it was raised as a very prominent part of the debate, as the Chief Minister has just acknowledged, he certainly did not have any excuse for not knowing the answer this morning. But, yet again, he did not know the answer.

The Chief Minister is missing one very substantial point: the role of the opposition in this Assembly - and it will continue to be so - is not just to test the Chief Minister but to test the Cabinet as well. I suggest to the Chief Minister that, if he does his job and allows other ministers in the Cabinet to do theirs, he will probably have enough time to travel around Australia attracting investment capital for the Northern Territory. I am getting sick and tired, and it is about time I said it, of the way in which some of the portfolio areas in this government are being handled. I will be quite specific about it.

Yesterday, I raised an important matter during debate. It could have been laid to rest by the minister who is responsible. It was not. I asked precisely the same question this morning, some 16 or 18 hours later. I do not know what the staff of the Minister for Industrial Development does. I do not know what sort of staff he has or whether ministers just leave the Assembly and go home and say: 'Oh well, that was a good day or a bad day, back again tomorrow'. It is a funny way to operate. All I have to say is that, if an important matter is raised in this Assembly with a minister, and he cannot get information which is readily available, obviously he is not as concerned with the operations of his portfolio as are other people in Darwin. I had the information given to me quite readily.

But, as the Chief Minister said in a letter he wrote to a colleague of mine in this caucus - and I agree with him - politicians should talk to politicians. I agree with that. It is the very system upon which a parliament operates and quite properly so. The person I should be entitled to get answers from about the NTDC is the Minister for Industrial Development; it is his portfolio. I

did not get the answers yesterday and I did not even get the answers today from that minister. There is no excuse for that. Now I have the answers from the Chief Minister. But it is not his responsibility. I make one simple suggestion to the Chief Minister: you do your job and let the other ministers do theirs - even if they fall down in the process - and you will have a lot more time on your hands to do the things you say you need to do.

In the course of this NTDC debate some things have been nailed to the mast and the fact that the responsible minister is not on top of his job is one of them. That is very obvious to everybody. People come to me and say: 'Here is the information'. I put to them the view that, in the operation of this Assembly, the opposition directs its attention to whichever minister has responsibility for the particular area under discussion. We should get prompt answers from the frontbench of this government. If we do not, then the minister responsible is culpable. The fact that I had the information given to me quite openly and readily by the corporate section of Darwin, and in a fairly amicable fashion too, does not reflect any credit on the person who is responsible - the man at the top. It does not impress me at all to get my answers from the Chief Minister.

Mr Speaker, I now want to offer my best wishes and express my gratitude to that portion of our Territory population celebrating Senior Australia Week this week. Although small in percentage, senior people contribute very significantly to the quality of Territory life. Not only do they represent the long term families, which have endured many adversities to make their homes in the Territory, but they also provide that important balance so necessary in any healthy society.

I believe it is fitting that next week we will be celebrating Children's Week. I do not deprecate these special weeks because I believe it is useful to focus on such things every now and again. I think the better the links we can build between our older and younger generations, the better the Territory will be.

Many of the people celebrating Senior Australia Week have a wealth of valuable memories about the Territory of yesterday and it is important that this wealth is passed on to future Territorian and, indeed, Australian generations. I will not be able to say all I intended to say about that in the debate this afternoon. I may continue some of my remarks tomorrow.

However, I would like to pay tribute to one particular family today, a family which has made significant contributions to Territory life which we, as politicians, enjoy: the family of Jock Nelson, a former Administrator of the Northern Territory. Last week the Labor Party decided that, to mark Senior Australia Week in the Northern Territory, it would make a presentation to Jock Nelson's mother who was residing at the Old Timers' Home in Darwin. I found it quite disturbing that, in the week in which we intended to do that, she passed away. By her death, the Territory lost one of its oldest residents. She died at the age of 99.

Mr Speaker, whatever their political philosophy, Territorians owe a great debt to the late Mr and Mrs Harold Nelson for the constant battles they fought to give us all a more just system of working conditions and political representation. Harold Nelson arrived in the Territory from Queensland in 1912 and spent time in Pine Creek before coming to Darwin as the first real union organiser in the Territory. His acknowledged ability to persuade soon became apparent and, in 1914, at the end of his first year as union organiser, he was praised by the Brisbane branch of the AWU for having enrolled some 500 members in the Northern Territory. Naturally, his attempts to unite workers and his

head-on collisions with the giant meat company of Vestey's and the ill-fated NT Administrator Gilruth - and I imagine he would not have been any friend of the Chief Minister's if he had been here today - drew some heavy criticism from some elements of the community who passionately called for his removal. But he remained steadfast in his resolve, not only to get a better deal for the workers and to expose what he believed to be the corrupt and arrogant Gilruth administration but to ensure that the Territory had parliamentary representation.

Once the people had successfully staged the mini-revolution outside Government House in Darwin that forced the departure of Gilruth, Nelson turned his attention to the pressing fight of no taxation without representation. Nelson, along with older leading citizens of Darwin, voluntarily went to jail in 1920 in a determined bid not to pay taxes until they received representation in the federal parliament. The campaign intensified when Nelson and other union leaders organised the launching of Darwin's first union-owned paper, the Northern Standard, which was to remain in print until the early 1950s. With the added vehicle of the printed media to help state their cause, they finally won the battle and, in December 1922, none other than Harold Nelson himself was elected as the first Territory representative to the federal parliament.

From then on until the time he was finally defeated 12 years later, Harold Nelson did not stop fighting for the development of the Territory. Although he was not allowed a regular vote in parliament, I am told that his outstanding and persuasive oratorical abilities often had many more senior members of parliament in awe.

Probably his greatest disappointment was when, impassioned though he was in debate, he lost his fight in 1931 to get a fully-elected Legislative Council for the Northern Territory. But he provided the necessary inspiration and laid the groundwork for those who followed him, including his son Jock who followed in his father's footsteps and became the Territory's parliamentary representative in the post-war years. Of course, Mr Speaker, as we all know, it was left to the Whitlam administration of 1972-75 to give us our first fully-elected Assembly.

Jock, who more recently has served as Administrator of the Northern Territory, and many others, some of whom have been members of this Assembly, carried on this fight and eventually won full parliamentary representation.

In the time available, I have only been able to sketch the details of the life of Harold Nelson, one man I wish very much I had had the privilege of knowing personally. I regard him as a remarkable man. In paying tribute to him, I also pay tribute to the very significant contribution that the rest of the Nelson family made to the Territory. I know members here will join me in extending sympathy to the family of Jock Nelson in the loss of his mother and I feel sure most would join me in acknowledging the very real and valuable role this family has played in getting a better deal for all Territorians.

Mr Speaker, in closing I return to my original remarks and again offer my good wishes and my gratitude to that 3% of our population in the Territory who this week are joining colleagues around Australia in very rightly celebrating Senior Australia Week.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, the outburst by the Leader of the Opposition in response to the Chief Minister's adjournment debate this afternoon leads me to get to my feet in an unscheduled fashion. He was very quick to flounder around and find some way to evade the allegations. Had he done what it was his responsibility to do before making statements in the Assembly which were blatantly untrue, then he probably would never have made them.

Mr Speaker, I would like to just quote a couple of the statements to remind honourable members. The honourable Leader of the Opposition, in talking yesterday about the loan by the NTDC of \$600 000 to North Brick, said a number of things.

Mr B. COLLINS: Point of order, Mr Speaker! I would point out to the honourable Treasurer and to you, Sir, that I have not had time today to correct nor even read the daily Hansard that the honourable Treasurer is quoting from. I have not had the opportunity to correct it and he should not be quoting from it, Sir.

Mr SPEAKER: Is the honourable Treasurer quoting from Hansard?

Mr PERRON: I was proposing to, Mr Speaker, but I will observe your ruling. I can well understand that the Leader of the Opposition would not like it to be quoted word for word. I am sure he does not honestly feel that he would change so many of those words as to change the meaning.

Working from recollection, Mr Speaker, the honourable member was absolutely emphatic that, in anyone's opinion, insufficient security was taken for the loan given to North Brick Industries. He implied that the total security taken was that of the resources of one particular company which had something like 1.5 million \$1 shares which were paid up to 1c. That was the substance of the company which he classified as being the total security taken. He used words such as 'from what is available on the public record'. That was all that was available to assure him or any members of the opposition that adequate security was taken. He further went on to cast aspersions on the appointment of a gentleman as government adviser and agent in Asia. That connection had to be completely sinister.

I believe he has grossly misled this Assembly inasmuch as he simply ignored totally the responsibility that a member has to ensure that what he is talking about is accurate. The allegations that he made in this House were indeed very serious. People do take notice of his statements. People see them as an indication of the hospitality of the Northern Territory. The fact that a person in the position of the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to get up in the Assembly and virtually lie to the Assembly, Mr Speaker, by saying that what ...

Mr B. COLLINS: Point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable minister knows that that is unparliamentary and I ask him to withdraw that statement.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable Treasurer said 'virtually lie'. I think that there is a difference there.

Mr B. COLLINS: With great respect, Sir, I refer you to the record of the federal parliament. To attribute 'lie' in any form whatsoever to another honourable member is unparliamentary and it cannot be qualified.

Mr SPEAKER: Will the honourable the Treasurer withdraw the remark?

Mr PERRON: Yes, Mr Speaker, I withdraw the remark but on the basis that the honourable Leader of the Opposition clearly knows what I am on about in this adjournment debate. I will repeat it briefly. There is a responsibility placed upon any member, before making serious allegations or suggestions in the Assembly, to check first publicly available information to see whether there is any substance in what he is claiming. As the Chief Minister pointed out, a few minutes of the member's time, or that of one of his colleagues or staff, would have produced information which would have indicated immediately that the

statements he made yesterday were absolutely false. However, he was happy to score a point on one day even though it was put down the next day. But the point has still been scored in his mind. To the rest of us, it is just another mark on the wall to show the level of integrity of the people we have on the opposition benches.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a few comments in the adjournment debate this evening. I regret my lack of dulcet tones. I will make an effort. If the Chief Minister would pass me across a cash float or something, I could get a few elocution lessons and I might do a better job of it.

I rise to raise with the Chief Minister an issue from question time this morning. It relates to the time taken by Conservation Commission officers in actively lobbying the people whom they come in contact with during the course of their work. Officers of the Conservation Commission have been actively lobbying tourists and other people with whom they come in contact. I propose this evening to make a few comments on the adverse effect that this has on the image of the Territory.

The Chief Minister in answer to such a question this morning said: 'Give me the facts. You have nothing to substantiate it'. In fact, that is not the case. I do have a statutory declaration by officers of the Conservation Commission to the effect that people have been actively lobbying.

Mr Tuxworth: Table it.

Mr BELL: I do not propose to table it. I will explain why later. I do not wish to make it a matter for the public record. I have it here to prove the point that it is going on and I think that is all that I need to do. The evidence is here that officers of the Conservation Commission have been lobbying tourists and visitors to parks and that requires some action on the part of the Chief Minister. The action, I suggest, is obligatory on the Chief Minister, as minister responsible for the Conservation Commission. He should issue a direction to officers of the commission saying that, whatever their spare-time activities may be, during work time, any attempt to lobby visitors to parks is just not on.

I am quite sure that both the honourable Minister for Tourism and the Chief Minister will be concerned about the image that is projected of the Northern Territory to people who visit here from other states. They come here to see the natural beauty of the Northern Territory. They come here to learn about flora and fauna and they come here to learn about the importance that different places have had for Aboriginal people in different ways through the length and breadth of this wonderful place. They do not expect to be confronted by officers ramming down their throats any particular political line, certainly not while they are in the employ of the Northern Territory government. I do not think that is on. As I said, I do not think it is appropriate that the Chief Minister carry out some witch hunt within the Conservation Commission. What I do believe is appropriate is that such a direction be issued that spells out quite clearly to officers of the commission what is appropriate behaviour in this regard.

While I am on the issue of land claims, I might comment on the Chief Minister's answer to the very same question. I would like to move on to that as a second and quite separate subject. The Chief Minister in his answer to a question from the Leader of the Opposition this morning raised 2 issues. Firstly, in opposition to land claims and the operation of the federal Land Rights Act, particularly in relation to Katherine Gorge, he made the mischievous statement that the access of visitors and tourists to the gorge would be threatened. There is not one iota of evidence to substantiate that. Well, let

me put it this way. I do not suggest ill-will by the Chief Minister nor that he is harbouring a deliberate plan to maintain people in the Northern Territory in a state of ignorance. But at least a clear public statement from the Chief Minister that there is no threat in that regard would be worth while. One cannot help but suspect that the Chief Minister feels that it is to his political advantage to maintain exactly that sort of doubt in people's minds.

We heard in the gallery today somebody here say: 'Save the gorge for us kids'. It is that sort of misinformation that requires the Chief Minister to make a public statement.

Mr Everingham: How can I?

Mr BELL: I think it would be quite easy for the Chief Minister to make a public statement to dispel the idea in people's minds that their access to any park will not be threatened by any successful land claim.

Mr Everingham: But it is.

Mr BELL: If he believes it is, why does not the honourable Chief Minister go about considering some sort of appropriate joint management arrangement instead of purveying these half-truths and these doubts that are seriously damaging race relations in the Northern Territory?

I move on to the second point that the Chief Minister made in his answer to this question this morning. He referred to the need for land administration to be a Territory concern. Well, there may indeed be some justification for that. However, you can hardly blame Aboriginal people for having very little faith in the Chief Minister or his government in administering land in such a way that was not prejudicial to recognition of Aboriginal rights in land. We believe in inheritance. We believe that everybody here will pass on rights in land to their children or some family connection. I have no doubt about that and yet, time and time again, we have to defend those rights which Aboriginal people should have: that their traditional ownership of land should be recognised and that it should be able to be passed on and inherited under exactly the same natural principle.

The sort of doubts that have been raised about the government's attitude in this regard have been fuelled, Mr Speaker, by the actions of the honourable member for Elsey. There are many examples. The Chief Minister sits back there and sniggers. But his very own national advertising campaign was not entirely devoid of a few little racist elements. We will get on to that some other time.

What I do propose to place on record now is just a question: how can Aboriginal people trust anybody, trust any government, that allows one of its representatives, whether a backbencher or whoever, to use the sort of Nazi-type propaganda that was used by the honourable member for Elsey in the displays that led up to that infamous little march in Katherine a week or so ago? If Aboriginal people and people who live anywhere else in Australia have any doubts about the sincerity of this government in regard to a recognition of Aboriginal land rights, I believe that the Country Liberal Party government here has the numbers on the board. We have had it time and time again in this Assembly: the extension of town boundaries etc. Look at the array of faces on the front-bench. They are all involved in it. I will make a couple of notable exceptions. There is the doe-eyed, Hellenic grace of the Minister for Transport ...

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will withdraw that remark. I find the remark objectionable and I request the honourable member to withdraw it.

Mr BELL: Certainly, if it causes the honourable Minister for Transport and Works any concern, I will withdraw it.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask you to withdraw it now, and unreservedly.

Mr BELL: I unreservedly withdraw the remark.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member for MacDonnell.

Mr BELL: I do not think that I really need to go on too much further. The last comment I want to make, and would have made yesterday if the honourable Leader of the House had not chosen to take up most of my adjournment debate with frivolous points of order, is that all Territorians must have doubts about the interests of this government in recognising Aboriginal rights in land, whether it is through the federal Land Rights Act or any other way, because of the sort of political tactics that you yourself have used, Sir. I do not believe that I can have confidence. In fact, I will speak a little longer because I think that the point needs to be made. I took the reasonably unusual step of asking a question of the Speaker which was not answered yesterday. I ask members to exercise a little forbearance because I think it needs to be ...

Mr SPEAKER: You will do a lot better to ask the Speaker to have a little forbearance.

Mr BELL: I am not quite sure in which area I should seek your forbearance, Sir. The question I asked was whether the recent statements that have been made were by the member for Elsey, endorsing as they did such racist ideas and threatening the good conduct of business of this Assembly. That question, of course, was not answered. I am quite satisfied that the customary pugnacity of the member for Elsey is such that one would not accuse him of being in any way malicious. However, I do not really expect that people who do not know him as well as I do would be as satisfied. Quite clearly the chances that the good conduct of business is being threatened ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr STEELE (Primary Production): Mr Speaker, the opposition asked some questions today on several matters. One was about payments to various persons and other questions dealt with companies and allied matters. I wish to deal with the question asked in respect of Mr Willoughby and Mr Dalziel. This morning I said that I was not aware of any government payments to Mr Willoughby or Mr Dalziel. But following the honourable member's questions, I asked the Northern Territory Development Corporation for a full briefing.

I am advised that Mr Willoughby was paid \$1918.24 on 13 January 1981 against specific accounts in relation to a Northern Territory unofficial delegation to Taiwan in September-October 1980. Members will be aware that Australia and Taiwan do not have diplomatic relations. Nevertheless, trade continues and it is in the Territory's interest to maintain contact with Taiwan. At the time, Mr Willoughby was the principal of the Australia Taiwan Business Bureau and was recommended to the NTDC by the appropriate Commonwealth authorities. He arranged a detailed itinerary for the mission and a number of important government and business contacts. His work in connection with this mission was most valuable.

No payment has ever been made to Mr Dalziel. As far as I can determine, he has not acted in any capacity for the Northern Territory government.

Mr Speaker, the question of Mr Koh's appointment was also raised this morning, I think in relation to the North Brick company. I will deal with both matters more or less at the same time. The application by the North Brick company came to the NTDC in September 1981 and the loan was approved by the board in May 1982. Mr Koh, according to 4 letters which I am prepared to table, Mr Speaker, was appointed retrospectively to 1 August on 6 August. Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table 2 letters from Mr Koh, 1 from the Northern Territory Development Corporation and 1 from the Chief Minister.

Leave granted.

Mr STEELE: Mr Speaker, the member for Sanderson asked the minister to inform the Assembly whether there was any other security for the \$600 000 loan by the NTDC to North Brick Industries Pty Ltd apart from the fixed charge dated 27 July 1982. Security to the NTDC comprised: a first mortgage for North Brick Industries Pty Ltd over brickworks, portion 2426 Hundred of Bagot ranking pari passu with Amray Australia Ltd and the NTDC; a first mortgage from North Clay Pty Ltd over section 378 Hundred of Strangways ranking pari passu with Amray Australia Ltd; deed of charge over all the undertakings of North Brick Industries Pty Ltd and North Clay Pty Ltd pari passu with Amray Australia Ltd and the NTDC; deed of pari passu between Amray and the NTDC; shareholders' agreement regarding the shareholders' contributions to further equity funding; and a caveat lodged over Darwin Town Area Lease No 1672.

Mr Speaker, I have some other information here in reply to the other question regarding this loan: 'Did the stated purpose for the loan of North Brick Industries Pty Ltd include the purchase of plant and equipment for the proposed clay brickworks?' My information is that the total project value was in the order of \$3.9m. \$1.8m was provided by the principals, \$1.18m was provided from Amray, \$600 000 was provided from the Northern Territory Development Corporation for land and working capital and there are 2 other amounts: trustee executives, \$50,000 and leasing components, \$195 000.

The Leader of the Opposition asked this question this morning: 'Were the professional costs and personal expenses of Mr Hagen S. Steher on all his trips to the Territory to investigate the tuna fishing industry paid for from the Northern Territory Fisheries Research and Development Fund or were these costs met directly by the NTDC?' From what I can ascertain, this gentleman was here for 2 purposes: to conduct an aerial evaluation of pelagic fish resources, including tuna, and other assistance to the Fisheries Division. This involved an amount paid for his services of \$2485.60. Mr Hagen Steher's work for the NTDC related to the Dolphin V. He was commissioned by the NTDC to advise the corporation on the following: the suitability of the vessel for use in Australian fisheries, particularly in the Northern Territory; any further adaptation in rigging of the vessel that may be necessary; the vessel's suitability for charter; any possible sale alternatives for use in other states' fisheries; and any other comments in respect of usage of the vessel in its current standard.

Mr Speaker, the NTDC paid a number of accounts in respect of accommodation expenses for the 8 days spent in Darwin and, in total from the NTDC, he was paid \$6802. \$4213 of that was billed to the account under which the NTDC was operating on behalf of that client.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Tiwi): Mr Speaker, this afternoon I would like to comment on difficulties that my constituents at Jabiru are having getting accommodation, and reasonably-priced accommodation at that. Most of the people who live at Jabiru are employed by the mining companies or by the public service. But there is another sector of the community out there which is very important. Its importance will increase as Jabiru grows and becomes more like any other

Northern Territory town. I refer to the private sector of the community. I asked the honourable Minister for Lands and Housing this morning what were the prospects of the Housing Commission building reasonably-priced accommodation to be let at a reasonably-priced rent to these people at Jabiru. His answer was not very encouraging. It certainly was not encouraging to my constituents.

Mr Speaker, the people in the private sector at Jabiru provide important essential services. They operate supermarkets, banks, mechanical repair shops and garages. They work in clubs. They are mess employees. Some just work in or own ordinary shops. At the moment, there is no private housing at Jabiru. The people who are there are either there by the good grace of the Housing Commission through the allocation of public service housing or by the good grace of Ranger which is negotiating to let accommodation to the private sector.

Mr Speaker, if the people in the private sector at Jabiru cannot get reasonably-priced accommodation, it stands to reason that it will be reflected in the goods and services that they are selling at Jabiru. The end result will be that the cost of goods and services will become so high at Jabiru - because the accommodation cost to those people must be passed on if they are to stay solvent - that the people living at Jabiru will seek other places to obtain those goods and services, namely Darwin or places around Darwin. The vicious circle will continue and the people who have businesses at Jabiru will get even less business. I hope it does not happen but, finally, they could be forced out of business altogether. Jabiru will end up just a dormitory town housing mine employees and public servants.

I think it is very important, whilst we consider the uniqueness of the situation at Jabiru, that we also consider that it is in the Northern Territory and, like other Northern Territory towns, it must bear some semblance to other Northern Territory towns. The high cost of accommodation at the moment prohibits the town of Jabiru from becoming anything like an ordinary town compared to other Territory towns.

I have had strong representations made to me. I am also aware of the high cost of accommodation in Darwin. I will give some figures now which will show honourable members that the people in the private sector at Jabiru are definitely working at a disadvantage. For a 1-bedroom flat, a public servant in the new town of Jabiru pays \$48.70 per week, and a Ranger employee pays \$11.15 per week. A private person pays double the public service figure. For a 3-bedroom house, a public servant in the new town of Jabiru pays \$68.70, the Ranger employee pays \$13.15 whilst a person in the private sector pays double the public service figure. For a 4-bedroom house, the public servant pays \$74.40, the Ranger employee pays \$17.15 and the private person pays double the public service figure.

I realise that there are discrepancies in accommodation offered and rents charged in other places in the Territory but, in a town like Jabiru, where you have people living in such close proximity to each other, and they have all arrived more or less at the one time, these discrepancies are more apparent than in other places. Remembering what I can from the Minister for Lands and Housing's reply to my question this morning, it seems that it was the Commonwealth who decided that there would be no private accommodation at the time at Jabiru. It seems to me that somebody has to bring a little semblance of common sense into the situation. The first organisation to look into this should be the Jabiru Town Development Authority because, on that authority, there are representatives of the people who were signatories to the original head-lease which established the area of the town of Jabiru.

Mr Speaker, people talk about the expense of hiring caravan sites in Darwin and outside Darwin. In the old town of Jabiru, which is now called Jabiru East, the Ranger employee pays nothing for a caravan site. A private person in the old town of Jabiru pays \$35 a week for the site. At the new town of Jabiru, a Ranger employee pays \$10 a week - this is only for the site; he has to pay electricity and water charges on top of that - whilst a private person renting a caravan site at Jabiru pays \$63 a week for the site. Private people are definitely not encouraged to live and work at Jabiru and this will be to the detriment of the people of Jabiru and to the detriment of the mining industry.

People are not even encouraged to take meals in the Ranger mess there. It is suggested that they go to the Nationwide mess or buy their food from the takeaway shops. I suppose it is six of one, half a dozen of the other because the local people work at all these establishments. A little semblance of common sense has come into the situation. I will be writing to the Jabiru Town Development Authority to ask it to consider the situation because it is administering the town of Jabiru.

Another subject on which I would like to speak is in regard to the recent visit of Her Majesty the Queen to open the Naval Patrol Boat Base at Larrakeyah. I was honoured to be one of the people who received an invitation to go to this opening, as were all other members of this Assembly. The people there were very enthusiastic and entered into the spirit of the happy occasion. Everybody greeted the Queen as our Queen of the Commonwealth of Australia, and also as the Queen of England. At the outset, I say that I am a royalist through and through. If the choice were up to me, I would prefer perhaps a King or Queen of Australia living in Australia but I do not think that this will come to pass while we have the present Queen. She is not doing a bad job. She has my allegiance completely.

Mr Speaker, I read with some interest the newspaper reports of Her Majesty's walk through the Mall. It gave me a lot of pleasure, and it gave a lot of pleasure to some of my constituents, that she was received so enthusiastically by the people, especially by the children. They showed their enthusiasm by happy remarks to her and also by giving her flowers.

I would like to point out that there seems to be a tendency to knock anything nationalistic or anything concerned with royalty. Whether these people like it or not and whether they are died-in-the-wool republicans, the fact of the matter is that we have a Queen and we owe her allegiance. She represents the national feeling of this country as well as other countries.

There is a family in my electorate who live in the rural area. The boy of the family goes to a school in the rural area and he and his class were brought to town to see the Queen. He is a teenager. You sometimes expect teenagers to be a bit cynical about pomp and circumstance but he really enjoyed the visit and he really enjoyed seeing the Queen. His sister, on the other hand, goes to one of the high schools in Darwin. She was actively encouraged to take a very cynical outlook on the visit of the Queen. She was actively encouraged in this cynical outlook by certain teachers at the school. This is what I am pointing up, Mr Deputy Speaker: this knocking of all things nationalistic and loyal. It really comes back to people not caring that they live in this beautiful country of Australia. These people like to live here but do not seem to want to take any responsibility for it. These people do not want to accept the loyal and national feelings that other people have in this country. They are doing everything in their power to influence some of the children in their care to think the same way that they do. I greatly deprecate this knocking of the happy national feeling that most people have toward the visit of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mrs O'NEIL (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the Territory's senior citizens who are celebrating Senior Australia Week. I was pleased to be able to attend the function in your electorate, Mr Deputy Speaker. Although the percentage of older Territory residents is small compared to the rest of Australia, the contribution which they make and have made to our way of life is substantial. I refer particularly to those who have come to the Territory or who were born in the Territory and who have stayed to make their home here. They are the people who have added the element of stability to the European sector of our community which has always suffered from the otherwise transient nature of the population. I would like particularly to pay tribute today to the women who have made the Territory their home. While in no way detracting from the very great contribution the men have made in the Territory, I particularly wish to refer to the women because I feel their very substantial role in ensuring the development of the Territory, which did in fact occur, has been largely unrecorded and certainly overshadowed by what most historians seem to regard as the more sensational role of men.

In terms of sheer numbers, women in the Territory have been overshadowed by men. The first Territory census in 1871 showed that there were 29 non-Aboriginal women. Only 12 of them were adults compared to 172 men. By federation in 1901, there were only 487 women to 3609 men. I have particular sympathy and admiration for and indeed some curiosity about the one Chinese woman who was listed in the 1881 census figures along with 2722 men. Indeed, the fact that the pioneer Territory women had to survive in what was basically a man's world in those early years of development accentuates the quality of determination and, I suggest, good humour which most of them must have had. It was this particular strength of character, handed down to generations of Territorians, which I believe is one of our greatest heritages.

The very earliest white women who came to the Territory must have been women of incredible courage and stamina, given the social climate of the times and the physical and climatic conditions of the Territory. I think of the women who came here from England with the first British arrivals in the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s, of Mrs Emma Lambric, wife of Lt George Lambrick, who went with her husband to Port Essington and died there along with 2 of her small children. I think of the 2 women who went with the first South Australian expeditions to Escape Cliffs with their husbands and lived in tents in sweltering conditions. One of them, Mrs Packard, later returned to the Territory as one of the first settlers in Port Darwin. One of the men who observed her at Escape Cliffs, a Mr Herbert, later said of her: 'She shared some rough experiences with her husband, displaying through all a pluck and cheerfulness that won for her the admiration of all with whom she came in contact'.

The women who first came to Darwin in 1870 after Goyder and his men had surveyed the township formed the stable element which was to ensure that the community grew. The brief story of one of them, who happens to be the grandmother of one of my constituents, exemplifies the point I am making about these pioneer women. Mrs Eliza Tuckwell arrived in South Australia from England in the immigrant ship Norman in the 1850s as a servant girl. She soon met and married Ned Tuckwell, then foreman of the railway yard in Adelaide, but destined to become one of the true builders of the Territory. He accompanied McKinlay to Escape Cliffs in the 1860s and was responsible for building a horse raft which later saved the lives of McKinlay's men. He later accompanied Goyder to Port Darwin in 1868 and 1869 as the ship's carpenter. Eliza was on the first ship bringing settlers to the place in January 1870, which also saw the arrival of Chief Inspector Foelsche and then Acting Resident Millner.

Eliza travelled with 4 children whom she made as comfortable as possible in the makeshift tent which formed the first Darwin town area known as the Camp on Fort Hill. I do not have time to go into the fascinating details of her life at that time. But the point I want to make is that she stayed. She had 3 more children in Darwin and outlived all but one of them. Her husband died in 1882 and, within a year, she had established a boarding house in Mitchell Street and well and truly made it clear she was making the Territory her home. She survived a cyclone in 1897 which wrecked her home but did not dampen her spirit. She went on to fight for her old age pension taking her case to the Government Resident.

When she finally died in 1921, she was the oldest European female resident in the Territory. Her daughter Eleanor, who had been born in 1874 and married Thomas Styles in the 1890s, had given birth to 4 daughters all of whom stayed in the Territory. Their names are well known to old Territorians: Lillian Lovegrove, Gertrude Eastern, Myrtle Fawcett and the only one still alive, Mrs Eileen Fitzner, now resident in Fannie Bay. Many of their children have also remained in the Territory; Creed Lovegrove and Pam Rixon, for example, are both well-known to members of this Assembly. Their children are now producing a fifth generation of Territorians.

There are several such families. Indeed, several members of this Assembly have had long associations with the Territory. There are families who have survived cyclones, wars and other hardships to return again and again to the Territory. I pay tribute to them and their tenacity.

The women and families who built Darwin, of course, are only one part of our history. There are the women and their families in the outback, who helped pioneer lonely stations in remote townships, women who joined in the development of the mines across the Territory, the emigrant women who came here with their husbands and parents to build a new home in a harsh climate and the women who ran hospitals and hotels in remote outback areas where they were often the only white woman in a radius of hundreds of miles. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, I cannot make this tribute to our women pioneers without mentioning the very significant contribution that Aboriginal women and women of non-European cultures have made to the development of this cosmopolitan community in which we find ourselves today. Not only did they have the responsibility of raising their own families but, in many cases, they accepted the roles of servants and midwives to help the more rigid and socially-demanding European women to adjust to the climate and way of life which they encountered in the Territory. I suspect that their unsung role had a not inconsiderable amount to do with at least a proportion of some women and many men deciding to bear with the rigours of Territory life.

There were other women who merely passed through the Territory but, by the very nature of their passing, must have been an inspiration to the women and indeed men who lived here. I am speaking of such women as the famous aviator Amy Johnson who stopped in Darwin on her record breaking flight to England and Mrs Emily Craig who, in 1883, accompanied her husband and the French explorer, Ernest Favenec, on a 6 month exploration trip on horseback from Queensland to Darwin. Perhaps this point was better made by Sir Baldwin Spencer than I when, in 1923, he was quoted as saying:

Some time, it may be realised that Australia owes a duty to its pioneer women. We hear of monuments being erected to pioneer men but, when you have been out in the Never Never country, you begin to feel that, in Canberra, there should be at least one great monument dedicated to the pioneer women. The women of the backblocks live in a state of almost complete isolation and loneliness, and Australia owes them a great debt.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I agree with those sentiments and pay tribute to those women who helped pioneer the Territory. I would also like to pay a tribute to the very real contribution which the senior citizens of today have also made to our unique way of life. I thank them and I wish them well in their celebrations throughout this week. I am very happy, Sir, to be able to say that, in my own electorate, we have very many of those senior citizens resident in Darwin.

While talking on the question of our older community members, I will take the opportunity to raise concerns which are constantly raised with me about the Palmerston Nursing Home. When it was first announced that a home was to be built by private enterprise in the new Palmerston town area, I had some reservations about the proposal but felt it best not to express them at that time because I certainly had not heard anything from the potential users, who are the ones that count. But since that time, I have had repeatedly raised with me - and I know other members, perhaps even yourself, Sir, have had it raised with them - concerns about that building by users, potential users and the families of people who would be expected to use a nursing home. The principal problem is that potential users of that nursing home have not been consulted at any time as far as I can gather by the people who are building it. They are very hard people to get in contact with indeed. They seem to have made no effort at all to get in contact with the older people of the Territory who will be using that nursing home. I hope that that will be corrected fairly shortly. It may be a bit late - building is proceeding. But I certainly hope that the consumers and potential consumers of that nursing home which is being constructed in Palmerston are approached by the firm which is building it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I presented a petition yesterday signed by members of Amnesty International in the Northern Territory. Perhaps by way of explanation I can inform honourable members of the information which that organisation gave me about the case the petition referred to. Since this is an international matter, perhaps some honourable members feel it is inappropriate to ask the government of the Northern Territory to intercede with the South Korean government relating to a prisoner held there. But I recall quite clearly the words of the honourable Chief Minister in debate in this Assembly on Thursday 27 November 1980. He was commenting on a report from the honourable member for Arnhem on his visit to a conference in Zambia. The Chief Minister said:

I notice that the honourable member did not mention the number of political prisoners in the jail in Zambia and Tanzania. No doubt no one asked any questions about these sorts of things while they were there. It is a great shame that some of the people at these conferences, while they have the guts to get up and put their point of view about things that are wrong in their own country, do not sometimes say things about things that are happening in the host country.

Being aware of those sentiments of the Chief Minister, I was able to inform members of Amnesty International that their petition would not fall entirely on deaf ears, knowing that the government of the Northern Territory - and we saw reports recently - has indeed contacts with the South Korean government.

The background to the case is as follows. Kim Yong-gi and 2 other students at a university in Seoul were detained on 29 September 1981 for their role in a demonstration on the university campus on that day. During the demonstration, students distributed a leaflet entitled 'Declaration of Anti-facist Struggle - signed All Democratic Students'. The leaflet criticised some of the government

policies and called on students to participate in a silent demonstration on 16 October. The criticisms related to, among other things, the government's economic policies, especially its reliance on foreign loans and investments and its policies of low agricultural prices and low wages, its policy over the holding of the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul and its restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and association imposed by the recently revised law on assemblies and demonstrations under labour laws. The students also complained of the excessive use of force by riot police when called in to break up a demonstration and criticised the Minister for Education for having threatened to suppress student demonstrations with firearms.

Kim Yong-gi and 2 other students were charged under the law on assemblies and demonstrations on 7 October 1981. This law bans assemblies and demonstrations undermining public order or those which it is feared will cause social unrest and provides for a maximum penalty of 7 years' imprisonment. It also allows the police to intervene in all demonstrations held outdoors.

Amnesty International believes that he is imprisoned for the non-violent expression of his political opinions in violation of his right to freedom of expression and association. It therefore adopted him as a prisoner of conscience and urges his immediate and unconditional release.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker MacFarlane took the Chair at 10 am.

TABLED PAPERS

Royal Commission into Australian Meat Industry Report

Mr STEELE (Primary Production)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I table the Report of the Royal Commission into the Australian Meat Industry.

This report is of vital importance both to the national meat industry and to the pastoral meat industry of the Northern Territory. You will appreciate that, under current meat inspection arrangements, the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industry provides a service to all export abattoirs. My department provides a service for meat destined for the domestic market. It is important to appreciate the difference because, in the context of the Royal Commission's report, one must clearly distinguish between the 2 departments. This is of even more significance in light of the fact that approximately 90% of cattle slaughtered in the Territory are killed in licensed export abattoirs. As a consequence of this in so far as it relates to the Northern Territory, the report of the Royal Commission is addressed principally to the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industry. The report contains no abject criticism of the Northern Territory government or its meat inspection service but it does provide some constructive recommendations. The report dwells on the legislative inadequacies of the Abattoirs and Slaughtering Act. Some time ago, the government directed that a major review of this legislation be undertaken and, as a result, I shall sponsor in this Assembly a new meat industry bill to replace the present act. The bill is designed to remedy deficiencies in regard to control of the operation, not just of abattoirs but the whole chain of establishments involved in the processing and sale of meat. Under the provisions of the bill, the transportation of meat will also be subject to tighter controls.

The government welcomes Justice Woodward's recommendation that the Northern Territory Meat Inspection Service be merged into a single system under the control of the federal Department of Primary Industry with an administrative base in Darwin instead of Adelaide. This is another example of where the Northern Territory has led the way nationally: we proposed this course of action long before the Commonwealth identified the need for rationalisation of meat inspection in Australia. The Department of Primary Production has already entered into detailed negotiations with the federal Department of Primary Industry with a view to the implementation of a single meat inspection authority for the Territory. This initiative will result in a more efficient and cost-effective system, and offer our Territory inspectors the prospect of improved career progression.

Honourable members will recall that a Pet Meat Act was passed in this Assembly and regulations to that act have already been drafted. The branding provisions of this statute will ensure the clear identification of pet meat. In summary, as far as criticism is concerned, I am pleased to be able to say that very little in the report applies to the Northern Territory. The little there is is mostly of an historical nature related to weaknesses which have been or are being eliminated. It goes without saying that the government is fully cognisant of the importance of the pastoral and beef industry to the Northern Territory's economy and welfare. We greatly appreciate the Royal Commissioner's extensive review of the meat industry and welcome his constructive recommendations, all of which are being implemented as quickly as possible by this government. The government believes the steps it has implemented to tighten controls over pet meat and improve the meat inspection system will add to the wealth and status of the beef industry in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I move that the report be noted.

Motion agreed to.

Kirton and Whiting Report on the Review of Urban-based Health
Centres in the Northern Territory

Mr TUXWORTH (Health)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I table the Kirton and Whiting Report on the Review of Urban-based Community Health Centres in the Northern Territory.

In July 1981, the government decided that a review of community health services should be carried out to determine whether they meet the changing needs of the community. Miss Terry Whiting of the resource management consultants, Kirton and Whiting, was commissioned to undertake a review of community health services in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Jabiru. Miss Whiting is widely experienced in the establishment and ongoing review of community health services. She was employed by the Victorian Health Commission for 7 years to establish community health programs and set up community health groups to monitor and evaluate community health services. Since then, she has worked as a consultant with the Victorian and Commonwealth governments in the area of community health.

The objectives of the review were: to identify functions performed by the centres; to determine which functions were effective and which were ineffective; to point out gaps and overlaps in functions; and to make recommendations concerning alternative services and possible restructuring. Miss Whiting spent a minimum of 1 week at each of the community health centres talking with the people involved in the preventative and curative health-care fields. Through these discussions, and because of her knowledge and expertise in this field, she developed a thorough understanding of the needs of different communities and the functions of the health centres.

The 3-month review is now complete and Miss Whiting has submitted her report. Community health staff participated in the review. In fact, the whole exercise was carried out with their complete cooperation and involvement. Miss Whiting discussed her proposed recommendations with the staff and their input greatly assisted in the production of this report. As part of the government's consideration of the Kirton and Whiting Report, I believe it is necessary that the recommendations be considered by members of the public and interested bodies. At the same time, the Department of Health will seek detailed responses from its regional administration and community health staff who will be involved in the consideration and assessment of the report.

The report indicates that each health centre must reconsider its role in the community so that services appropriate to the needs of consumers are available. This is necessary because the needs of the various communities in the Territory differ greatly. One major trend of the recommendations is that hospitals should form a closer bond with regional health services. A principal function of community health services is in the area of preventative care. They should encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyles, educate them about health matters and provide a community support service. However, accidents happen and people fall ill. This is where hospitals play a part in health care. They are not only an essential part of the community's health services but a special part with a particular role to play in the network of health services available to the individual. To be of most benefit, this network should provide a coordinated approach to the care of the individual with no barrier between community health centres and hospitals.

The report indicates that a system of quality assurance, which has been introduced in some community health centres, is excellent and should be extended throughout the Territory. This system has been in effect in certain hospitals and health services for some time and has been fostered through the efforts of the Northern Territory Quality Assurance Committee. Over the years, Mr Speaker, much has been made of the importance of financial and audit functions in the delivery of health care but there has not been much emphasis on the quality of services. I would like to congratulate the medical and nursing professions for their initiative in this very important area.

The report also makes the point that the way our health professionals participate in the development and implementation of health care programs is changing. This leads to the concept of the generalist nurse. The Territory leads the way in fostering the development of generalist nurses and actively assists and encourages community health staff to gain the required skills. Full implementation of the concept will allow allied health professionals to adopt a different role in the health resource team, more like a consultant role, that will assist the nurse practitioner in areas requiring specialist skills.

Discussions are proceeding on the establishment of a child assessment and development unit. I raised this matter in the Assembly during the budget debate yesterday, Mr Speaker. The unit would draw on the varied skills of the allied health professional group and would provide a multi-disciplinary approach to paediatric problems. This proposal is being considered by a number of people in government departments, community groups and professional organisations which would be involved in the operations of the unit. A number of ideas are being looked at but I stress that, as yet, no firm proposal has been placed before me. I take this opportunity to advise that I would be pleased to receive the comments and suggestions of honourable members on this issue.

Mr Speaker, when the proposal comes to fruition, the government would like the unit to be named in honour of Dr Helen Phillips MBE who was a pioneer in the field of child assessment in the Territory. Dr Phillips played a major role in establishing community health services and was instrumental in the development of the infant health and school screening programs.

Copies of the Kirton and Whiting Report on the Review of Urban-based Community Health Centres will be dispatched to interested people and organisations. Other copies are available from the Department of Health if they are required. I ask honourable members to consider the report carefully and, if possible, give me their comments within the next 6 weeks. This should give ample time in which to consider the matter and provide advice.

I intend to maintain the impetus created during the review period. I know that community health staff who were actively involved in the review process will wish to implement improvements in their operations as soon as possible. The commissioning of this report indicates the importance that the government places on the community health team in improving the health standard of Territorians. It is an important step towards our goal of ensuring that Territorians achieve the highest possible standard of health and get the best value for their health dollar.

Mr Speaker, I look forward to receiving the comments of honourable members and move that the report be noted.

Debate adjourned.

Reports of the Subordinate Legislation
and Tabled Papers Committee

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I table the fifth and sixth reports of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee. I move that the reports be noted.

The sixth report gives details of the reason why the committee recommended that Copy Paper No 256 be disallowed.

Mrs LAWRIE (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I rise as a member of the committee to speak to these reports. Once again, my main concern is to bring to the attention of the Assembly the need of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee to have independent legal advice when it so desires. This recommendation has been espoused by the chairman and other members of the committee several times now. If they look at the fifth report, honourable members will see that we have dealt with 30 separate sets of regulations, some of them very comprehensive and requiring fine attention to detail. Not one person on the committee is a qualified lawyer and that is the point. We must have access to independent legal advice when the committee considers it necessary.

The chairman and I attended a meeting of subordinate legislation committees in Canberra. Other people came from Commonwealth countries outside Australia and all said the same thing. Those committees which already have independent legal advice considered themselves to be in a far better position to peruse the material than those which did not. That would seem quite logical. Some committees had faced the wrath of their Treasurers and Attorney-Generals who had tried to insist that they use Crown law officers. The committees pointed out that those same officers are largely responsible for the drafting of regulations and they would prefer independent and fresh advice. Mr Speaker, the motion for disallowance of one set of regulations would seem to prove my point.

I draw the attention of honourable members also to the fact that paper 269 relates to the financial statements of the Darwin City Council for 1978-79 and 1979-80 which were tabled on 2 September 1982. Your committee, through its chairman, looks askance at this late tabling of the report but it is doing all it can to take remedial action to ensure that relevant departments table reports within the specified time. This involves the committee in a fair amount of work and I would like to thank the officers for carrying out the administrative tasks which we heap upon their shoulders.

Mr Speaker, to give honourable members an idea of the problems facing the committee, tabled paper 248 deals with the Weights and Measures (Date-Marking of Prepackaged Goods) Regulations. Paragraph 3(f), relates to prepackaged food. The paragraph concerned specifies food which is not to be included: 'pre-packaged food where the sum of the maximum dimension and the maximum circumference or perimeter that is perpendicular to that maximum dimension of the pre-packaged food does not exceed 250 mm unless intended to be finally supplied in a primary package'. That is certainly comprehensive but a little difficult initially to understand. Some members may not have the same obligation or opportunity to study regulations closely. I wish to bring to their attention that regulations should be drafted in as simple a manner as possible, as should the act which validates them, because these regulations are binding on members of the public. If they flout the regulations, they are contravening the act and are subject to a penalty. I ask that ministers responsible for having regulations promulgated under various acts ask their advisers and the draftsmen to take heed of these remarks and draft the regulations in as precise and simple

language as possible to protect members of the public who otherwise may contravene the regulations unknowingly.

Mr Speaker, I also wish to draw the attention of the Assembly to paper 261 which relates to the revocation of a reserve, a land matter. The information initially supplied by the department was confusing and seems to conflict with the schedule supplied. Additional information was sought by our chairman which clarified matters. The committee has been critical of various government departments in the past for not providing sufficient information to allow the committee to do its work without having to refer back to a department. I feel that, in matters of land particularly, the greatest assistance by way of explanation, detail and relevant drawings should be provided to the committee at the time the papers are tabled. We should not have to go back and ask for additional information.

Mr ROBERTSON (Education): Mr Speaker, I will speak very briefly on one matter raised by the honourable member for Nightcliff: the complexity of wording which occasionally appears in regulations. I think it is widely known that I have said on many an occasion that the public is entitled to the simplest language possible in laws with which it has to work. In this case, however - and this is not an excuse but a reason - these regulations are drawn up by national conferences of so-called experts. I am afraid it is the type of thing in which the public and this Assembly occasionally become entangled. These regulations were agreed to nationally by various conferences on weights and measures and consumer protection organisations and officers of all states in the Commonwealth. Of course, for us to use wording at variance with that which pertains in the states would probably cause even greater confusion.

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, in relation to the suggestion by the honourable member for Nightcliff that independent legal advice be provided to the committee, could I first say that this is the first motion for disallowance of regulations that I can recall. I suggest that that is not such a bad record for the officers of the parliamentary draftsman's office over a period of 7 or 8 years. The suggestion made by the honourable member for Nightcliff is appealing and readily acceptable on the surface. The government has ensured that a great deal of legal work, especially that required by departments and statutory authorities, is channelled into the private sector. Unfortunately, with regulations and other matters that come before this Assembly, there are often many factors that operate behind the scenes. My colleague, the Minister for Community Development, has just outlined to us the situation in respect of the particular regulation of which the honourable member for Nightcliff complained. Of course, one would think that a mathematician would have been of greater assistance than a lawyer in interpreting that particular regulation. Mathematics is not my long suit. There are many factors operating behind the scenes in areas such as this that make it more desirable that senior government lawyers support this committee.

I am prepared to undertake that, if the committee makes a request for legal assistance, that request will be attended to by one or other of the statutory law officers. Probably they are both listening to this on the landline that takes our debates over to the Department of Law. If so, I ask them to note that undertaking and ensure that it is implemented. But the fact is that, whoever gives legal advice to this committee, can provide it only on a specific query or set of instructions. If the committee seeks advice on specific regulations or other matters, I undertake that it will be attended to by the Solicitor-General or the Crown Solicitor, whoever is more appropriate in the circumstances. They have their duties to carry out under the act and are in no way constrained by any earlier decisions that may have been taken by drafting officers. I might say

that, in matters of drafting, the Legislative Draftsman operates completely independently from the Department of Law and is in fact only administratively subject to the control and support of the Department of Law. In effect, the advice that is received from these statutory law officers will, in my view, be as independent as any other that might be obtained and much more informed.

Motion agreed to; reports noted.

MOTION

Regulations 1982, No 50 Small Claims Regulations

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): I move that Regulations 1982, No 50 Small Claims Regulations, tabled in this Assembly on 17 August 1982, be disallowed.

Motion agreed to.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 264)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr TUXWORTH (Health): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Speaker, this bill contains a number of matters which are designed to facilitate the operation of the act. The majority of clauses are of a machinery nature. Clause 4, however, changes the composition of the commission by adding one more member. This should give the commission more flexibility in its day-to-day operations.

Clause 5 refers to the tenure of office of members of the commission. Under section 8 of the act, a person who has attained the age of 65 years shall not be appointed as a member. In the future, these provisions could limit severely the appointment of a valuable and worthwhile citizen who may be 65 years or older. Clause 5 will omit subsection (2) of section 8 thereby allowing a person over the age of 65 years either to be appointed or to remain as a member of the commission.

It has also been found, Mr Speaker, that section 27(1) of the act, which gives an applicant for a liquor licence only 14 days after lodging an application in which to advertise in the NT Government Gazette and other newspapers is impracticable. Particularly for the NT Government Gazette, this 14-day period is too short. Clause 6 of the bill before the Assembly will give the applicant 28 days in which to lodge the required advertisement.

Clauses 7 and 8 correct another problem with the act. Under section 34(1), applications for the renewal of a liquor licence were required to be lodged not less than 14 days prior to the expiry of the licence. In practice, this 14-day period has caused some unnecessary complications. Clause 7 proposes that the 14-day period be deleted and simply requires the applicant to lodge an application before the date of expiry of the licence. Clause 8 is an amendment consequent upon the amendment proposed in clause 7.

Currently, even though a licence fee is not paid, a licence continues in force. There is no provision for revoking a licence for which the fee has not been paid. Clause 9 proposes that a licence shall not continue in force if the licensee has not paid the fee within 14 days of receiving notice that the fee is payable.

Under section 96 of the act, when a thing is seized at the time of making a charge relating to a restricted area - for example, seizure of a car found to be carrying liquor - and the thing is not declared forfeit by the court, the only way it can be returned to the owner is by order of the Chairman of the Liquor Commission. Clause 10 proposes that a magistrate have the power to return property which the court does not declare forfeit.

In March 1981, in a special case stated, it was decided that the Liquor Commission did not have the power to require licensees to keep records in any particular form. Currently, section 3 merely requires a licensee to keep a written record. Clause 11 proposes to correct this matter by requiring that records be kept in a form approved by the commission. This amendment is necessary because proper records are essential if the commission is to be certain of the fee to be paid on liquor purchases. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

FISH AND FISHERIES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 230)

Continued from 19 August 1982.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this simple bill corrects deficiencies in the definition section of the principal act and also provides for increased penalties in respect of protection of the Northern Territory's barramundi stocks. The opposition supports the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Tiwi): Mr Speaker, as long as the fishing industry is one of harvesting not husbanding, we must have a strong control over our fish resources. I thoroughly agree with the principle and the spirit with which I hope this legislation will be carried out. It is a tightening up of the legislation to protect our fish resources in the sea. The legislation aims to do this by increasing fines for second and subsequent offences and by providing that people must be able to explain why they are in possession of gill-nets, whether they are legally in possession of them or not.

I can see legislation dealing with the fishing industry being tightened still more in the future if common sense does not prevail in harvesting of the resources. Bag limits have been imposed on amateur fishermen for some time. Before they were imposed, I asked questions about it as a result of queries put to me by wildlife rangers and bushmen. These people have an honest concern for their fishing resources and could see even then that there would be a depletion.

I hope that the legislation does not have to be tightened still further in the future but I think it may have to be if there are abuses of the system. Some people have been interested in fish farming ventures. In the interests of the fishing industry, I hope these will prove successful. If they are, we may not have to look so carefully at our fishing industry in the Northern Territory with regard to restrictions on the taking of fish by the public. We must continue to fight to preserve the fish stocks in Territory waters for people who work from Northern Territory ports and belong to the Northern Territory. I hope it is a long time before further restrictions are introduced. I support this legislation.

Mr EVERINGHAM (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I am very pleased with the general support of opposition and government members for this legislation which is designed to further protect an important resource.

I take this opportunity to apologise to you, Sir, and other honourable members. I have to depart from this Assembly this afternoon at about 2.30 to go by plane to Hobart for a meeting of the Australian Fisheries Council where I will represent my colleague, the Minister for Primary Production, who will leave tomorrow to lead a trade and investment mission into South-east Asia. At the meeting tomorrow, the west of the Wessels fishery proposal will be brought formally before the Australian Fisheries Council. Please excuse my departure.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

HOUSING BILL (Serial 240)

Continued from 1 September 1982.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, the opposition welcomes the bill in general terms. It represents a sensible updating of existing legislation. There are, however, matters in the bill that I would like to address, in particular, a clause that we will seek to defeat at the appropriate time.

Clause 16(4), which will give selling power in some circumstances, is supported. As the minister noted in his second-reading speech, this will enable the commission to engage in the acquisition and development of land or land and house packages for immediate sale to persons who may not otherwise be eligible for the purposes of the commission's sales scheme. The commission will be able to sell to all corners developed land and or dwellings built expressly for sale. While it is not the government's intention that the commission should use this power to compete directly with private developers or real estate agents, it is noted that the possibility of that happening will remain. The provision will allow the commission to effectively mix its rental accommodation with owner-occupied dwellings. That motion is supported.

Clause 23 is of considerable significance in that it allows the minister complete discretionary powers in the matter of rental determination. This will enable the commission to comply with the requirements of the present Commonwealth-states agreement and with any new or changed requirements which may emerge in the future, either by virtue of Commonwealth-Northern Territory relations or purely Northern Territory policy initiatives. When a federal Labor government renegotiates the Commonwealth-States Housing Agreement, the Northern Territory government will have no difficulty in facilitating the new arrangement.

The principles underlying clause 29 are supported by the opposition. This clause provides for all concessional terms of sales of dwellings under the various loans and sales schemes to be subject to an interest penalty if the dwelling is sold by the purchaser within 3 years of the date of purchase. The rationale that purchasers of Housing Commission or private dwellings, who receive the benefits of generous government interest rate concessions, should not be able to profit from the interest rate concession if they sell within 3 years is supported. The retrospective nature of this clause is noted and also supported, as is the retrospective nature of clause 36(3) which deals with NTPS staff sales.

The opposition cannot agree, however, with subclause (4) of clause 29 which reads: 'The amount which a mortgagee is required to pay under subsection (2) to the commission shall be deemed to be part of the principal sum of the loan'. Accordingly, I will be moving that that particular subclause be defeated. The

opposition's view is that the interest penalty should be in fact what it purports to be; that is, a penalty rather than an additional payment of principal. The penalty should not increase the seller's equity in the property.

The ministerial discretion provision in subclause (3) of clause 29 is the cause of some concern. While the difficulty in doing so is appreciated, it is felt that further elaboration of phrases such as 'extenuating circumstances' and 'genuine hardship' is necessary. I ask the honourable minister whether there are any guidelines for defining such 'extenuating circumstances' and 'genuine hardship'? I also ask when, in fact, the minister is likely to use his discretion. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not opposing the intent of this subclause but mention it in this context to highlight those particular aspects.

It is noted that the bill removes, in certain circumstances, the Housing Commission option to repurchase dwellings offered for sale within 3 years of purchase from the commission. Clause 36(2)(c), which provides for a single uniform sales formula for all dwellings sold by the commission, is welcomed. In his second-reading speech, the minister detailed the various formulae which will be replaced. The use of a concept of market value as determined by the Valuer-General will no doubt reduce the confusion which has applied in the now redundant formulae. I ask, however, whether the amendment in proposed clause 34A is consistent with the proposition. I understand this proposed clause is contained in the schedule of amendments circulated by the minister. I would appreciate some comment from him in that regard. Is this particular amendment consistent with the proposition that a single uniform sales formula for all dwellings sold by the commission should apply, as is mentioned elsewhere in the bill? Clause 34A reads: 'The minister may, in writing, determine the amount at which a dwelling, including the land on which the dwelling is situated, shall be sold under this act and, accordingly, the commission shall not sell that dwelling except at that amount so determined'. Presumably the minister would determine the sale price on the advice of the Valuer-General and there may be no conflict there. However, I would appreciate the minister's opinion in that regard.

There are 3 other matters mentioned by the minister to which I will briefly refer: firstly, the lifting of the requirement that tenants must serve a 2-year tenancy qualifying period before becoming eligible to purchase; secondly, a measure to the effect that concessional terms purchasers under the NTPS home sales scheme who resign or are dismissed should be permitted to reside in their dwellings but be liable for annual increases in interest rate payable of up to 2% per annum until a ceiling equivalent to the maximum rate of interest payable on a first mortgage under the Home Loans Scheme is reached; and, thirdly, a measure to the effect that concessional terms purchasers under the NTPS staff homes sales scheme, who sublet for profit, should be immediately liable to pay the maximum rate of interest applicable to a first mortgage under the Home Loans Scheme. Those 3 measures are supported. But, in relation to the last measure, I ask the honourable minister what is proposed in order to detect people who sublet for profit?

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Alice Springs): Mr Deputy Speaker, I welcome this bill. The measures will give flexibility and streamline certain processes which are necessary in this very important area of housing.

One element of the bill causes me concern, It is not vitally important but needs to be looked at. Much of the operation will be governed by regulation. I believe the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee will have an extra task. It will need to be particularly alert, scrutinise carefully the

regulations as they come out and raise matters in this Assembly if it seems that something is not to the advantage of the community as a whole.

All that aside, as I have just mentioned, there are many disadvantages. The main one is that it will allow a quick response to changing situations in the housing industry. The fact that regulations can be brought into effect more quickly is very important. The bill sets up the commission and defines its responsibilities and powers such as power to enter and take back commission property. It defines tenant responsibility for damage and for removal of illegal structures. If a tenant does not comply, the bill allows for such removal and the imposition of penalties.

It is quite clear in the bill that the commission is under ministerial control. The main function of the commission is to administer and prescribe housing schemes, mainly in regulations. The minister has the job of determining the rents. Under the Commonwealth-States Housing Agreement, there is pressure upon the minister to move towards market rents. This is of some concern because they are reasonably high in the Territory as a result, no doubt, of our buoyant economy. I noted with some interest that the member for MacDonnell mentioned that, when a federal Labor government comes, there would be no problem in renegotiating an agreement. There would be no problem then because, with the closing down of the uranium industry, the pressure on housing and the buoyancy of the economy would be such that the market rent would fall considerably.

I particularly welcome the provision which will allow the immediate sale of Housing Commission houses to people. This incentive will encourage the sale of homes. It will be well worth the effort for people to make sacrifices and accumulate the deposit to buy their own homes.

The bill will allow the minister powers, in certain cases, to authorise the sale of commission property. At the moment, apart from the various home sales schemes, the commission must either sell its property by public tender or by auction. There are situations where it would make very good sense if the minister could allow properties to be disposed of, say, to other government departments. This allows him that particular power. It also allows for participation in the secondary mortgage industry if it comes into being and, in particular, participation in immediate land and or house sales. As mentioned by the minister, this will be particularly important for the Palmerston area. The people there will see a considerable advantage in this.

It has been mentioned that it is not intended to compete with the private enterprise system. I doubt whether that is possible entirely. Some wisdom will be required in that area. If the private sector will build these houses, a lead can be given. The testing of the market may encourage the private sector. The fact that housing is to be sold at market value will definitely allow the private sector to compete on an equal basis with the Housing Commission.

Clause 29 involves an interest penalty to any mortgagee who sells his property within 3 years. This is to be backdated to the start of 1981. The aim is to prevent profiteering and the Home Loans Scheme has always been intended to encourage the permanent settlement of people in the Territory. There is allowance for the minister to consider special circumstances. It does not apply to persons who are required to move from the Territory on transfer or promotion. Obviously, that applies to the public service area but I hope it would also apply to people in private industry. There are occasions when people in firms in the Territory have to move for such reasons.

The interest rate for the Northern Territory Public Service staff homes

scheme was increased by 1% up to about 6%. The early sale of such houses will also involve a penalty interest rate and that again will be retrospective to 31 December 1980.

I am pleased to see one thing omitted from this bill: the 3-year term of joint ownership with the commission whereby, if you try to sell within that term, the commission has first option to purchase. That has always been an annoying factor. There are times when people are forced to sell and it is best that the sale go on the open market. The purpose of this bill is to regularise the sale of all dwellings. The various loan schemes have been different and that is rather unfair. I particularly welcome the provision that market value is to be determined by an independent valuer. This will allow competition on an equal footing with the private sector.

I also welcome the omission of the 2-year tenancy provision before a house can be purchased. I believe it is a great way to get people interested. Instead of paying rent for 2 years, a person can pay off a house. I believe that will have a great effect in settling people down in the Territory. I am also pleased to note that a choice of 2 houses is available. I would ask the minister to cover the particular point I am about to raise. If someone is renting a house, is he also allowed the choice of 2 other houses to purchase if he does not desire to buy the house he is in? I think most probably he is allowed a choice, but I would like to be reassured on that point.

The Northern Territory Public Service interest rate on the purchase of a house is about 6% at the moment. If someone resigns or is dismissed from the NTPS, the low rate of interest will increase annually by 2% until it is the same rate as the maximum for the Home Loans Scheme - about 12.5%. I ask whether it will be a retrospective provision dating back to the date of purchase. I agree that is a reasonable provision. At the moment I am buying my house through the scheme. It does not particularly worry me. Some would question whether the condition of service for public servants is fair compared to the private market, but that is another point for another time.

Subletting of Housing Commission homes by public servants for profit will attract the full 12.5% interest rate of the Home Loans Scheme. I believe that proposition is fair enough. The minister will have some discretion in this area which will no doubt be used with considerable caution.

I appreciate the reasons for the bill. I believe that it is flexible enough to cover the varying situations that we have in this developing Territory. I believe the minister will use his discretionary powers with wisdom. I know that the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee will be alert to the regulations and raise any matters which are of concern to it in this Assembly. I look forward to the operation of the bill and give it my support.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, as the member for MacDonnell has indicated, basically the opposition supports the contents of the bill. It is obvious to me that the primary aim of this bill is to reduce the differences between the 2 existing housing schemes: the general public and the public service housing schemes. For a number of years now, the government has made it clear that it is ultimately looking towards the amalgamation of these 2 schemes and that is a principle I support.

The government probably knows better than I how difficult it is to amalgamate those schemes but I have some experience of it. Last year, I was invited to serve on a working party set up by the Public Service Commissioner's Office. At that stage, its task was to present a report to the government which

would show how an amalgamation of the 2 schemes could be effected. That committee had to report by October or November last year. It became evident to the committee after a number of meetings that complete amalgamation of the 2 schemes just was not possible. I am pleased to say that the government accepted that view and, at this stage, has not attempted to amalgamate the 2 schemes completely.

However, there are a number of important steps contained within the bill which lead towards amalgamation. A number of common approaches to the 2 schemes have been adopted and I support these. There is an interest penalty if the house purchased under either scheme is sold within 3 years. If the purchase price per house is based on the market value, both schemes will abolish the qualifying period of ownership before application can be made to sell. In both schemes, there is the offer of 2 choices of houses for people who wish to purchase. I commend the government on the move it has taken towards amalgamation of the 2 schemes and I think that continuing steady progress can be made in these areas. Hopefully, it will be possible to completely amalgamate the schemes in the not too distant future. At that stage, one of the main prejudices that people in the private sector have against public servants - that they have better housing rights - should disappear.

Like the member for MacDonnell, I support clause 16(4) which will allow the Housing Commission to develop its own land and sell the land and or dwellings. This was a recommendation of the Housing Needs Inquiry which was tabled and debated in this Assembly earlier this year. My memory of the debate was that members on the government side indicated quite clearly that they were not interested in such a provision. In fact, I can remember the Minister for Community Development becoming quite uptight about the idea that the government would re-enter the subdivisional stakes. I think I pointed out at that time that it would be a good idea to reserve the right of government to enter into that area if it felt it necessary. I am glad to see that wiser heads have prevailed on the government side and that this power is contained within the new bill.

I would ask one question of the Minister for Lands and Housing at this stage. There is some concern on our side whether clause 16(3) will limit the power of the government to dispose of the land or housing under 16(4). As we read 16(3), the only way the government could dispose of land or housing under 16(4) is by public auction or after inviting public tenders for the purchase of the land or housing. As I read the minister's speech, this would be against the spirit of what he is attempting to do in 16(4). I ask the minister to comment on that particular point in his concluding remarks.

Mr Speaker, I was interested to look at clause 20 of the new bill which was in the old bill. It concerns the removal of illegal structures. The Housing Commission has acted quite properly and quite often under that section against a number of people in Housing Commission houses. In my short term in the Assembly, it has, for example, directed a number of my constituents to remove illegal structures, particularly garden sheds. This has been done. I have no objection to what the Housing Commission has been doing in this area, but it does point up a useful comparison to the government's attitude to breaches of covenants on pastoral properties. The government, through its Housing Commission, has been most prompt in sorting out illegal structures and illegal additions to buildings in urban areas but the government's tenants on pastoral properties, particularly in the last year, have had no restraints placed on them because of the government's decision during 1981 that it would not take action against pastoral property lessees who breached their covenants. I am pleased to acknowledge that

apparently the government has reversed that decision this year and instructed the Department of Lands to take action, where appropriate, to remedy breaches of covenants. It appeared to me that there was an interesting difference in its attitude to breach of covenants by tenants of Housing Commission properties and breach of covenants on pastoral properties.

I want to address briefly the vexed question of housing in Aboriginal communities. There have been rumours and statements that the present right of the department to construct housing for its employees on Aboriginal communities would, at some stage, be taken over by the Housing Commission. These rumours have been widespread, particularly in the Department of Education with which I have had most experience, and have caused some uncertainty as to whether the department was to have a continuing role in the provision of housing in Aboriginal communities or whether the Housing Commission would take over that task. It would be appreciated by a great number of people if the minister could make a statement as to what role, if any, he expects the Housing Commission to play in Aboriginal communities both as to the provision of staff housing and general public housing.

Mr Speaker, with those comments, I indicate again my support for the bill.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, I wish to speak briefly to the bill. Most of the points on which I was going to comment have been raised by other speakers. I agree that there needs to be flexibility that can take into account the local situation and needs of people. The widening of regulation-making powers put forward in this particular bill will enable that flexibility to occur. I share the concern that has been stressed today about regulations generally. Whilst it may be speedier to amend regulations - I think that was what the minister used in his second-reading speech - I always have the fear that the Territory may end up being governed by regulation. One could say that we have a Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee that oversees all regulations and rules that come before this Assembly and that committee's job is to make sure that we are not governed by regulation. I share the concern that was stressed by members in the Assembly this morning and again by the member for Alice Springs this afternoon. The time is fast approaching when that very important committee of this Assembly will need to have professional and full-time staff to assist it. We need people to examine all the papers with us so that we are able to assess the issues raised. With the workload of the committee increasing and with more areas opening up for the committee to examine, this aspect is of grave concern to me.

Mr Speaker, the other issue touched on was abuse of benefits of the schemes. That is a very serious problem. Of course, the difficulty here is that, if we try to tighten these areas to stop people abusing the various generous government schemes, the ones affected will be those whom we are trying to help. That would be rather unfortunate.

There are 2 points which I would like to raise with the minister. First, in the definitions of 'market value' and 'premises', there is reference to 'house' which includes 'the land upon which that house is built'. With the strata titling that we have now, I wonder if the word 'airspace' should be included in the definition. Previously, this was covered under common law. In the interpretation section, reference is made to the Unit Titles Act. But I was just wondering in that particular instance if the word 'airspace' needs to be included in those 2 definitions.

The other point I would like to raise with the minister is clause 7 which deals with the composition of the commission and appointment of the members.

One of the members is to be a tenant representative. Clause 7(2) provides that the tenant representative shall be a person who, at the time of appointment, was a tenant of a commission dwelling. If that person ceases to be a tenant, there is no provision in this bill to have him replaced. That person can remain there for 3 years without necessarily being a resident of a commission dwelling. I feel that it is necessary to have a tenant as a member of the commission. I ask the minister if it was the intention of the government to allow someone to be in that position who is not a resident of a dwelling. Mr Speaker, with those remarks I support the bill.

Ms D'ROZARIO (Sanderson): Mr Speaker, I too would like to address a few remarks to this very important bill. It is quite obvious that the Housing Commission plays a very important role in the Territory as a generator of construction activity, a far more important role than is played by housing commissions and housing trusts in other parts of Australia. The reason is that, for many years, the Housing Commission has had a greater proportion of construction activity in the total housing market than have housing commissions and trusts elsewhere in Australia. It is true to say that construction activity generally can be affected greatly by the extent to which the Housing Commission here participates in that activity. In the last few years, the commission has had several hundreds of millions of dollars appropriated to it in successive budgets for the specific purpose of increasing the supply of housing in Territory centres. This has flowed on to other sectors of construction and stimulated activity in the private market as well. It is appropriate that now, some 25 or so years after the first Housing Act was promulgated, we look again at our housing authority and upgrade its functions and the manner in which it operates. I welcome this bill. About 2 years ago, an undertaking was given by the minister that the Housing Act would be rewritten. We now have the opportunity to establish a new Housing Act by the presentation of this bill.

One or two matters are of particular interest to me because I have a number of constituents who are either tenants of the Housing Commission or are buying their houses through schemes operated by the Housing Commission. As the minister would know, the Housing Commission is extremely active in the electorate of Sanderson and is undertaking numerous projects in both medium-density and single-family dwellings in that electorate at the moment.

It is interesting to see that a move has been made to abolish the waiting time. Some members of this Assembly will remember that, in 1979, I put forward the suggestion that waiting times were unnecessarily disadvantaging prospective home buyers, particularly those from low-income households. In 1980, I resurrected that proposal. At the time, a suggestion was made that, if it was not possible to eliminate the waiting time for all, then it should cease to apply to low-income tenants. In 1980, I suggested a household income of \$24 000 or a single income of \$16 000 as the threshold at which the waiting time should be abolished. The reason for making the suggestion at the time was that, with the squeeze on housing and housing prices, some households were being disadvantaged in their access to housing. Whilst sympathetic to that view, the government said that it would not abolish the requirement at that time because the market could well be cleared of stock and leave nothing for the rental market. In response to that argument, I nominated a class of persons to whom the abolition should apply. I am very pleased to see that there are to be no qualifying periods now and that people who are eligible will be able to become owner occupants without having first been tenants.

Mr Speaker, the other matter of interest is the premiss in clause 29 that essentially the commission will provide housing for Territory owner occupants. In order to implement that policy, the bill provides that persons who arrange

to sell or otherwise assign their interests in the property before the elapse of 3 years will be liable to pay the difference in interest they would have incurred if they had been paying at the highest rate applicable under the Home Loans Scheme. I commend this proposal. A great deal of thought has been put into solving the Territory's housing problems. The income-gearred interest scheme that we presently have was introduced in order to increase access to housing. We do not approve of people who avail themselves of that scheme simply for making a capital gain at some future time and not genuinely requiring it for their own owner occupancy.

The member for MacDonnell commented on the provision in clause 29(4). There is an amendment to this clause which I think will overcome his objections.

Mr Speaker, one clause which interested me has already been taken up by the honourable member for Port Darwin. It relates to the composition of the commission. By clause 7, we have a commission composed of 5 persons appointed by the minister, 1 of whom must be a tenant. The honourable member for Port Darwin has already drawn to the attention of members that the tenant representative need only be a person who was a tenant at the time of appointment.

I think that the whole idea of providing for a tenant representative is to make the views of tenants known to the commission in its decision-making activities. Whilst I can appreciate that there will be people who were originally tenants and then became owner-occupants, nevertheless there are in the Territory some tenants of very long standing who prefer to remain as tenants. These are the very people whose views we are trying to convey to the commission. I would suggest to the minister that the tenant representative be truly representative of the tenants' views and be a person who is a tenant for the duration of the time that he is on the commission. This involves the standing down of a person who was a tenant at the time of his appointment and subsequently ceased to be one. I put this point forward especially in view of the fact that the term of office is 3 years. Should a person cease to be a tenant at the beginning of his term, then, in effect, tenants will not be represented for the duration of that term.

Mr Speaker, of interest to all members are the provisions contained in clauses 15 and 16 which set out the powers and functions of the commission. I am pleased to see that very wide powers would be assigned to the commission because the commission would have to initiate innovative approaches, not only to construction but also to the marketing and sales schemes.

I note that the provisions of the existing act relating to the manufacture of products and building materials have been retained. Whilst we know that the commission, at this time, does not engage in this particular activity, I would not like to see it precluded from it. Some members would be aware that, in the early days of its formation, the commission was involved in the manufacture of building products. Commissions in the states have this power and I am pleased to say that many innovations in domestic construction have developed as a result of the activities of housing commissions. I mention one local example and one non-local example to emphasise that point. Members might recall that it was the New South Wales Housing Commission that first went into the installation of solar heating systems before they were adopted widely by private housing constructors. As a local example, I was reminded the other day, in connection with a seminar sponsored by the Real Estate Institute on mud brick construction, that some years ago the commission experimented with this type of construction and produced some adobe bricks for its own use. I am pleased to see that particular power has been retained for the commission should

it ever wish to integrate its activities vertically.

Mr Speaker, the next matter is of great concern to me because I have very many constituents affected by it. It is the provision in clause 16(3). The honourable member for Millner has already drawn attention to this particular matter. This subclause provides that the commission shall not dispose of its property, other than building materials, by any method other than public auction or public tender. The question that arises is whether tenants who apply to buy their houses would then have to submit to a public auction or public tender process. I am sure that this is not the intention of the bill because its tenor seems to be to make housing more accessible to residents. But it seems a bit inconsistent. I would like some clarification from the honourable minister.

Mr Speaker, my attention had been drawn to the provision of clause 40 which is a transition clause. It states that schemes already in force or commenced will be allowed to continue. Whilst it has been drawn to my attention that this could be the solution to the concern that I have, I look to the regulation powers contained in clause 36. Clause 36(2)(b) provides for regulations to be made for and in relation to types of housing schemes and the classes of persons eligible under such housing schemes. It seems that there is a possibility that the commission will be entering into new types of schemes. While existing schemes may be covered by the transition provision of clause 40, it seems to me that the introduction of new schemes will be impeded if subclause (3) of clause 16 remains in the bill in its present form.

I have looked at this bill several times and I do not find any explanation of what a scheme is. I am merely assuming that a scheme referred to in clause 40 would include a housing sales scheme although this is not defined anywhere. If the circumstances I have outlined come about, we would have to pass validating legislation to meet them because I, for one, would not wish to disadvantage any owner occupants who have bought their houses without going through the process of public auction or tender.

Mr Speaker, with those few comments, I welcome the introduction of this new bill and look forward to continued activity by the Housing Commission in my electorate. Before I sit down, I would like to say that, in the past few years, an enormous improvement in the design of Housing Commission dwellings has become apparent, particularly medium-density housing design and construction. In medium-density construction, the Housing Commission has held its own with any private developer.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Tiwi): Mr Speaker, this legislation is an attempt to update the whole system of housing in the Northern Territory. Our government realises the importance of adequate housing in relation to the whole economy. The Northern Territory is developing its economy with the end view of becoming self-supporting and housing must be one of its main considerations. To encourage any industry, for example, not only must there be a market for the product and availability of jobs but there must also be sufficient housing to keep the workers in the Northern Territory once they have come here.

The private sector has not been able to keep up with the mushrooming of the population in the Northern Territory due to various reasons, not the least being the greater degree of vulnerability of our isolated situation. If private contractors consider it unattractive to provide housing, then the government somehow has to take up the shortfall. Nowhere else in Australia has any state government entered so enthusiastically into the field of housing as the Northern Territory government. Our positive efforts in public housing to provide serviced land to build houses, to rent them and to sell them to all classes of

people stand second to none compared to state governments' efforts.

In his second-reading speech, the minister said that this legislation aims for a more fluid situation regarding public housing in that the yoke of legislation will sit lightly but the reins of regulation will guide the intent of the legislation more simply and speedily. The big pitfall in this idea could be that a careful watch has to be kept on the bureaucracy that administers the regulations. To make sure that the bureaucracy is not carried away with its own importance, we must always ensure it and its regulations are not an end in themselves but the means of enacting this legislation.

As the minister mentioned in his second-reading speech, clause 16 not only gives the minister discretion to do various things, it also sets out clearly the numerous functions of the Housing Commission relating to the various situations that could arise.

We realise that clause 20 is necessary but we hope that it will be administered with common sense. This clause relates to structures that have been built onto Housing Commission houses. The people in the rural area still show originality and independence in the way they build their dwellings. They do not wish to be stifled by an overbearing bureaucracy. That is why these people went to the rural area in the first place. I realise that, if the Housing Commission has let a home to a person or the person is paying off the house, the Housing Commission has an equity in it and must be concerned with the well-being of its capital investment. However, I stress that I want to see some common sense in the administration of clause 20. I do not want my constituents hassled and harried if they wish to make some well-built additions to any Housing Commission home they may occupy before they get around to doing the paperwork for the operation.

I thoroughly agree with clause 29. The concessional loans and sales should not be taken advantage of in a manner which goes against the whole grain of this bill. The essence of the bill is to settle people in the Territory by housing them and encouraging them to stay here. I am very much against the idea of somebody gaining a cheap loan, building a house, selling it and shooting through. This was brought to my attention by one of my constituents who is a building contractor. He had barely built a house for a particular person in the rural area when he heard it was to be advertised for sale. Needless to say, I felt that it was my duty to bring it to the attention of the Housing Commission. I hope they did something about it.

Mr Speaker, it was the practice in the past that, to qualify for accommodation from the Housing Commission, people were required to reside in the Territory. It has been brought to my attention that exceptions must be made when considering housing allocations to people. The exceptions I talk about are the occasions when people have had to leave the Territory for short periods after being resident here. I recall 2 instances. One was caused by the serious illness of an elderly relative who subsequently died and the people returned to the Territory. Another was due to the serious illness of a child. The family had to go south to obtain treatment for the child. When these families came back to the Territory, they applied immediately to the Housing Commission for concessions they thought they were eligible for, but were told that they had not lived here continuously for the preceding year. I would like to see common sense brought to bear in such situations. In these cases, the previous term of residence in the Territory was taken into consideration. The discretion of the minister is mentioned in clauses 10, 13, 16, 22, 24 and 29 and probably in some other clauses. I realise that the power of ministerial discretion is always

necessary but it must not lead to such wide interpretation as to defeat the purpose of this bill.

Clause 36 is concerned with the sale of dwellings and makes provision for regulations for the sale of dwellings at market value. It would be interesting to speculate at what price houses would be offered if the Housing Commission could build them at Jabiru. In answer to a question, the minister told me yesterday that that is not possible yet due to certain lease conditions that pertain in that area relating to the head lease and negotiations previously entered into by various interested parties - the Commonwealth government, mining companies and the Territory government. I would like to reiterate that housing is a big worry to my constituents in Jabiru. I do not know if this legislation will improve the situation for them but I hope it will.

In giving my support to this bill, Mr Speaker, I realise that it takes cognisance of the increasing demand for housing in the Northern Territory. It is fitting and adequate and I feel sure it will fulfil its purpose.

Mr PERRON (Lands and Housing): Mr Speaker, as sponsor of this bill, I am pleased to see that it has a large degree of support from honourable members. Housing is one of those very important aspects of the Northern Territory's operations and success.

The honourable member for MacDonnell wanted an indication of the way clause 29(3) might be applied. This subclause gives the minister a discretion to exempt a person from paying what has been termed a 'penalty interest rate'. I point out that no specific guidelines have been drawn up as yet. No doubt very many people may wish to sell their houses within 3 years of taking up a mortgage and no doubt they will be applying to the minister for exemption. However, the real reason the clause has been included is to cover situations where disposal of the property is necessary by the operation of law, settlement of property between parties of a dissolved marriage or foreclosure by mortgagor, other than the Housing Commission, where another mortgagor has exercised the power of sale etc - situations grossly outside the control of the seller. I appreciate that the reasons people could give for having to sell their houses are infinite. However, such matters will be looked at very closely and interpreted in a fairly narrow fashion so that every person who simply has a general reason - perhaps to sell up and move interstate - is not exempt. It will be the intention to take a fairly hard line.

The same honourable member queried clause 29(4). Following consideration of his complaint, I have circulated an amendment which is quite optional. I am quite happy to include it. However, I am advised by officers of the Department of Law who looked at this over the lunch period that, whether or not clause 29(4) is amended, the effect will be the same. The mortgagee cannot discharge the mortgage until he has paid the principal sum of the loan, the interest payable under the mortgage on that loan and any additional penalty interest. The purpose of clause 29(4) clearly is to ensure that the penalty interest, if levied, is paid and therefore it must be part of the settlement of that mortgage. We did not want a situation where a person could discharge a mortgage and the penalty interest was a separate bill to be pursued independently. That is why 29(4) is there. It would seem, upon legal advice, that, whether it stays as it is or whether we amend it, the effect is totally the same: a person will have to discharge that penalty interest in order to discharge the mortgage at the same time. I am quite happy if honourable members wish to have that amendment accepted in due course.

Clause 34A, the minister's discretion in relation to selling properties

without the Valuer-General's valuation, was mentioned. This discretion would be used by the minister only on very rare occasions. I will mention by way of example an occasion when such a measure was taken. The Housing Commission inherited a group of dwellings, the design of which was not extremely popular. The commission felt that it would rather not have them on its books for continuous administration and maintenance, having regard to the fact that many commission rental premises suffer somewhat as far as occupancy is concerned and it prefers to keep brick buildings for rental purposes. In order to sell those dwellings, the government decided that they should be offered at a concessional rate to the occupants. That scheme was announced to all occupants at the time and they were given the opportunity to buy those dwellings at a percentage below the price fixed by the Valuer-General. That was decided upon by government in order to get rid of them. It was understood that the price for those particular dwellings as determined by the Valuer-General, whilst perhaps reflecting a market value, was too high to expect the occupants to purchase when those occupants had the right to transfer to other dwellings to purchase. They did not lose that right.

In Batchelor we inherited old dwellings which had been occupied for many years by the same people. They were left over from the time when Batchelor was a mining town. In those days, the Commonwealth government never paid any attention to the dwellings so far as maintenance was concerned. Admittedly, rent in those circumstances was very nominal. The dwellings were still standing only because the occupants had maintained them for 15 years. If they had not, the dwellings would have been eaten by white ants many years ago. In those circumstances, the government felt that the dwellings should be sold to the occupants at less than the market value. The true market value would have been quite out of touch with the more reasonable price consideration, having regard to the circumstances I have outlined.

Of course, once such a discretion is given, there is always the opportunity for abuse. I am sure this will be borne in mind by any minister who exercises the discretion to sell a property for less than the Valuer-General's price. It is a serious step and a minister would need to be certain that he can justify the use of his discretion in any circumstance. We were advised that, without this discretionary power in the bill, the commission would be prohibited from selling houses other than at the specific valuation of the Valuer-General. That is no reflection on the Valuer-General's expertise in his field. We just feel that circumstances may warrant the use of the powers in clause 34A.

The honourable member for MacDonnell asked if anything was proposed which would aid the detection of persons who rented out dwellings in contravention of the requirements of schemes under this act. There is no specific system and it is difficult to envisage how one could have one other than calling regularly on every person who has a loan with the government to check whether the owner is in fact the occupant. Of course, that is clearly impractical administratively. What we will attempt to do is make sure that every tenant is aware that, if he proposes to rent a dwelling that is under mortgage at concessional interest rates, he must seek first the approval of the commission, and that one of the most drastic penalties for not seeking such an approval is that the loan can be recalled. That is indeed a most drastic penalty and people should bear it in mind. I doubt that the government would go that far. Perhaps there would be alternatives that could be applied in those situations. The intention is that, where a person proposes to rent out a dwelling that is being paid off under a concessional scheme, the interest rate that would apply while the dwelling is being rented out would be 12.5%.

The honourable member for Alice Springs mentioned that a great deal was to

be governed by regulations. Other members mentioned it too. It is true. Housing is one of those areas that is changing fairly rapidly. Every 6 or 12 months, we re-examine the housing loans schemes in the light of new experience, public attitudes and, of course, correspondence and communications received by honourable members. We need a very flexible system so that schemes can be changed in response to community needs.

The honourable member for Alice Springs also asked whether a person renting a Housing Commission property who wants to buy will still have a choice of properties. I believe he will. If he chooses to purchase a house other than the one he rents, I believe he has a choice of dwellings from which to purchase. However, I stand to be corrected. In some cases, the commission has earmarked accommodation which is not for sale. We do not want to get into a situation where the commission is merely a builder of houses and every time a house is completed someone buys it. The commission has a very important role as a rental authority. Therefore, we do not want to say that every Housing Commission dwelling is for sale. Many of them are, probably most of them.

The honourable member for Alice Springs also raised the matter of a person retiring from the public service. Where members of the Northern Territory Public Service who have concessional loans either resign or are dismissed from the public service, they will be required to pay an additional annual interest rate until they reach the 12.5% rate. A retiring public servant will not be required to pay the additional interest. The view taken by the government is that the public service housing loan scheme is an extremely concessional system and part of the benefits of being a public servant. We propose to have regulations that public servants who resign will be subject to an additional penalty interest. People who are dismissed from the public service cannot expect to continue with the very generous benefits provided by the service. People who retire are in quite a different situation. We are not proposing to have their interest rates increased by 2% per annum until it reaches a maximum. Whilst they are no longer public servants, they have served their time.

The member for Millner asked whether clause 16(4) overrides clause 16(3). It does not. Clause 16(3) states: 'The commission shall not, except under this act, sell, lease or otherwise dispose of real property'. Clause 16(4) gives the minister the power by instrument in writing to authorise the commission to sell property to classes of persons. Clause 16(3) will normally apply to the commission's activities except as specified under schemes. If a scheme arises that the minister feels is a one-off and does not require being set in regulations under clause 36, the minister, by instrument in writing, can authorise the commission to sell other than under the terms laid down in clause 16(3). There is no conflict. In fact, really they are complementary.

The honourable member also raised the matter of housing in Aboriginal communities. Rather than address this complex question now, I undertake to make a statement on this matter during the next sittings. The Northern Territory government has always maintained the stance that housing is a state responsibility. State authorities quite often administer, on behalf of the Commonwealth, all Commonwealth and defence houses that are built in that state as well as the state construction programs.

For reasons perhaps of empire building within the Commonwealth bureaucracy, the Commonwealth has consistently denied the Northern Territory the right to take over the complete housing function in the Northern Territory. Until quite recently, the Commonwealth continued to allocate funds for Aboriginal housing to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs which obtained the services of the Commonwealth Department of Construction to construct housing for Aboriginal

communities in various places in the Northern Territory, not just on Aboriginal land but also on what I would call town leases in places such as Alice Springs.

More recently, the Commonwealth has decided that the Aboriginal Development Commission shall have funds for 'Aboriginal housing'. We have made overtures to the Aboriginal Development Commission offering it the services of the Housing Commission which has a great deal of expertise in the construction of houses and the letting and administration of contracts. However, those overtures have been rejected and the ADC proposes to use the Commonwealth department as its agent for constructing houses with its funds. It also proposes to use Aboriginal housing associations which have expertise in this area.

The matter is somewhat complicated also by the provisions of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act as far as funds are concerned. When we consider the use of funds received by the Northern Territory Housing Commission under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, as distinct from Commonwealth funds provided to the ADC for Aboriginal housing, a difficulty arises if we are to build houses on land to which the general public does not have a right of access - Aboriginal, inalienable, freehold land. The situation in relation to the expenditure of funds for that purpose is very complicated.

Mr Bell: The commission can build on private land.

Mr PERRON: It is true that the commission has power to use a person's money to build a house on private land. Under that very provision, we offered to build houses for Aborigines on Aboriginal land with funds provided by the Aborigines. The offer still stands; there is no conflict there whatsoever. It is a complex matter and one the Territory government has been vitally interested in. I will make a statement on the matter during the next sittings.

The member for Port Darwin was a little concerned that the definition of 'market value' may not be adequate as far as strata titling is concerned. I understand that there is no reason to be concerned there. The definition of 'market value' includes the land on which a dwelling is situated. With strata titling, the land is held by the various owners as tenants in common. I understand that that should not present a particular problem in obtaining a value for a property to sell to someone. Certainly, the Housing Commission is involved in strata titling these days and we hope will be increasingly so involved in time to come.

The provision on the appointment of the tenant representative was specifically put in on my instruction so that, when a person who was a tenant was appointed to the board as tenant representative, he would not have to vacate the board if, at some stage during his term of office, he ceased to be a tenant. The position of tenant representative on the board had been vacant for some time. I think a tenant was appointed fairly recently. One of the difficulties in the past has been that the person obviously has to be in a position to attend board meetings. That may not seem a demanding requirement but it is for many people. They feel that being a member places constraints on them. It is necessary for such a person to be able to deal with the papers that go before the board on a range of subjects. However, in the past, we occasionally appointed someone and within 6 or 12 months he purchased his house and so became ineligible to be on the board any more. It did not seem to me to be right to maintain that stance. For that reason, I had that provision inserted saying that, whilst a person must be a tenant at the time he is appointed to the board, he need not vacate the board if subsequently he ceases to be a tenant.

The honourable member for Sanderson raised the matter of housing schemes

and felt that we might be constrained by clause 16(3). I do not see clause 16 (3) slowing us down at all. In fact, most of the Housing Commission's regular activities will be conducted under schemes created by regulations provided for under clause 36(2)(b) and (c). Other activities of the commission will be governed by clause 16(4) which is where the minister says: 'By instrument in writing you can do x'. Clause 16(3), which says 'the commission shall not, except under this act, sell, lease or otherwise dispose of real property', is not a constraint unless it proposes to act in a manner that is not covered by a scheme, a regulation or a ministerial direction. In that case, it must be covered by clause 16(3) which says it shall not dispose of land or building material unless by public auction or after inviting public tenders for the purchase or disposal of those properties. I think that is quite proper. The government gets itself into enough trouble from time to time by dealing with people directly. I guess that will continue to happen on occasion. The fairest way to ensure that public criticism cannot be brought upon the commission in regard to disposal of items that are not covered under a scheme is, of course, to ensure that property can only be released by public competition. That is the only true protection the government has.

The honourable member for Tiwi, in typical style and as the true representative of her area, does not want rural residents constrained by an unnecessary waffle of paperwork such as obtaining approval for structures. Unfortunately, I have to tell the honourable member that, like it or not, the rural people will have to comply with such provisions as those relating to illegal structures. I know they all disappeared out of town into the rural area to escape bureaucracy, government inspectors and the requirements of approval systems but, gradually, they are coming to realise in some areas that government regulations and inspectors can be a good thing. For example, they are able to stop the guy next door from running a pig yard because it is contrary to the town plan. Gradually, it will also dawn on the rural people that provisions which relate to preventing people building illegal and unsafe structures are really in the public interest and not included simply to make their lives difficult.

Mr Deputy Speaker, that is all I have to say on the bill and I thank honourable members for their general support.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 6 agreed to.

Clause 7:

Ms D'ROZARIO: Mr Chairman, during the second reading, the honourable member for Port Darwin and I raised the question of a tenant representative on the board of the commission. I appreciate the reasons given for the manner in which subclause (2) is phrased. I even suggested that the reason for the phrasing was the fact that people become owner occupants during the course of their appointments and would then have to be replaced. Whilst I am not suggesting that the clause be changed, I ask the honourable minister to give this Assembly an assurance that, as far as possible, the tenant representative will be a person who has the status of a tenant. By that I am not suggesting that, the moment a person becomes an owner occupant, he should step down automatically but simply that the minister should encourage his replacement by a person who is a

tenant. The reason I put forward the suggestion is because the status of a tenant is very different indeed to the status of an owner occupant. I feel that, if we are to recognise that tenants should have some input to decisions of the commission, then the person representing them should be in a position to convey their views accurately.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, I accept the point the honourable member makes. I would be delighted if the tenant representative were always a tenant. It is not proposed that I would have any power of dismissal here - the honourable member did not suggest that I should have - in the event that that person ceases to be a tenant and we find another eligible tenant. However, there are ways that these things can be effected by discussion and general agreement in many cases. If we can encourage someone to stand down in these circumstances, I would be very happy.

Clause 7 agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 15 agreed to.

Clause 16:

Mr BELL: I must rise to make a couple of comments in response to what the minister said in his second-reading speech. The government never misses an opportunity to suggest how difficult it is to live with the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. Clause 16(2)(c) confers on the commission the power to build on land, including land held by a private person. I would have said that that power quite clearly applies to the sort of land that the minister was referring to. A reading of today's Hansard will indicate that, during his speech, the minister contradicted himself. He had his little snipe to start with and then suggested towards the end of his comments that, in that particular area, there were really no problems. I would thank him if he adopted a slightly more constructive attitude in future.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, let me change my snipe, as the honourable member calls it, to something more positive. I tried to explain to the honourable member that there were difficulties and complexities with the Housing Commission using, on Aboriginal inalienable freehold land, public money allocated for the construction of public housing. It seems that he cannot understand that. I did not say that the commission was prevented through statutory provisions from building houses on Aboriginal land. Clause 16(2)(c) clearly allows the commission to go on to private land, including Aboriginal land, and build a house. We are not about to go on private land in the middle of Stuart Park and build a public house. The provision is there so that we can build that person a house with money he provides. The opportunity has always been there for the commission to build houses of its own design on people's land. If the Housing commission were to use public funds to build houses on Aboriginal land, it would have virtually no control. Certainly, it would have no title to the land and could not possibly repossess the property. That is the type of problem I am talking about. If the commission could be provided by the Commonwealth, ADC or DAA with specific funds to build houses on Aboriginal land, we would be delighted to do that. The offer has been made and rejected.

Ms D'ROZARIO: Mr Chairman, the minister explained, in response to a concern that I had, that the provisions of subclause (3) may impede new schemes being introduced unless they provided for sale by public auction or tender by referring to subclause (4). Whilst I mentioned that I was reasonably satisfied that the transition provision of clause 40 provided some relief for the problem

that I had, he referred me to subclause (4) which did nothing but confuse me further. He pointed out that the minister could direct or authorise the commission to sell, lease or otherwise dispose of property by subclause (4). I am not quarrelling with the power of the minister to do that. Certainly, I am not saying that the commission ought not to be able to sell. All that does is reinforce the earlier provision in subclause (2) which permits the commission to sell its property. Subclause (3) goes a bit further in my view in that it specifies the manner in which the sale will take place. If subclause (4) were preceded by the words 'notwithstanding subclause (3)', I agree that a sale pursuant to subclause (4) could take place without public tender or auction. The minister referred to the 2 clauses being complementary. I think that subclause (3) determines the manner of sale and subclause (4) just that the sale can take place. In that sense, I do not believe that they are complementary and there still could be a problem with the introduction of a new scheme unless it were a scheme which could be said to be amended and therefore come within the provisions of clause 40.

Mr PERRON: Can I refer the honourable member to other provisions as well. Clause 36(2)(b) and (c) provides that the commission may, by regulation, adopt schemes for the disposal of property. It does not say in any way that they shall be constrained to public release or whatever. That is a way that the commission can dispose of property under various schemes in addition to 16(4). Clause 16(3) says, 'the commission shall not, except under this act...'. A direction under clause 16(4) would be a direction under the act. His direction to sell under whatever terms and conditions would be authorised under the act and therefore would not be in conflict with 16(3).

Clause 16 agreed to.

Clauses 17 to 28 agreed to.

Clause 29:

Mr BELL: I welcome the circulated amendment and appreciate the administrative problems of separate billing for the interest and the principal.

Mr PERRON: Mr Chairman, clause 29(4) merely makes the penalty interest a legal debt. The important words are 'shall be deemed to be' part of the principal interest payable. The reason for that clause is that the penalty interest shall be a legal debt. If we did not have that provision, we would need one enabling a presumably unsecured debt. I am advised that it does not really matter which way it is expressed. The effect is the same: it is a legal debt and will have to be discharged at the time of discharge of the mortgage. I am still in your hands. Would you like us to propose the amendment or not?

Mr Bell: Yes.

Mr PERRON: I move amendment 131.1.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 29, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 30 to 32 agreed to.

Clause 33 negatived.

New clause 33:

Mr PERRON: I move amendment 129.1.

This clause makes the commission liable for water rates in respect of water supplied to land on which a dwelling is situated other than excess water charges in relation to a dwelling that is separately metered. The reason for this amendment is that, in clause 33 which was just defeated, reference was made to the Supply of Services Act which may not be in force at the time this bill is to come into force.

New clause 33 agreed to.

Clause 34 agreed to.

New clause 34A:

Mr PERRON: I move amendment 129.2.

This new clause enables the minister to determine the sale price of a dwelling which is to be sold under this bill and requires the commission to sell that dwelling only at that determined price. That is, of course, where the minister chooses to intervene and require the commission to sell for other than the Valuer-General's price.

New clause 34A agreed to.

Clause 35 agreed to.

Clause 36:

Mr PERRON: I move amendment 129.3.

This obviously follows the earlier amendment where we inserted a new clause into the bill.

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 37 to 44 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

STAMP DUTY AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 241)

Continued from 1 September 1982.

Ms D'ROZARIO (Sanderson): Mr Deputy Speaker, the most interesting feature of this bill from our point of view is that it clarifies the liability of joint tenants to pay stamp duty. The reason that this matter is of great interest is that there are provisions existing in the principal act which provide certain exemptions for persons buying their first house and also in certain other circumstances. Large numbers of people buy their houses as joint tenants. In fact, I would say the majority of people buy their houses as joint tenants with their spouses. This amendment seeks to clarify the liability of these people for stamp duty under that type of instrument.

At the moment, there is some argument as to whether each of those joint

tenants would be separately liable. Of course, that was not the intention of the act. The honourable minister has now presented an amendment to clarify that situation and it has been done simply by deeming that joint tenants, for this purpose, will be considered as tenants in common. The status of joint tenants and tenants in common is quite different under the Real Property Act. This particular amendment does not seek to alter that relationship for the purposes of the Real Property Act but only for the purpose of assessing duty. Therefore, we support it.

The other interesting matter in relation to joint tenants is that consideration for improvements can be made by them when the property is conveyed or transferred. For that purpose, the value of improvements can be taken into account and part exemption provided.

Mr Speaker, the other matter is in respect to the liability of statutory corporations. This bill provides that statutory corporations are liable to pay stamp duty except in cases where the instruments are prescribed exemptions. Again, it was of course always intended that statutory corporations should not have automatic exemptions from the liability to pay stamp duty and the amendment in proposed new section 6A clarifies that matter.

Mr Speaker, we support the amendments to the Stamp Duty Act.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer) (by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

TAXATION (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 242)

Continued from 1 September 1982.

Ms D'ROZARIO (Sanderson): Mr Speaker, once again the opposition supports the contents of this bill. It seeks to provide a fairly automatic mechanism for the collection of stamp duty by making it an offence to register an instrument on which duty has not been paid. In these days of much talk about avoidance of liability for taxes, this is a fairly sensible insertion. The amounts recovered on individual transactions are fairly small but the volume of transactions can be quite large in any particular period under consideration. The provision in proposed new section 9A is that it will be an offence to register an instrument on which stamp duty has not been paid. Of course, it would be in the interest of all those who wish to have their instruments recognised to pay the stamp duty rather than have their interests not registered.

As I say, the amounts on individual instruments can be quite small. I know of recent examples where, on the conveyance of a house, the stamp duty was about \$160. I know of other examples where the stamp duty has been even lower. Certainly, it would not be an economic proposition for the Commissioner of Taxes to institute recovery proceedings against these people to get them to pay the stamp duty. The simplest way of doing it is not to register their interests unless the stamp duty is paid.

The other matter which this bill addresses is the question of refunds. Proposed new section 56A sets out not only the conditions under which a refund would be forthcoming but also the time limit for claiming it. Again this is an

administrative matter. There are a number of cases where, owing to changes in circumstances, people are entitled to a refund of duty. A 90-day limit has been imposed. If the person claiming the refund does not do so within 90 days, he loses his right to it.

The other matter covered is fairly simple. It is to allow the duty on instruments to be denoted by an impressed stamp rather than by a sticky stamp. Again this is a machinery amendment which we support. I know of a few people who have been inconvenienced by having to purchase these sticky stamps. Now they simply go to the registrar and have their instruments impressed.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer) (by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

MEDICAL SERVICES BILL (Serial 238)

Continued from 1 September 1982.

Mrs O'NEIL (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, the bill before us replaces the existing Hospital and Medical Services Act bringing this legislation up to date in view of the changing circumstances of the provision of medical services in the Northern Territory. The existing act is some decades old and has been amended many times. This bill provides a legal authority for government medical services in the Northern Territory.

Members will note that it expands the range of services and enables the Department of Health to charge private practitioners fees for the use of government facilities. It is interesting to note in the definitions reference to chiropractic and natural therapy services. I would be pleased if the Minister for Health could provide the definitions of those services since, in the past in this Assembly, we have seen legislation on chiropractic introduced and subsequently withdrawn. Such definitions are not easy to frame but, as they are included in this bill, doubtless the minister has some idea of what he means by them.

The bill also covers the transportation of patients, as necessary, within the Northern Territory and from the Territory to other places to seek specialist treatment. It incorporates the more recent policy changes regarding transportation of patients. In the past, the department had a policy of paying air fares for patients whose travel was deemed necessary by the department's own specialists for purposes of certain treatment. Following the introduction of IPTAAS, the department changed its policy. Unless they are in necessitous circumstances, people pay for their own transport and can then reclaim the cost from the Commonwealth government. This change relating to transportation costs causes some hardship and concern in the community. I trust the minister will ensure that those provisions allowing the Department of Health to continue to pay fares from time to time are interpreted liberally. Undoubtedly, it can cause great hardship to people to have to find an additional air fare or perhaps 2 for a child and a parent to travel, say, from Gove to Darwin or from Darwin to Sydney, in the case of a patient requiring medical treatment. While those persons may not be pensioners or otherwise necessitous in terms of other Commonwealth definitions, nevertheless to find those air fares can create very grave difficulty for them. I believe that people require an assurance that that scheme

will be administered liberally. A number of cases have been brought to my attention in recent times relating to the cost of air fares.

Mr Speaker, the title of this bill is the Medical Services Bill. I suggest its long title could be the 'Curious Case of the Missing Medical Officer'. Mr Speaker, you will be aware that we have a statutory position in the Territory of Chief Medical Officer who is both a registered medical practitioner in the Territory and a public servant employed within the Department of Health here. The position has always been that the person who is the Chief Medical Officer, for purposes of the Public Health Act and other acts, is also the head of the Department of Health. This need not necessarily be so. It seems curious to me that only last year, for example, we passed an act relating to the regulation of private hospitals and nursing homes in the Northern Territory. We gave the Chief Medical Officer substantial powers and responsibilities relating to private hospitals in that act. Before us now, we have another bill introduced by the Minister for Health relating to public hospitals and health services and yet it contains no reference to the Chief Medical Officer. The duties are divided between the Minister for Health and the Secretary of the Department of Health. I would ask the minister if he can explain to us this quite substantial change of policy.

Members might recall that I asked the minister a question in the course of the last sittings about a change in his policy relating to persons in charge of hospitals who, in the past, have always been medical officers. Now they no longer are despite the minister's reference in this Assembly some years ago to the fact that it was his policy that they should be. That is clearly a case where he has changed his policy. Policy, of course, is a matter for the minister, not the department, although he is guided by the department. I ask him how he now sees the position of Chief Medical Officer in the Northern Territory.

Nevertheless the opposition supports this new, streamlined Medical Services Bill for the provision of health and medical services in the Northern Territory.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, the principle of providing the best medical services possible to the people of the Territory no matter where they live at a price similar to that they would pay if they were living in one of the major southern cities is one which every member in this Assembly would accept. That principle is one of the objects of this bill. We have come a long way since the open ward situation. The facilities and services provided in the hospitals and health centres of the Northern Territory are as good as those provided in most major cities in Australia. I would like to go on record as congratulating all those people who have been involved over the years in providing such a wonderful service to our people.

My main concern over the years has been to push for private facilities to be made available to the people of the Territory. Even though some of these facilities are placed on sites that I would not agree are ideal - and I am referring specifically to the nursing home that the member for Fannie Bay referred to last night - the facilities are still provided. One of the problems that we have had is that private organisations such as that nursing home are offered a number of sites on which they can build the facility. In this case, they decided that the site that suits them is Palmerston and also that they will operate the facility in the manner that they see fit. There is no option. I agree with the member for Fannie Bay that there is a need for input from local people but we are placed in the position of saying, 'Do you want the facility or not'. My view is that we should have it and be pleased to have it. It is a service provided for aged people even though some of us might not agree

with the way in which it is being constructed or its siting. It will benefit the aged people of the Territory. The same thing has happened with the hospital. One is now able to obtain a private room. I am pleased to see that these options are available.

One of the initiatives that I am very interested in is that in clause 17. Provision is made for the government to charge private practitioners and private dentists for the use of government facilities. At present, no charge is made. I raise this point because, if a charge is made, somewhere along the line the costs will increase. I am not aware that governments in other parts of Australia charge private practitioners or specialists for the use of their facilities. In most cases, the specialists in those particular areas are members of a private hospital consortium and there is no need for government hospitals to make charges. I would like the minister to give me some idea of what an appropriate fee will be for the use of the government's facilities. If a private hospital were established in Darwin, perhaps the provisions that we have here would not be necessary.

The other interesting point is that specialists who are now employed by the government will be able to move out into private practice and still use the hospital facilities. At the same time, the government will be able to buy back their services when the need arises. We have lost specialists in the past because of the lack of suitable facilities for them to carry out their work. We want to keep these qualified people in the Territory. That is one of the reasons why I support this move by the government wholeheartedly. I would still prefer to see a private hospital established to cater for the needs of the people of the Territory but it appears that, at this stage, that is some way off. I am pleased to see that facilities available at our hospital give people the choice of accommodation they prefer.

I am pleased to see that the government is moving with the times and looking to the future. The opportunity is there to ensure that our own people receive vital medical services at a cost which they would be paying if they were living in one of the major cities in Australia. I support the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Tiwi): Mr Speaker, to consider the current legislation relating to medical services in the Northern Territory and other legislation which has operated since the Commonwealth days is in many ways to look at anachronisms. We have very old legislation that is trying to keep up with modern times. The current legislation dealing with medical services and hospitals is good as far as it goes. However, to keep pace with the times, amendment after amendment has been passed over the years. The more amendments that are passed, the harder it is for people to understand. Before its consolidation a few months ago, the Crown land legislation had so many amendments to amendments to amendments that even the Lands Department officers had difficulty understanding and interpreting it. Legislation must be clearly presented to be understood. This bill is clearly and concisely written. It is easy to understand and I feel sure it is comprehensive.

My first comment on the legislation itself relates to the definition of 'medical services'. The definition is very extensive in that it takes into account medical services which are not available at the moment such as chiropractic and natural therapy services. We have had legislation before the Assembly relating to chiropractic services. No doubt, when legislation is passed to register chiropractic and natural therapy services and they become available in our hospitals, they will come under the definition of 'medical services'.

Nowhere in the definition clause or in any other clause can I find any reference to or definition of 'acupuncture'. I know this technique is used by medical practitioners in certain cases. I also know that there are people who are not medical practitioners who practice acupuncture. I am assuming that, if acupuncture is used and is to be considered under 'medical services', it would have to be carried out by a medical practitioner as the legislation is now written. If the need arises and acupuncturists are registered separately, the definition of 'medical services' may change in the future. Despite the fact that chiropractic and natural therapy services are mentioned, I understand that people will not be able to claim on medical benefits organisations for these services. It is not our legislation which determines what claims can be made but that of the Commonwealth.

I have no quarrel with the fact that this legislation will set a scale of fees for the use of hospital facilities by medical practitioners. I am sure that medical practitioners will not fail to pass this fee on to their patients so they will not be out of pocket. The patients will not be either because they will pass it on to their health insurance company.

Mr Speaker, I do not have an intimate knowledge of the running of hospitals because, in all the years we have been up here, I have only had the misfortune to be hospitalised 3 times, unlike less fortunate people who have to spend a lot of time there. More choice will be available in the services that are offered to the general public. Recently, the subject was raised of hiring private rooms in hospitals. We have come a long way from the medical treatment that was offered when we first came to Darwin.

The Darwin Hospital is a magnificent structure but it has a certain de-humanising effect on the whole exercise of going to hospital. It was different in the days of the old Darwin Hospital. I remember when we first came here that things were very human in the old Darwin Hospital. Patients felt that they were getting well very quickly because the atmosphere was just like home. There was natural ventilation. Visits were unlimited provided visitors behaved themselves. Everything was much more friendly and natural. There were pictures on the lawn every Saturday night for the pre-ambulatory patients and friends who happened to be there.

I would like to mention an added service that was offered by the Darwin Hospital in those days: the treatment of dogs. I cannot remember the doctor's name but there was one doctor who had a reputation as a very good veterinary surgeon. Provided the operating theatre was vacant, he would spay your bitch, perform a caesarean section, mend a broken leg or do whatever else you wanted done to your dog. When we first came up here, one of my dogs was bitten by a king brown snake. There were no private veterinary surgeons up here then. I rang the hospital and they said bring the dog in. We arrived a little late because a king brown bite to a little dog is rather drastic but, when we arrived at the hospital, there were 2 outpatient beds prepared. One was used by a human patient and the other one was prepared for my dog. I thought that was very nice. That service was extended to other people who had sick dogs. The hospital staff would make their professional services and drugs available.

Mr Speaker, some of my constituents from Bathurst and Melville Islands also have drawn to my attention the rather austere, forbidding and frigid surroundings of the Darwin Hospital. It has been mentioned in the Assembly before that Aboriginal people find the hospital very unfriendly because of the way it is built. We cannot do anything about that now. But the old Darwin Hospital was a much more friendly place, especially for Aboriginal people coming to town. Many years ago, Sister Kathleen Ryan was in charge of the ward for Aboriginal

men. She became a legend in her own time. She was a very kind person. She was a very proficient sister and had a lot of common sense. People like her laid the foundation for the nursing service and the hospital services in the Territory that we enjoy today. Although the staff at the Darwin Hospital are as competent and as kind as they were in the past, I regret that we do not have the same sort of friendly building that we had in the old days.

Mrs LAWRIE (Nightcliff): Mr Speaker, I wish to speak briefly to express, as an independent, my support for the bill. I am particularly pleased at this revision of what was an old piece of legislation, amended so many times, which became, as the honourable member for Fannie Bay said, unwieldy. I hope that as its legislative program slows down, the government will be in a position to revise other acts and bring in completely new ones which are updated, simple, straightforward and easy to read. This is a perfect example of that. It is well laid out, highly visible and able to be interpreted by any member of the public. That is what laws are all about.

I listened with some interest to the honourable member for Tiwi when she mentioned the variety of services that the old Darwin Hospital offered. Like the member for Tiwi, I am a healthy young woman and have spent hardly any time in hospital. Those times have been at the old Darwin Hospital and I share her feelings about Casuarina. I gave evidence to the public works hearing years ago when it came to Darwin and, despite all the local evidence which was by and large against that design, that was the one chosen and that is the one that we have to live with.

She referred to the feeling of strangeness, which is true not only for visitors but for patients. It is so different to their homes that they suffer a form of shock. It is very easy for a person to become immediately dependent upon the hospital and lose a lot of self-reliance, which is a very bad thing. We will not labour that point this afternoon because it has been spoken of before and I am sure it will be spoken of for as long as we have no alternative facility to the new Darwin Hospital. However, legislation is not sufficient of itself. We need enough staff to run the hospital adequately and sufficient supervisory staff to assure us that those very dedicated employees are not over-worked and tired, and that mistakes are not likely to happen.

In the context of the remarks of the honourable member for Tiwi about dogs and cats being castrated and spayed, may I say that I have had representations from a gentleman. I am glad those practices have ceased because who knows what might have happened? He was admitted to the Darwin Hospital on 30 August this year at 7.15 am. He was operated on at 9 am. Twenty-four hours later, he looked at his arm and discovered that he had the wrong name on his wrist. Somewhat alarmed, he hobbled to the chart at the foot of the bed and that had the wrong name too. He was very relieved that he had had the right operation. He was known to both the surgeon and the anaesthetist. Notwithstanding the incorrect tagging, the gentleman received the treatment for which he was admitted to hospital.

Mr Speaker, I only bring that forward in this debate because, no matter how good the legislation is, it is the backup services and staffing levels which will determine the quality of the delivery of health care in the Territory. Like other members, I appreciate the dedication of the staff we have. I hope that the Territory budget in coming years will allow that staff to be expanded because, as medical technology expands, we need people to administer it to the patients with the time and devotion which they have always shown and with full professional and very caring responsibility.

Mr TUXWORTH (Health): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support of the bill. There are several points that I would like to touch on for the benefit of honourable members because I believe they are worthy of comment. They were raised on a note of seriousness by speakers and I think it only reasonable that the information be provided.

The honourable member for Fannie Bay referred to transportation of patients. Up until a year or two ago, patients were carried by the department or at the expense of the department whether in the Territory or out of the Territory. Some years ago, when the honourable Ralph Hunt was Minister for Health, he introduced a subsidy scheme for travel for patients called IPTAAS. In simple terms, IPTAAS is very beneficial to Territorians because it enables us, as a government, and the people, as individuals, to claim money from the Commonwealth for the movement of patients which normally would have been billed to our account. In that sense, it is a very beneficial payment to the Territory. It is a great scheme and it is one which I think we should all use prudently. The department tries to do that.

Mr Speaker, for the benefit of the honourable member, patients carried within the Territory or sent interstate who are referred by doctors to specialists qualify under IPTAAS. Where it is understood that the patient has the capacity to pay and then claim back later, that request is made. If the department has any reason to believe at all that the patient does not have the capacity to make the payment and await the repayment from the Commonwealth, then the department steps in and pays the amount. I think that is a fairly reasonable proposition.

On the other hand, the department still carries at its own expense within and without the Territory people whom it believes should be its responsibility. I would say to the honourable member that every effort is made to apply the travel system to patients in the most generous, fair and equitable manner. If any member has knowledge of somebody who has been disadvantaged or unfairly treated by the application of the travel system, I would be only too pleased to hear about it so that I can feed it into the system and the matter can be addressed. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that to my knowledge there has never been an attempt made to effect financial savings by restricting patient travel. The government would not subscribe to that.

Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Fannie Bay also raised the matter of the Chief Medical Officer. I am not being obtuse but I did not quite follow the honourable member's drift. Under several acts the Chief Medical Officer has statutory responsibility, particularly in relation to some matters of public health administration. Really, any doctor in the department can be appointed to the position of Chief Medical Officer for the administration of those acts. Traditionally, the Chief Medical Officer has been the Secretary. Dr Fleming divests that responsibility to Dr Quinn or Dr Chalmers, depending on the administrative arrangements that prevail from time to time. I have the greatest of confidence in both of those men and no reservations about either of them being appointed Chief Medical Officer from time to time. I do not see that there is any particular need for the Secretary of the Health Department to be the Chief Medical Officer.

The honourable member for Port Darwin raised the issue with me of what is an appropriate fee for use of hospital facilities by specialists that are charged or likely to be charged. Mr Speaker, the striking of charges or levels of fees is always a contentious issue whether it be for a doctor's time, a theatre space, a bed, drugs or whatever. The department uses a variety of mechanisms. Quite often, there are established charging systems which we can

pick up and use. For instance, in setting hourly fees for doctors who carry out a sessional function for the department, all state systems throughout Australia have an arrangement with the AMA and there is a structured hourly fee for the respective sections of the profession. In so far as charges for the use of theatre or whatever are concerned, again we turn to the established practices in the states. We would not be looking to charge more or give away things unnecessarily but simply to be fair and reasonable in the way we dispense the services.

Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Tiwi referred to acupuncture and chiropractic services in hospitals. She asked who would conduct them and what the set-up would be. I do not have answers to those particular questions. I can advise the honourable member that acupuncture is carried out in the hospital in Tennant Creek by a doctor from Alice Springs from time to time. To my knowledge, chiropractic has not been practised in the hospital but there is nothing debarring it so far as I can see. I will address myself to those matters and provide the information to her in writing at a later time.

Mr Speaker, the honourable member alluded also to the period when hospitals were used as veterinary stations. Regrettably, that practice cannot continue, mainly in the interests of the patients. I wish we could charge as much for our patients as veterinary surgeons charge for pets. It would be a very lucrative business. I recall the time when Dr Vic Webb, who has been in the Commonwealth departmental system for 25 or 30 years, was the doctor in Tennant Creek. I remember him thawing out a baby kangaroo in his kitchen oven on one occasion.

The honourable member for Nightcliff also commented on the design of the hospital at Casuarina. I guess one great difficulty in the cost of our system is the design of our hospitals at Darwin, Gove and Alice Springs. They are very unfortunate designs so far as our communities and costs of operation are concerned. I think it significant and interesting that the most suitably designed hospital in the Territory is the Tennant Creek Hospital. It was designed by local people from the Department of Transport and Works. It was not a design from another place that was picked up and implemented in Tennant Creek. It is one more example of how a little local knowledge goes a long way in providing the services to the community that it really needs.

The honourable member for Nightcliff also referred to the need to maintain satisfactory staff levels. Let me reiterate that staff levels are related to patient numbers and the doctors and managers in the hospitals have the authority to raise and lower staff levels as patient demand rises and falls. There is no arbitrary level on the number of people who work in our hospitals. The managers have that in their control. The honourable member also told an interesting story of a case of mistaken identity involving a patient who knew he lost something that he did not want to lose. I thought I had read that somewhere in Reader's Digest; it is a really good story. It can happen to anybody anywhere.

Mrs Lawrie: I have his name here.

Mr TUXWORTH: You have his name. Is that right? It just goes to show that it can happen to anybody anywhere.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, could I say for the benefit of honourable members that there is an important aspect of this bill that is very relevant. I do not wish to seem particularly mercenary in explaining this point. There are many people in the Territory who pay hospital benefit charges and those charges entitle the patient to claim on that fund money for a wide range of services that are offered. One of our difficulties has been the legislative one that we

have not been able to charge for services that we were entitled to charge for. This bill will enable us to do that. There is no impost on the patient or the fund member, Mr Speaker. The fund levy has been based on patients having these charges made against them. We are now able to raise invoices for services that, in any other part of Australia, would have been raised as a matter of course. I think that is one of the benefits that will come from this legislation.

I thank honourable members for their support and advise that I do not have any amendments.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr TUXWORTH (Health) (by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr ROBERTSON (Education): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, do adjourn until 10 am on Tuesday 16 November 1982 or until such time and date as may be notified by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ROBERTSON (Education): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I will not take up much of the time of the Assembly in the adjournment this afternoon. Indeed, all I have to do is read a letter. I was handed this letter about 3 o'clock this afternoon by the Chairman of the Northern Territory Development Corporation. I do not intend to make any comment on the contents of the letter or its veracity. Obviously, I cannot do this because it was only given to me at 3 o'clock this afternoon. I had the opportunity to speak with the chairman prior to his leaving the precincts of the Assembly and, having read the letter, I advised him verbally that I found it most unusual that I should be given it. I told him that the person who should read the letter is the minister to whom he is responsible. Nevertheless, I was asked to read this into Hansard and I do so. It is addressed to myself:

Dear Mr Collins,

Re Territory Development Corporation Assembly Debate Tuesday 12 October 1982.

The purpose of this letter is to seek your assistance in correcting certain statements which you made in the debate on the Northern Territory Development Corporation in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday 12 October 1982.

On page 83 of the Hansard of that day, you stated that I had worked for a Mr Dalziel in Western Australia and also had dealings with that person in New South Wales. This is not entirely correct and I would place the following information before you. In about May 1969, I commenced working for a public company called Michael Nairn and

Company Limited in Sydney as personnel manager. In about March 1970, that company was taken over by a group of Sydney businessmen. After the takeover, I became aware that the group consisted of 4 persons named Wardell, Todd, Chadwick and Dalziel. On the takeover, a new Chief Executive was appointed whose name was Mr John Marshall and I was promoted by Mr Marshall to the position of Office and Personnel Manager. I was responsible to Mr Marshall for the performance of my duties. From the period of the takeover until I left the company in 1971, I got to know the 4 persons involved in the takeover by sight but I had no dealings with them. I attended no board meetings nor did I attend any meetings at which those persons were present. I did not meet any of those persons on a social basis.

In early 1971, the company was again sold and Mr Marshall advised me that the new owners would probably wish to appoint their own senior executives. With this in mind, I sought alternative employment and, in August 1971, I left the company. I never saw nor heard again of Mr Dalziel until I was introduced to him in early December 1980 at the Travelodge in Darwin. At that time, I recognised both the name and the face. I had no dealings with Mr Dalziel in Western Australia and at no time, since May 1969 and until the Buntine collapse, did I have any knowledge of any misdoings by Mr Dalziel. Apart from the facts I have put to you above, I have had no business dealings with Mr Dalziel.

The purpose of this letter is to ask you to seek to set the record straight as, in my view, there is some possibility of persons drawing conclusions from your remarks in the Assembly that I had previous business associations with Mr Dalziel and that, in fact, I used my position as chairman of the corporation to bestow upon Mr Dalziel favours or favourable treatment which would not have been bestowed upon persons whom I had not previously met. I can assure you that such was not the case and I would seek your assistance in setting the record straight so that any innuendos which could have been drawn from your address in the Assembly cannot now be legitimately drawn. I am available to discuss this matter with you should you so desire.

Yours sincerely,

Ted Simpson.

Mr Speaker, obviously I have no intention of commenting on the content of the letter, but I took up Mr Simpson's invitation to discuss the matter with him. I advised him that the opportunity would be available for his minister to read this letter to the Assembly this afternoon in the adjournment. I was asked to do it and, in fairness to Mr Simpson, I was happy to comply.

Mr STEELE (Primary Production): Mr Speaker, I advise the Assembly that the government will be making a submission to the Industries Assistance Commission inquiry into abattoirs and meat processing in Australia under the terms of reference that have been provided. In particular, the clause we will address is warranted in rationalising the location and capacity of plants in the industry. There are other terms of reference that need to be addressed by the unions and the industry itself and obviously some reference will be made to them in the Territory government submission. Clearly, it is our responsibility at this time to define the beef industry situation to the Industries Assistance Commission. In view of some of the failing standards revealed in the Royal

Commission's report by Mr Justice Woodward, it is apparent that the government must set on record its position in respect of Northern Territory abattoirs.

Mr Speaker, I will give some general information about abattoirs in the Territory. I believe the Northern Territory is very well serviced with export abattoirs and domestic standard kill abattoirs. Specifically, some abattoirs have been going down hill as far as their general ability to maintain satisfactory standards of kill and performance during recent years. Abattoirs that have not been doing so well are Meneling, McArthur River and Uralla. I believe that Corkwood Bore is in need of substantial upgrading to stay in the market. Wales Australian Resources Pty Ltd holds a lease over the site of the old Uralla meatworks. The company intends to build an export standard abattoir. Under the Abattoirs and Slaughtering Act all abattoirs in the Territory are required to hold a NT government licence, regardless of whether they have export status or not. An application was lodged by Katherine Abattoirs Pty Ltd. This is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Wales Australian Resources Pty Ltd. It was declared by the Chief Inspector of Abattoirs, Dr Graeme Fallon, to be invalid as it did not conform with the act. The company was advised of this decision by letter on 24 August 1982. In a telephone discussion with Mr Milton Hayward, he accepted this action and agreed that when the company was ready to proceed it would lodge formal application. An application has not been received by the Department of Primary Production.

In the course of these events, Norwest Beef advised the department in writing of its objection to the issue of a licence. The old abattoir is being demolished but the department's objective assessment is that the proposal is unlikely to proceed. The Department of Aviation advised the Department of Primary Production in writing that the land in question has been proclaimed under Air Navigation Regulations which effectively will restrict any activity on the land which may create a bird hazard. The Department of Defence, through Administrative Services Darwin, has advised verbally that it will also object to the issue of an abattoir licence in respect to the site.

Mr Speaker, I think it is an easy conclusion to draw that the federal Minister for Primary Industry will be paying particular attention to future applications for licences to export beef, particularly to the US. To my mind, not only is it doubtful that the Northern Territory could sustain further abattoirs at this particular time but also that the federal minister would want to license further abattoirs here.

Mr Speaker, another matter I want to raise today is the development of horticulture in the Northern Territory with particular reference to displays that have been undertaken in conjunction with the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority and the Department of Primary Production. I draw attention to public reaction to a local produce display which was held recently at Casuarina Square. Some 45 people took the opportunity to avail themselves of a suggestion box which was placed close to the display. Comments included the following:

Fresh produce is great.

After having our own fruit and vegetable shop we find the quality and appearance is something growers can be proud of.

We cannot imagine why people buy second-rate produce from southern states.

Shows we can grow it just as well if not better than other places in Australia.

Very delicious fruit, please promote it more.

Most impressive display seen in this public area.

*Good public relations. I would much prefer to buy locally-grown fruit even if it is at southern prices.
Well done growers, marketing people, promoters. Keep up the good work.
If it can be grown here, why import it?
Beats deterioration.
I had no idea that we produced so much so well.
Let's succeed further and secede from the southern markets.
Fantastic to see such superior fresh vegetables and fruit.
I think this is the most incredible display of absolutely fantastic top quality fruit, equal to the best, if not better than the best, to be found in the south. Keep up the good work.
Great stuff. It is about time we could buy fresh food.
I have been here for 13 years and was always told you could not grow anything in Darwin or the Northern Territory. This proves how wrong people are and I hope the local buyers are impressed.*

Mr Speaker, I am fairly impressed by those expressions of support for the endeavours of growers and people who are promoting the products and those who are providing extension services in the field.

Mr Speaker, in response to the Leader of the Opposition, I would have readily presented the letter. The Chairman of NTDC requested the Leader of the Opposition to do so. Obviously, he thought he could get better mileage out of asking the Leader of the Opposition to present it. I have no idea of his motives in that regard.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, this morning we witnessed an amazing display of incompetence from the Minister for Transport and Works concerning the operation of the Government Printing Office for the financial year ending 30 June 1980 and subsequently. I have only been in the Assembly a short time but the performance of the honourable Minister for Transport and Works this morning was an eye-opener to me. I would hope that we do not see too many performances like that from him or his government colleagues.

What we had this morning was a situation where a document had lain on the table of this Assembly for 2 days, a document headed, 'Department of Transport and Works Government Printing Office Financial Statement - Year Ended 30 June 1980'. On the first day it lay on the table, it became clear to us that the document made a number of damaging statements against the operation of the Government Printing Office. Those statements were made by the Auditor-General and basically said that, in the financial year ending 30 June 1980, the records of the Government Printing Office were in such an appalling state that the Auditor-General had no way of making an assessment of whether what he had been presented with was in fact an accurate representation of how money had been spent in the Government Printing Office during those 12 months.

We have had 2 days to look at the document. We have been able to ascertain in that time that there are a number of questions that both the honourable Minister for Transport and Works and the honourable Treasurer should answer. The honourable Minister for Transport and Works has had 6 months to ascertain that there are no serious charges in this report which have not been answered. I would like to nail one misstatement that the minister made to this Assembly this morning. The letter from the Auditor-General was not to the head of his secretariat, the head of the Department of Transport and Works. It was in fact to himself. The date of the letter from the Auditor-General is 16 March 1982. Very clearly in that letter, which is in the document that has lain on the table of this Assembly for 2 days, is the date of the receipt of the letter in the minister's office. That date is 1 week later; 23 March.

The minister has had 6 months in which to investigate the contents of this document and the statements of the Auditor-General, to satisfy himself that these things had improved in that area and to answer the questions that the honourable member for Sanderson and myself posed to him this morning. But his response was not that he had examined the document and had the answers but that he had sent out for a full report from his department. It is obvious that he sent out for that full report about 2 minutes before we asked the questions. That is a glaring example of incompetence. Not only do we have that sort of incompetence but we also have incompetence in the fact that the minister was not able to fulfil his responsibility under the act to table the document within 6 sitting days. Again, no reason was given by the minister for his failure in that regard.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident. It reflects in a broader sense the way this government sees the Assembly and the contempt it expresses on too many occasions for its operation. The Territory Labor Party sees the Assembly as an institution through which the interests of the whole community are protected. Our concern over the operations of NTDC have always revolved around the lack of accountability for how it spends considerable amounts of public money. Our concern about the lack of accountability by the government to the Assembly has also resulted in repeated calls for the establishment of a public accounts committee. Each time the issue of accountability for public expenditure is raised in this Assembly, the government's response is: 'We have the Financial Administration and Audit Act. All departments and statutory bodies are required to meet the requirements of that act. Therefore, the community money is in fact protected'. Mr Speaker, to use the words of the member for Sanderson in a debate on accountability for NTDC, that is, theoretically, the case.

Might I remind members that it was not until the middle of 1981 that the 1978-79 Annual Report of the Northern Territory Development Corporation was tabled. On this failure of NTDC even to meet the requirements of the Financial Administration and Audit Act - which we, I might add, consider totally inadequate for the purposes of accountability of that statutory body - the Northern Territory News in an editorial on 20 April 1981 described the government's failure as 'a further example of the Northern Territory government acting as a law unto itself'. That editorial went on to say that, both legally and morally, this was a scandalous state of affairs.

Mr Speaker, we now have another example of what can only be described as a scandalous state of affairs. According to the Annual Report of the Government Printing Office, no financial statements were prepared for the year ended 30 June 1979. Further, in the year ending 30 June 1980, the general ledger was not fully maintained on a normal commercial basis. There was no way for the Auditor-General to verify sales of \$2.4m for that financial year. As at 16 March 1982, there were no known details about the terms and conditions of a loan of some \$3.5m that was granted to the Government Printing Office by the Northern Territory government in June 1978. Further, there was a loss of some \$223 000 for the financial year 1978-79 that the Auditor-General was unable to account for because of totally inadequate accounting procedures. There was a further breach of the Financial Administration and Audit Act in relation to this annual report and that was the failure of the minister to table the document within 6 sitting days of this Assembly from the date he received it.

Mr Speaker, the minister received this report in late March this year. When I asked the minister a question relating to the late tabling of this report this morning, his answer was that there had been some disruption in the Department of Transport and Works following the resignation of Mr Rod Unwin as

secretary. But he then went on to say; 'I really at this stage cannot give the honourable member any reason as to why there has been a delay because there was no reason'. They were the minister's exact words this morning, 6 months after he received the report. Three months later, under the terms of the relevant act, he was supposed to table the report. Nor did the minister know the current position in relation to a statement of accounts of the Government Printing Office for the year ending 30 June 1981.

I might add at this stage that, under section 30 of the act, the time limit for presenting statements of accounts in each financial year is 6 months after the conclusion of the previous financial year. It is now 15 months after the conclusion of that financial year and the minister cannot answer the simple question of whether the statement of accounts has gone to the Auditor-General. In accordance with the act, that statement should have been made available to the Auditor-General within 6 months of the end of the financial year 1980-81.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in relation to the terms and conditions of a government loan of \$3.5m to the Government Printing Office in June 1978, the shadow treasurer and member for Sanderson asked the Treasurer why there were no terms or conditions set on the loan at the time it was granted and whether terms and conditions had now been applied to that loan. According to the Auditor-General, there were no terms or conditions applied to that loan as at 16 March this year. That was nearly 4 years after it was granted. This morning the Treasurer had no idea what terms and conditions apply to this loan.

It is obvious that this government has major problems in managing public finance. Apparently these problems are continuing in relation to the Government Printing Office as evidenced by the minister's inability to inform the Assembly this morning as to the status of the accounts for 1980 and 1981. This debacle in relation to the financial administration of the Government Printing Office is yet another clear illustration of the need for a public accounts committee to be established as part of the operations of this Assembly to ensure that this government is made accountable to the Territory community for the expenditure of Territory money.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable Minister for Transport and Works, if he is game to rise to his feet when I have completed, will probably attempt to answer the questions that the honourable member for Sanderson and I posed this morning. By doing so, he will compound his ignorance. He will compound his felony. If the information can be found within one day, that is further reason for condemning the minister for not carrying out his statutory responsibilities and providing the information when he was required to. In this case no excuse can hide the fact that, under the act, the buck stops with the minister. He has failed the test. He has shown himself incompetent and he deserves the greatest possible condemnation.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Speaker, I would like to make some observations about queries that were raised by honourable members during the course of this sittings. The first one is the fire report on the Jape Arcade which I promised I would give this Assembly during the course of the sittings. The report that I have is as follows. The apparent cause of the fire was a lighted cigarette thrown into a plastic waste paper bin which set fire to bins and waste paper and spread to an office chair and curtains causing noxious smoke. It is undesirable to use plastic bins in offices and attention is drawn to fire safety circular regulation no 37 from the Commonwealth Fire Board recommending a metal bin with space for air circulation beneath the bin.

A summary of the examination of the fire is as follows. Hose reels on the

fourth and fifth floors were not charged. Booster pumps were incorrectly connected and details about this were to be obtained from a plumber later. The fire alarm system worked satisfactorily but was not connected to the fire brigade headquarters at the time of the fire. NTEC has a separate evacuation system. It is manual for NTEC's own area. NTEC thought the system would automatically operate the building fire alarm system but found that it was not connected to the building alarm system. Air-conditioning was turned off by manual operation in the plant room on the 5th floor by an NTEC employee before the automatic operation cut in. Pressurisation of staircase systems functioned satisfactorily on the operation of the alarm system. Workmen extinguished the fire with hand extinguishers.

A general observation was that subsequent inspections of the building on 30 September 1982 by the Northern Territory Fire Brigade found that it was safe for occupation, the means of escape were satisfactory, fire-fighting equipment was operational and accessible, fire detection systems were all functioning satisfactorily and compartmentalisation and fire penetration stopping were both satisfactory.

On 1 October 1982 a further inspection was carried out by the Northern Territory Fire Brigade on the Jape Plaza building at the request of the Chairman of NTEC and the details of this inspection accord with the above. Two items do not meet fire safety hazard standards but had been approved by the Building Board: Australian Standard 1908 part 1 in relation to fitting of fire doors mentioned and glass fitted in light wells which should be either wired glass or fire-rated glass. Mr Deputy Speaker, it is the opinion of the Northern Territory Fire Brigade that the premises now comply with current fire safety standards except on these 2 points.

The other question that was asked of me during the course of the Assembly sittings concerned a gate or fence crossing the Bynoe Harbour Road. My investigations reveal that there are no fences or gates across the Bynoe Harbour Road. However, a gate placed across the Finnis River Station Road may be illegal. We are investigating whether or not it is legal.

I would like to bring to the attention of the Assembly the recommendations of the report of the Youth Needs Survey in the northern suburbs. Most members would be aware that, early this year, the Chief Minister and I held a public meeting at the Casuarina High School with a number of people to discuss the needs of youth in the northern suburbs. About 200 people attended that meeting and a steering committee was set up to report back to that general meeting. A further meeting took place on 25 August and a series of recommendations were accepted. I will read them into Hansard because of the obvious need for the government to act on some of the recommendations.

The report recommended that the Casuarina High School proposal be implemented within the 1982-84 financial years and that Casuarina High School be requested to take over the management of the centre and that an appropriate sum of money be set aside from the Youth, Sport and Recreation Trust Fund for that purpose; financial and other provisions be made for the maintenance of small drop-in centres such as are operating in Nightcliff and that provision be made for the establishment and operation of at least 2 centres in the northern suburbs, that is, Malak, Dripstone or Wanguri; those government instrumentalities responsible for the provision of public transport undertake an immediate investigation into the transport needs of youth to meet their social and recreational requirements; and there should be an established association of

voluntary youth organisations which should have the full support of the government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I read those recommendations into Hansard because the next step is to involve the various departments in the implementation of those recommendations. We will have made evaluations in the very near future and once we have those I will be in a position to place them before my Cabinet colleagues for consideration.

Earlier this morning I was asked a series of questions regarding the Government Printing Office. I must admit that I had made known to members opposite that I would provide them with a full statement later today. Of course, the honourable member for Millner said that it could have taken only today to get the report. That is not true; I actually asked for a briefing regarding the report earlier in the sittings, before question time this morning, because I was concerned when I received the report.

This morning questions were raised on the financial statements of the Government Printing Office. I believe that it is appropriate for me to make a complete statement on the financial situation of the Government Printing Office so that these issues can be placed in a proper perspective. At the same time, I will take the opportunity to respond to specific questions.

The Government Printing Office was transferred to the Northern Territory Public Service on 1 July 1978. On that date, the Government Printing Office's accounting system was based on traditional government accounting principles which do not include the preparation of commercial financial statements. An option stated is to encourage government enterprises to operate on a commercial basis. Therefore, the Treasurer directed the Government Printing Office to produce financial statements in accordance with commercial principles. The first statement was required for the 1979-80 financial year.

Members will appreciate the vast difference between traditional government accounting and commercial accounting. Government accounting recognises not only cash transactions but also current assets and liabilities; for instance, depreciation, provisions for future employment benefits, prepayments of salaries, cost of work in progress, and accounts payable and receivable. Therefore, to change from the traditional government accounting system to a commercial basis required a revised structure of costs, revenue, assets and liability information. Much of the information required was not available and necessitated examining additional records and transactions, a critical aspect of the commercial financial statement of the opening balance. However, in the case of the Government Printing Office, such a balance was difficult to ascertain for 1979-80 as no previous commercial records were kept. This factor significantly delayed the preparation of the statements.

The Department of Transport and Works recognised the difficulty of meeting the new requirement and, after a major review of the Government Printing Office accounting system in late 1980, invited a number of accounting firms to tender for a consultancy to establish an accounting system and provide timely and accurate financial statements. At the same time, the Government Printing Office employed a qualified accountant within its financial group to maintain the new system and review and update procedures. The new system was introduced on 1 July 1981 and resulted in a major improvement. Financial reports are now being produced on a monthly basis.

Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, although current financial procedures in the Government Printing Office conform with established practices, you will realise

that the issues raised today concerning the 1979-80 statement will apply to a lesser extent to the 1980-81 statement currently with the Auditor-General. You will also realise that the Darwin bus service, being subject to similar changes, has experienced similar difficulties, which will be apparent to members when I table its statement at the next sittings.

Before responding to the particular questions raised this morning, may I point out that the queries raised by the Auditor-General concern methods of accounting and do not infer impropriety. I must reiterate that we inherited a far from desirable system from the Commonwealth and members must appreciate that action now has been taken to rectify the problems inherited and new systems have been installed. As you can appreciate, Mr Deputy Speaker, it takes time to convert an operation of this magnitude to a commercial system although, on the surface, it looks as though things could have progressed more quickly.

I turn now to the specific questions asked today. The member for Millner asked me why the 1979-80 financial statements in the Auditor-General's report were not tabled in the Assembly within the statutory time prescribed in the Financial Administration and Audit Act. This was due to an administrative error within the department. The report was filed away after completion of auditing in March and regrettably not tabled until this sittings. I might add that there is no excuse for that. The member for Millner also asked what steps had been taken for the Government Printing Office's general ledger to be kept in accordance with commercial practice. I believe I have answered that in my general statement. Basically, the department has now adopted a new accounting system which satisfies both the Auditor-General's requirements and commercial principles.

The member for Sanderson asked for an explanation of the accumulated loss of the Government Printing Office as at 30 June 1979. The accumulated loss of \$223 918 was a difference between assets and liabilities as at 30 June 1979. This procedure was required to balance the books and locate a commencing balance.

The member for Millner also inquired about the situation with the 1980-81 financial statement. As previously advised, this statement has already been submitted to the Auditor-General.

Finally, the member for Sanderson asked a question of the Treasurer concerning the terms under which a loan of \$3.5m had been made to the Government Printing Office. No actual loan has been made to the Government Printing Office. What I assume the honourable member is alluding to is the fixed asset borrowing mentioned in the financial statement. This borrowing is equivalent to the cost of providing the Government Printing Office building, machinery, equipment and furniture and fittings. As the Government Printing Office is operating on a commercial basis, it is necessary for a nominal repayment to be made and the terms of such a repayment are still under consideration.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not denying the fact that I was caught short in providing information to honourable members this morning when I was asked questions. In most cases, when a minister is unable to provide such information, he usually requests the honourable member to place the question on notice. Because of the gravity of the situation, I told honourable members that I would provide that information to them during the course of the sittings.

Unfortunately, I cannot think of any parliamentary term with which I could describe the honourable member for Millner and get away with it. The point is that he dashed straight out after question time and issued a press release calling for my resignation. He may continue to do so.

Mr MacFARLANE (Elsey): Mr Deputy Speaker, the beautiful Katherine Gorge is not really wanted by Aborigines. I spoke with Mr Raymond Fortymile some time last week and he indicated that they would go ahead with the claim but that they did not even want the area. What they want is employment of 2 Aboriginal rangers and they want the rock paintings which are not sacred but which have a significance. They have no complaint with the way they have been looked after for the past 15 to 20 years. They want an area of land near the visitors' centre in the gorge proper for a museum and artefacts centre.

What is happening is that the Aboriginal Land Rights Act is giving Aborigines land they do not really want and to which they already have as much right as all other Territorians. We are all Territorians. We all live in the Territory and have the same rights as one another, except that Aborigines have greater rights. Apparently, the Chief Minister saw the 60 Minutes program and he sent this telex to the Chairman of the Northern Land Council:

I was very interested to see the 60 Minutes program on TV last night regarding the Katherine land rights claim. As I understood it from the interview, Raymond Fortymile indicated the claimants really did not want to pursue the claim. They simply wanted the following 3 conditions met: 1.- Aborigines employed as rangers of the Katherine Gorge National Park; 2.- rock paintings of the park protected; and 3. - a museum devoted to local Aboriginal culture established at the park.

Never at any time has this point of view been put to the Northern Territory government. This situation illustrates the misunderstandings and racial tension brought about by the restrictions imposed and implied by the Aboriginal Land Rights Act on parties being able to negotiate direct with the traditional owners. The government has always felt constrained by the provisions of the Land Rights Act to negotiate only with and through the land councils. I should like to indicate to you that the government is immediately prepared to agree to the terms proposed by Mr Fortymile. I would also point out that at no time has the NLC representative appointed to the Territory Conservation Commission for the Territory Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council drawn the situation as outlined by Mr Fortymile to the attention of either of these bodies.

I would suggest that talks to implement the agreement be held as soon as convenient to you and I nominate Dr Goff Letts and Mr Creed Lovegrove to represent the Territory government. I propose inviting the 60 Minutes team to focus their attention on some other land claims over national parks in the Northern Territory. It seems that their direct approach may successfully cut through the red tape which so often strangles negotiations between this government and some land councils. This whole situation exemplifies the sorry state that the Territory is being brought to by ambit claims being lodged rather than the true interests and wishes of the traditional land owners being put forward in a frank and candid manner. I will await your urgent advice. Paul Everingham, Chief Minister.

The Katherine Gorge is a big money earner for Katherine. It appears that in excess of \$2m in direct expenditure by tourists is being earned at the gorge. This represents takings from the caravan park and camping area, boats, and proceeds of bussing visitors to the gorge. It includes \$1.3m which represents an average single night's expenditure for 55 000 people. Taking into account multiplier effects, this figure could safely be tripled so that the total value

would be between \$6m and \$7m. By conservative estimates, this figure represents more than half the total estimated value of tourism to Katherine.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the area above the gorge is also under claim in this same huge Katherine Area Land Claim. This area concerns me very greatly because with a dam above the gorge, estimated to cost \$53m, we would have a lake 50 miles long and 30 miles wide at its widest point which would give Katherine a huge recreational area and somewhere where tourists could spend an extra day. This would double the takings from between \$6m and \$7m to \$12m and \$14m. With an annual income of that size from tourism, the figure of \$53m is very reasonable, taking into account other benefits the dam would offer.

It would provide flood mitigation for the town of Katherine and the whole area downstream. I heard during the sittings that a barge is to be provided to the people at Daly River but with a dam above the Katherine Gorge, there would be no flood at Daly River, which would remove the fear and damage, and a barge would not be needed. A dam above the Katherine Gorge would keep the dam at Mount Nancarrow full which would one day help Darwin with electricity and possibly with a water supply. The dam also would provide soft water for Katherine which will be needed when a RAAF base is established there, and also provide water for up to 40 000 people. There would be plenty of water for irrigation. I hope I am right about this too - horticulture will take off in a big way around Katherine. The water being released from the dam to make room for storage from the next wet could be used to generate hydro-electricity and to raise the level of the river right through the gorge by another 4 feet to provide year-round use of the gorge for tourism. All in all, as well as a recreational area providing something really useful to the Top End, there would be these spin-off benefits. If I have omitted to mention any of them, I am sorry.

These facts show that Aboriginal land claims affect not only the present but also the future. I say here and now that I think we have gone too far with the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act. I think a lot of the land is being given away to people who do not really want it and it can be put to better use by Territorians. By Territorians, I mean Territorians unlimited - Territorians, full stop. It was very interesting to have a talk with Raymond Fortymile and find out that, although Aborigines are proceeding with the gorge claim, they do not really want it. I said to him: 'Well, you didn't really want the Katherine Rural Education Centre and you backed off that'. He said: 'Yes, but we are going ahead with the gorge. After we get it, this is all we want: to preserve the rock paintings, 2 Aboriginal rangers and an area of land for a museum and artefacts centre'. Outside the gorge, one pastoralist is making arrangements with Aborigines to trade one area for another area. I put it to you squarely, Mr Deputy Speaker, that Aborigines are being given something by law which they do not really want. This is really causing tension around Katherine.

A year or so ago, a gentleman named Henry Peckham, whom some of you might know - his grandfather was the Fizzer - came to me and said: 'I want some land. What do I have to be, a blackfellow? Well, I don't know. I'll do my best'. Henry is a half-caste but he is now managing Beswick Station. He said he had no chance at all. We tried everything to get him some of the vacant Crown land along the Edith River. There was not a hope in the world. He was furious and virtually said: 'Well, if you can't beat them, join them'. He is managing Beswick Station now and doing a very good job. He comes in every now and again and he shakes his head and says: 'Well, I don't know, what do I have to do?' That vacant Crown land over the Edith River, alongside some of the good farming country there, is still lying idle 6 years after this act came in. There is a cut-off point. We are tying up valuable land from development. Something should

be done. Something must be done. Something will be done.

I have Aborigines working for me who want to claim land across the Roper River 4 or 5 miles away. They say that is their country. I have explained to them that that is a pastoral lease and, under the present law, they have no chance at all. But, under the Everingham package, they have a chance. They say they only want a bit of land to call their own. They do not want a big cattle station; they just want their own area. Once again, I come to this Assembly and support fully the Everingham package. I think it is time there was a cut-off point to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act or it should be extended to cover the whole of Australia.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr SMITH: I certainly do.

Leave granted.

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, in his adjournment debate speech, the Minister for Transport and Works explained that I issued a press statement calling for his resignation. I wish to place on record that I am about to issue a press statement. I have not called for the resignation of the honourable Minister for Transport and Works. The Labor Party is quite happy for the minister to remain where he is.

Ms D'ROZARIO (Sanderson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I feel I must make some comment on the remarks made by the Minister for Transport and Works. The first point to be made is that we appreciate the fact that the minister gave us an explanation in this afternoon's adjournment debate as a result of questions that were asked this morning. But the point, which I thought had been made quite adequately by the member for Millner, was not that questions were asked this morning but rather that the report had been with the minister for nearly 7 months and apparently he had done nothing about it until this sittings. I stress that that was the admission of the minister himself. He said he had only sought an explanation of this report earlier in this sittings.

What we are asking is why he did nothing in the time that has elapsed since the presentation of this report to him - I believe from the imprint that he received it on 23 March - and today, 14 October. It is quite clear that the honourable minister has indeed had time to look at this report but he sought to do nothing about obtaining explanations from his officers until the sittings had come upon him. It would be a different matter if indeed the report had been presented to his department and had, as he put it, been filed away. Whilst he admits that there is no excuse for the report having been filed - and that is the reason he gave for its not being tabled within the 6-day limit required by the Financial Administration and Audit Act - this report was brought to the personal attention of the honourable minister.

I really do not think a minister can go around blaming his department when, in fact, the letter of the Auditor-General is addressed to the minister himself.

Mr Perron: Who do you think gets the minister's mail?

Ms D'ROZARIO: Mr Deputy Speaker, the Treasurer asks who gets the minister's mail. I think that the Assembly is entitled to believe that, when something has been brought to the personal attention of the minister, he would at least address himself to its contents especially when they are so damning of the operations of the Government Printing Office.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I accept some of the explanations that have been given but by no means all of them. The facts of the matter are that the Government Printing Office is in such a state that it is impossible for the Auditor-General to express an opinion on the accuracy of the accounts. I have been in this Assembly a little longer than the honourable member for Millner and by no means as long as the honourable Minister for Transport and Works but this is certainly the most damning Auditor-General's report that I have ever examined. There is not one redeeming feature in this report. The qualifications and material uncertainties that the Auditor-General has outlined strike at the very basis of the accounting procedures and it cannot be more fundamental than that.

I accept that, before the takeover of the Government Printing Office on 1 July 1978, the Government Printing Office prepared its accounts on a cash-flow basis. Notwithstanding that, the fact of the matter is that, a year after having transferred to a commercial basis, there were no accounts prepared for that financial year. The Auditor-General is very clear about this. He says: 'The Government Printing Office commenced operations on 1 July 1978 and no financial statements were prepared for the year ended 30 June 1979'. He is not saying that no accounts were prepared on a commercial basis but that no accounts were prepared on any basis. He went on to say; 'Accordingly, it is impractical to use alternative verification procedures. I am unable to form an opinion on the accumulated loss of \$223 918 brought forward as at July 1979'.

The 2 points that come from this statement are that there were no accounts or alternative procedures for verification. Despite the fact that the minister has offered an explanation that the accounting basis moved from a cash to commercial basis, the Auditor-General was not able to establish the existence of the accounts and he was unable to avail himself of any alternative accounting system that had prevailed before. I think that statement stands for itself and there is no way the Minister for Transport and Works can wriggle out of that one.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the next point that we had from the minister was that he has attempted now to obtain a briefing on the matters relating to this report and presumably he had expected some questions from the opposition. I would like to ask the minister what on earth he expected when he tabled this report on Tuesday. This report has lain on members' desks since Tuesday. Apparently, the honourable minister did not expect us to ask any questions but, on the off chance that we might, he sought the briefing. If he did not expect us to ask these questions, I ask whether it is the action of a reasonable person to present a report as damning as this, which he has had for nearly 7 months, and then to criticise the opposition for asking questions and not being satisfied with the answers. I cannot say too strongly that this shows the most gross financial incompetence.

I would like to move on to another related matter. We have often heard ministers of the government criticise the opposition for questioning it on the financial operations of its various divisions. On each occasion when the opposition has called for the establishment of a public accounts committee, we have been told: 'The material is there. All you have to do is ask for it. You are lazy - that is why you want to be able to have public servants called before you to answer questions'. It now appears that the honourable ministers are embarrassed by the degree of interest that members of the opposition are showing

in matters of financial management. This is simply not good enough.

At the next sittings, the opposition will give notice of the introduction of a bill to make the NTDC more accountable to this Assembly. We will do that because of events that have taken place in the recent past and because of our long-standing interest in this matter which goes back to 1979. That bill will embody the principles of public accountability and accountability to this Assembly that have been spoken of before in this sittings.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the next matter relates to my electorate. I have to thank the Minister for Transport and Works for having complied so promptly with the request that I brought before him during the last sittings. In the last sittings, I brought to the attention of this Assembly the plight of primary schoolchildren residing at the KOA and Malak Caravan Parks who attend the Malak School. I spoke about the traffic conditions around the crossings that had been provided for the use of these children and the ineffectiveness of the crossings. I asked the Minister for Transport and Works to prepare himself for representations from residents who had organised a letter campaign to him for the installation of a set of pedestrian-activated traffic lights. I am happy to say that, when I examined this crossing on Tuesday, I saw workmen setting out 'witches' hats and the installation of these lights is now taking place. I thank the honourable minister for acceding so promptly to the request of those residents who look forward to the operation of this new system of traffic lights.

Mrs O'NEIL (Fannie Bay): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have had the pleasure of attending 2 interesting functions in the last few weeks. The first was in my electorate: the arrival of Mr Dick Smith on his solo helicopter flight around the world. This was a significant occasion and recognised as such by the many hundreds of people who took the opportunity to gather on the vacant land in Parap in my electorate to welcome Mr Smith. His flight is not something which I or, I suspect, many people would wish to undertake. Perhaps it does not rival the flights of earlier aviators who arrived more than 50 years ago at the airport at Parap. Mr Smith had the advantage of radio communication, constant contact with Qantas aircraft and access to supplies around the world. Nevertheless, it is a significant achievement and I was pleased to be present on that occasion, as were very many of my constituents. We are most mindful always of the part our area of Darwin has played in the aviation history of the Territory and Australia.

Bearing that in mind, the local residents have called again for some recognition of the old Qantas hangar in Parap. In view of its historic significance, when it has ceased its function as a workshop for the Commonwealth Department of Transport, it should be preserved, perhaps as an aviation museum. I am told it still has bullet holes in it from World War 2 when Darwin was attacked from the air. I support local residents in this call. I hope for the support of the Northern Territory government and other members of the Legislative Assembly.

One thing disappointed me on the occasion of the arrival of Mr Smith. It was brought to my attention by a number of my constituents who said: 'We notice that there is no Northern Territory government representative here. Why is that?' I said: 'I really don't know'. One would have expected the Minister for Transport and Works or some other worthy person to represent the Northern Territory government. I did not have an answer to give to the people.

Subsequently, I was told that no Northern Territory government representative was present at the civil reception which the Darwin City Council saw fit to offer Mr Smith on this historic occasion. I have since been told, and it has

not been confirmed by a member of the government, that this was in fact a deliberate government decision in view of disagreements that the Northern Territory government has had in the past with Mr Smith. I am reporting what I was told. Certainly, my constituents were disappointed by the non-attendance of a government minister on that historic occasion.

Another function that I had the pleasure to attend was the inaugural meeting in Darwin of an organisation known as Technical Aid for the Disabled. This organisation exists in the various Australian states and the South Australian chairman, Mr Terry Cody, was kind enough to address that meeting. It is a most unusual organisation and a very worthwhile one. I am informed it has no counterpart in other countries. The United States has very substantial systems for providing sophisticated equipment for all disabled people, in particular for service veterans. Sometimes this equipment is extremely expensive. But it has no organisation similar to Technical Aid for the Disabled. I am sorry the Treasurer is not interested in this but I think it is a worthy organisation. It is run by people in the community - particularly tradesmen, engineers, draughtsmen and people with useful skills - who voluntarily give their time to invent, create or manufacture in their own homes and workshops items which can be of use to disabled people to assist them to enjoy their lives to the full. Some of the items which they make are very small - others are quite substantial; for example, an electric wheelchair which is much cheaper apparently than the ones available on the commercial market.

This organisation has been established in the Northern Territory. I attended the meeting in Darwin. I am told something similar is under way in Alice Springs. I am pleased to see that many people with these skills - and I must confess that I had none to offer the organisation - were interested in assisting handicapped people in the Northern Territory. There were also representatives of the Handicapped Persons Bureau which evolved from the International Year of the Disabled Person.

Having taken the opportunity to advise honourable members of the existence of this organisation, I would like to wish it every future success.

Mr DOOLAN (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak very briefly this evening. I wish to comment on what the honourable member for Elsey said. He referred quite often to Mr Raymond Fortymile who now spells his name 'Fordamail'. I worked with his father some 30 years ago. His father spelt his name 'Fortymile'. At the time, I was pulling down Sydney Williams huts at the 110-mile. It was about the first job I had in the Territory.

The honourable member for Elsey said that people were quite happy about sacred sites and paintings on the walls of the Katherine Gorge. He said that they were not happy about the possibility of a dam at Katherine Gorge because it would cover the paintings by about 60 feet of water. I do not really think that people would be happy about that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chair will be resumed at the ringing of the bells.

Mr Speaker MacFarlane resumed the Chair.

Mrs PADCHAM-PURICH (Tiwi): Mr Speaker, yesterday morning I asked the honourable Minister for Community Development for some information regarding the general rate that had been decided on for the Palmerston area and also how that compared with the general rate charged to people in the Berrimah area. The minister told me that the rate that had been decided on by the Palmerston Develop-

ment Authority for the Palmerston area was 0.75¢ in the dollar on the unimproved capital value of the land. He said that the rate charged in the Berrimah area was 1.02¢ in the dollar.

My constituents in Berrimah will not see much equity in the rates they pay when they find out the rate that the people in Palmerston will pay. If you consider the general rate for the unimproved property value of land in Berrimah as compared to that in Palmerston, it is probably fair to say that land in Berrimah is worth more than land in Palmerston. But the people in Berrimah will not see it that way. They will feel that, after paying rates year after year, they are not getting much for it. People in the Palmerston area, despite the fact that they will live a few miles further from Darwin, will have many more services than the people in Berrimah. They will have the cost of bitumen roads, concrete kerbing, street lighting and rubbish collections, water and sewerage reticulation, bus stops, and proximity to shops, clinics, recreational facilities etc considered in the assessment of their rates.

I spoke yesterday about rents charged at Jabiru to the detriment of some of my constituents out there. I speak today most strongly against the inequalities of the rates for Berrimah and Palmerston. I do not know how much longer I must speak about the inequality that is presented to my constituents in Berrimah. Periodically, an increased value is put on their land, which means they pay more in rates. Mr Speaker, it could be said that, because the value of their land has gone up, if they wish to subdivide they will receive more for their land; they will receive some benefit from the increased valuation. But most of the people in Berrimah who are paying these rates are not fly-by-nighters; they are not people who want to subdivide, make a quick quid and get out. They want to stay there living as they have lived for years. All I can see is a very bleak future for them because they will not derive any benefit from subdivision of their land. They just want to stay there. They are certainly not receiving any benefit from government services and they have to pay more and more for nothing, which to me does not make much sense. It certainly does not make sense to them.

The second matter on which I would like to speak this afternoon is the Chief Minister's reply to a question regarding the protection of the Holmes Jungle and Black Jungle areas. I know the Holmes Jungle area has been of concern to the Trees Organisation for a couple of years. It took up petitions at the Garden Fair this year and last year. It is also concerned with the depredation caused by people vandalising the place, removing palms, and damage caused by fire. It is a very beautiful wildlife area. I remember years ago when we first came up to Darwin, we had friends in the Berrimah area - the Litchfields. They told us about the very interesting bird colonies in the Holmes Jungle area. Unfortunately, at that time, I was not able to take advantage of their interest and check it out for myself.

To conserve these areas so near to urban development is becoming critical. Rain forest areas are no longer very plentiful around Darwin. There was a beautiful area in Nightcliff which was vandalised in the name of progress when it was cleared to put up government houses years ago. Once such areas are cleared, they cannot be replaced and reafforested. There was another area somewhere in the Jingili area which was also cleared some time ago. The only benefit to the people who live in these areas subsequently is that they have very deep and luxuriant topsoil. Certainly, they get beautiful gardens out of it but the community loses a lovely jungle area.

There is another jungle area in my electorate. It is near Koolpinyah Station. It is called Black Jungle. I went through this area recently with a

friend in a four-wheel drive vehicle, which was necessary. We made an extensive trip right through the area. If only some of the people from the south who come up here could go through the same area; it was most beautiful. Our trip was very hurried but from a botanical point of view it was most interesting. It would be of great interest to any botanist who went through there and, indeed, any scientist interested in wildlife at all. Not only did we see the jungle area, which was unique in itself and in the flora it presented, we also saw about 5 or 6 completely different botanical eco-systems. We went at some speed because neither I nor my friend had much time to spare. It took us about 3 hours to go on this long trek from one side to the other. We went around lagoons and through dry creek beds, dry at this time of the year anyway. I had an interesting experience in that I was mistaken for a lady buffalo. There was a little orphan buffalo there. When we opened the car and I spoke to this little one, it wanted to get into the vehicle with us. I do not know whether I was making mother noises or father noises to it, but it certainly responded.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this Black Jungle area was known for a long time to people who lived in that area many years ago. In fact, by many old timers who used to live out there, it was called Aunty May's Black Jungle, after Aunty May Yates. The Yates family lived on Koolpinyah Station for many years. Unfortunately, Aunty May is dead now but Ted Yates is still alive. These people have a great knowledge of the natural history of the whole area. I hope that when the Conservation Commission institutes measures of protection for that area - and I hope it will not be only for the Black Jungle area but some of the areas around it - it contacts people like the Yates to get some knowledge of the history of what has been there. Other things have been grown there. Crops have been grown there. One can see remains of different things that have been there, parts of very old vehicles and some very old buildings.

Mr Speaker, I think there was a slight error in the Chief Minister's reply. He said that Black Jungle is near the Adelaide River. It is not; it is connected with the Howard River and some of its watercourses. The Howard River is very extensive in that area. I understand preliminary studies have already been made of the area. When the Conservation Commission continues its inspection, I hope it will find other areas of interest there which could also be protected for the use of future generations in the Northern Territory.

Mrs LAWRIE (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have asked questions in the Assembly over the last year or so relating to the opening up of Gunn Point as a recreational area for Darwin people. I am delighted that the government thinks likewise and that action has been taken. We hope to see the tabling of the report from the Conservation Commission in the November sittings as outlined this morning by the Chief Minister.

This morning, I had wanted to ask the Minister for Lands and Housing a question in relation to Bynoe Harbour, following the one I asked on Thursday 19 August which appears on page 934 of Hansard. I was hoping this afternoon to elicit some more information from him. I am aware that the government, and the Treasurer in particular, has been concerned at the proliferation of shacks or humpy dwellings in the Bynoe Harbour area. The reply he gave me really raised more questions than it answered. He stated that it would be unpopular, and probably unwarranted, simply to move in with government powers to tear the shacks down and that the government is now working on a plan to have some land in the area released so that it can be sold and proper access provided for the increasing number of Darwinites using the area. I wanted an assurance that he was not saying that the people who have camped illegally in that area for some years are going to be given priority in the allocation of land. Otherwise, Mr Deputy Speaker, I can assure him that I, along with quite a few of my Nightcliff

constituents, will race across to Bynoe Harbour and start building similar shacks very promptly. There is a tremendous amount of community interest in this. People want to move across the harbour to pursue, what is to some, a preferable lifestyle there. Land values on Cox Peninsula have soared and Bynoe Harbour is seen as the next cab off the rank.

I would like the honourable minister, before November, to instruct his department to have a good look at what is occurring at Bynoe Harbour and, if possible, to prepare for the Assembly a firm statement of the government's intentions together with maps of the area, a likely time-scale for the turn-off of land and the way in which he sees it being handled.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a number of matters I would like to raise in the adjournment debate this evening but, before I turn to them, I would like to pass a couple of comments on what the honourable member for Elsey had to say today. I have spoken in 2 adjournment debates about this matter. I do not propose to speak at length about it today.

I found it extraordinary in the extreme to hear the honourable member stand up this evening and say: 'Look, what is the point of this land rights claim? They do not really want it'. Those were the honourable member's words. I do not know Katherine very well. I know a little about Aboriginal people and I am quite sure that the undue pressure that the Nazi-type propaganda that the honourable member has been pushing has had the effect that he desired in making Aboriginal people feel that perhaps they are creating too much fuss and say: 'Really, all we want is that'. The honourable member has taken that to mean that the whole concept of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act is completely pointless and of no value to anybody. 'We are all Territorians, why should one lot of Territorians have any greater right over an area of land than another group of Territorians?'

As I said last night, Mr Deputy Speaker, the whole issue of who owns which bit of land is one that I think deserves a slightly more complex understanding than obviously the honourable member is able to give to it. Quite clearly, if we are only going to recognise the sort of ownership that western laws, white fellow laws, take into consideration, then the honourable member is right. But, after 200 years in this country, if we have learnt anything, quite clearly, we must consider different legal principles. That is what the federal Land Rights Act attempts to do. It is a shame that the honourable member does not take a little more time to think about the principles involved instead of shooting from the hip and pandering to racist elements in his own electorate.

To turn to another matter, Mr Deputy Speaker, last week I visited Tennant Creek. It was a pleasure to visit there but not under the circumstances in which I went: because of the closure of the meatworks. That has already been referred to in a couple of questions in this Assembly. I was to present a petition this morning but, unfortunately, I was unable to because I was not aware at the time of the rule that a petition must be presented to the Clerk 3 hours before the sittings commences. I certainly learnt my lesson in that regard. I will present the petition at the next sittings.

In answer to the Dorothy Dixier this morning, the honourable Treasurer referred to population figures in Tennant Creek. He said that the allegation in an article in last night's NT News that the population in Tennant Creek had decreased by 17% is nonsense. He quoted figures from Northern Territory government censuses of 1 July 1981 and 1 July 1982 which indicated that there was no decrease of the order the article suggested. Of course, subsequently there has been the closure of the meatworks.

The honourable Treasurer suggested that the closure of the meatworks was a seasonal thing and had no effect whatsoever. I would like to point out to the honourable member that that is not, in fact, the case. The untimely closure of the meatworks has had considerable impact on the population of the town. I had the opportunity while in Tennant Creek to spend considerable time with meatworkers and their families, doing the sorts of things that politicians do: listening to the issues that people were raising, putting them in contact with government departments and getting the sort of information that people in an isolated town like Tennant Creek have difficulty in obtaining.

For the benefit of the honourable Treasurer and the honourable member for Barkly, many of the meatworkers have not left Tennant Creek. Many are still living there. They are not all itinerants.

Mr Tuxworth: Who said they were?

Mr BELL: I heard you say it on the news.

Many of the people in Tennant Creek are being forced to apply for unemployment benefits which gives the lie to the honourable member for Barkly's assertion that they are people who move around anyway.

Mr Tuxworth: That was your line not mine.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr BELL: It's not my line; it's their line - your own constituents. It's about time you paid more attention to your constituents.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I would ask the member for MacDonnell to address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr BELL: To return to the honourable Treasurer's point, many of those people have been forced to move away much more quickly. This is the key point: although many of them leave when the meatworks close, many of them have been forced to give up accommodation they had in the town. Whereas in the off-season they may have been regarded still as residents of Tennant Creek, on holiday, because they no longer have premises in Tennant Creek, many of them feel they can no longer be classed as residents of that town.

The next matter I wish to raise concerns a meeting of representatives of Aboriginal organisations that the Chief Minister conducted last year. I am sorry the honourable Chief Minister is not here to hear this.

Mr Tuxworth: If it's like the other story, he's probably heard it before.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr BELL: I am delighted that I have managed to nettle the honourable member so severely.

Referring to this issue, it is a matter of information. I would have brought it up in question time this morning if the same honourable member had not expatiated quite so fulsomely as he did. Last year, the Chief Minister organised a meeting of representatives of Aboriginal organisations. I would be very keen to find out - and many people in Alice Springs have asked me about it - whether such a meeting will be convened this year. It is my intention to raise that with the Chief Minister either by letter or at the next sittings.

A further point I wish to raise concerns a couple of incidents that occurred in my electorate. I believe that they are of sufficient import to require being brought up in the context of a grievance debate in the Legislative Assembly. They refer to what can only be described as the unwarranted use of firearms by way of threat by a police officer. These stories came back to me and they relate to Aboriginal people in my electorate who have been known to me for many years.

One incident related to 3 young men in a motor car travelling back from Alice Springs to where they lived. They may have been in breach of dry area legislation and perhaps their apprehension by a member of the police force was quite warranted. I am personally well aware of the problems created by alcohol abuse in Aboriginal communities.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr PERRON (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Nightcliff asked about land at Cox Peninsula, in particular at Bynoe Harbour, which is a subject she and very many people in Darwin have an interest in. My response to a question she asked of me previously may have been a little vague and I apologise for that. The government is very concerned at the continuing proliferation of illegal shacks at Bynoe Harbour. I pointed out in answer to her question that, whilst being concerned at this proliferation, I personally can understand the motivations of those people who have, through frustration, built themselves an illegal weekender because the government has not moved to meet a need in this area. We propose to do so.

I have had a number of meetings with officers of the Department of Lands on various proposals to provide land at Bynoe Harbour for weekender-type structures so that people can buy land and put up a shack. There will be some constraints and these are important. Until now, it has been general government policy that we require private developers to provide full services to land before they are allowed to obtain title to it. That is clearly impractical in this situation. If the government were to provide electricity and water as well as roads to Bynoe Harbour before it released any land over there, quite clearly it would be many years before a square inch of it was released.

I am taking the punt and bending the rules a little. I have directed officers that the government will release land with specific covenants which state that the government will not be providing electricity or water to this particular area. The land will be released for weekenders. Whilst we cannot stop people moving there permanently, we want them to be under no misunderstanding that the provision of water, electricity and effluent disposal systems will be entirely at their own cost. I am sure that many people will find this quite acceptable because they are presently carting water for their weekend fishing excursions and, with modern vehicles and water tanks, that is not such a problem. It will be if people want to stay there permanently.

It seems clear from preliminary designs that have been prepared that some of the blocks to be released will be where there are illegal structures at present. I will be making it clear in press releases that this land will be released publicly and this is the only equitable way for the government to do it. Whilst I expect some lobbying from people who would like to claim prior rights, particularly if their shed happens to be on one of the blocks that is to be released, they will be given a warning and a period of time within which to move. After that time, the government proposes to move them. Government action to demolish such structures would be taken after an auction, presuming these blocks are auctioned. If a person who claims ownership of an illegal structure happens

to buy the land that it is on, it would be unfair to make him move it first and then sell the block of land to him. That should broadly satisfy the honourable member.

I am pushing to have designs etc put before the Rural Planning Authority at an early date because subdivisional and rezoning approval is necessary to enable the government to release the land. I believe that such land will be very popular and, in order not to drive prices up, I hope to release as much as I can in the area at that time. The government is not intent on earning money by releasing this land. Obviously, the money we will gain will be minute in budgetary terms. I would like to give as many people as possible the opportunity to own a block.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for MacDonnell complained that the honourable member for Elsey does not appear to acknowledge certain principles that the member for MacDonnell feels he should in the whole Aboriginal land rights question. The honourable member for MacDonnell should reflect on this question because, if one member has an extreme point of view - and I do not say that he has - then the other probably has one too. The honourable member for MacDonnell seems to me to be blind to the fact that there could be deficiencies in the Aboriginal Land Rights Act or that any injustices could be perpetrated by the administration of that act. I think that is unfortunate.

The government of the Northern Territory has long recognised that land rights for Aborigines is a just cause and the Country Liberal Party has long supported Aboriginal land rights. However, both the party and the government have seen some very serious deficiencies in the act and serious injustices perpetrated, including injustices to some Aborigines as distinct from others. A great deal of effort has been put in over the years to reach agreement with the various parties to have the act changed. Those activities continue at present despite the quite considerable opposition which is to be expected. I say to those people who seem to think that any amendment to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act whatsoever is simply not on because it would diminish the rights of Aborigines, that that is totally unacceptable. The people who throw a lot of stones should look at their own houses.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Alice Springs): Mr Deputy Speaker, this morning I asked a question of the Chief Minister about encouraging the use of plastic bottles instead of glass bottles. I have spoken about this before. Broken bottles are very costly to clean up. It is an expense to the ratepayer and the taxpayer and tends to add considerably to racial tension. Further, the glass bottle can be used as an offensive weapon. The Leader of the Opposition has referred to the Todd River murders. Events like these occur too frequently. Just a week ago, a white man and an Aboriginal woman were killed. I do not know if bottles were the weapons used in these cases but they have been used in the past. Many of the injuries that have been caused to people have been caused by broken bottles used as weapons. When one considers the human suffering and the financial cost, I would suggest that all members ought to give this suggestion some serious consideration. I do not believe that legislation would be necessary to implement this proposal. I think that encouragement of the beverage manufacturers to come to the party might be all that is needed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that members of this Assembly would demonstrate very violently if anybody said that they did not believe in democracy. One of the cornerstones of democracy is freedom to express a point of view in a non-violent way. Even if we strongly oppose a person's point of view, if we believe in the process of democracy, we must defend that person's right to

express his view. The march in Katherine against federal legislation has been opposed in a non-democratic manner. If you did not understand the Katherine situation and listened to what has been reported and what the honourable member for MacDonnell has said, you would think the people were suggesting that Aborigines should be banned from the area. Nothing could be further from the truth. Might I suggest, Mr Deputy Speaker, that use of terms such as 'racist' and 'Nazi-type tactics' are themselves Marxist-like and designed to silence by denigration anybody who might oppose someone else's point of view. That is definitely not democratic.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I had chosen to speak this afternoon on a matter relating to horses, but the honourable member for MacDonnell has distracted my attention momentarily. The premature closure of the meatworks in Tennant Creek has caused dislocation for quite a few people. With the background that led up to the closure, I hope that we have the good fortune to have the works opened next year. But, with the cloud hanging over us, that is not going to be a spread misere. I, too, have been working very hard behind the scenes with my colleagues and other people to ensure that the meatworks reopens as soon as possible - whether it is this year to kill horses or next year to kill beef - but certainly as soon as is practicable. I support that entirely. I have said so several times.

I was in Tennant Creek on the weekend and had the good fortune to meet with representatives of the meatworkers who expressed their concern and were a bit testy that I had referred to them as itinerants. That was pretty hot news to me, Mr Deputy Speaker, because I have not referred to the meatworkers as itinerants. Anybody who has followed my activities over the last 12 months would be aware that I have been working with the meatworks proprietors to try and establish training schemes through which the meatworks could become manned wholly by local people. Whether they move in and become local or they are locals who learn to be meatworkers is irrelevant. I think it is very good to have a stable force and to try to do things to extend our seasons so that people have 48 weeks' work each year. When I asked them where they had heard this they said: 'We were told. We were told that you said it on the radio'.

When I heard it again this afternoon, it all became clear to me: the great white father had been wandering through my electorate making up stories about what the local member had said. I say to the honourable member again that, if he can produce a tape or a transcript of the member for Barkly referring to meatworkers as itinerants, I will give him \$200 and, if he cannot, I invite him to give me the same amount. His reflection against me is most unparliamentary. It might even be called devious. I think if the honourable member wants to be a purveyor of untruths and a little careless with the way he handles the spoken word, then he ought to be prepared to back himself up. If he does not want to do that, then he might just stick to the truth and save everybody a lot of inconvenience. He still has not taken up the offer and I guess that means that he is not quite so sure that he heard it after all. I know that he did not.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe we have to find something that will help to extend the season at the Tennant Creek meatworks and provide an alternative market for us. Quite by accident, I was introduced last Friday to a representative of an organisation which had hoped to kill horses in the Tennant Creek meatworks this year and send them to Japan for human consumption. The proposal was based on the fact that the Japanese horse meat market is worth about \$100m a year and has traditionally been supplied by South American countries. At this stage, those countries have a hoof and mouth cloud hanging over them and the Japanese are looking to diversify their supply points. Australia has fallen into the net.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the interesting thing in all of this is that, out of somebody else's poor fortune, there is an opportunity for us to sieze. In the early days in the southern half of the Territory, a great deal of horse breeding was undertaken for the Indian army remount program. My good friend, the Senator, tells me that, when he was a boy, tens of thousands of horses were transported on the Ghan to Adelaide for shipping to India. Given that today in Japan horse meat is worth more than beef and given that the market is maturing in Australia's favour, perhaps it is an opportunity that the Territory should take up and foster. I do not see it as being an enormous market for us. I think perhaps it would be a very nice little diversification. It might enable us to kill 10 000 or 12 000 horses a year in the meatworks and ship the meat to Japan. It would give us an opportunity to utilise some of the spare barge space that we have out of Darwin to Singapore. Many opportunities exist for us to reach out and take.

I am very grateful for the initiative shown by my colleague, the Minister for Primary Production, who has formed the terms of reference for an investigation into the possibility of horse breeding and shipment to Japan. Although we may have missed the boat this year, I believe there is an ideal opportunity for us. It is in all our interests as well as the interests of the constituents in my electorate, particularly the meatworkers who have a broken season, to try to bring such a program of horse breeding to fruition.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

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