

## PART II

### THE QUESTION PAPER

An index to questions appears at the end of Part II.

Numerical references are to Question Paper page numbers.

An asterisk preceding an entry in the index indicates that an answer has not yet been received.



Beaufort Hotel

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

What is the total amount of money owed by the Beaufort Hotel to the Northern Territory government for electricity, water and sewerage charges and payroll tax?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am not in a position to give the exact details. I can give approximate figures owed by the Beaufort Hotel. In doing so, I advise honourable members that the Northern Territory government is in a secure position in that it could close the Beaufort Hotel down and regain those moneys owed to it at any time. Indeed, the Leader of the Opposition was reported in an article in the Katherine Times in September last year as saying that the NT government had no option but to support Burgundy Royale, the financially troubled owners of the Beaufort Centre. He is now asking how much financial support we have provided to them by way of leniency in respect of their electricity account. I understand the figure is somewhere in the vicinity of \$800 000 for electricity. The amount owed in payroll tax would be somewhere in the vicinity of \$250 000. I do not have the figures for water and sewerage charges but I will provide them during the course of question time.

Alice Springs to Darwin Railway

Mr FIRMIN to CHIEF MINISTER

What is the nature of recent developments regarding construction of the Darwin to Alice Springs railway line?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it is with pleasure that I take the opportunity to inform the Assembly of the position with respect to the construction of our much-awaited railway line from Alice Springs to Darwin. Honourable members will be aware that, over the last several years, our government has used every available avenue to try to promote the development of this line and to have the federal government honour its clear and unequivocal undertaking to the people of the Northern Territory, given in an agreement reached in 1910, that it would construct a railway line to Darwin. Territorians do have some patience, but I think that really is stretching patience to its absolute limits.

During the 1983 election campaign, there were clear and unequivocal promises, without qualification, by the current federal government that it would build a railway line. That promise lasted less than a month after it was elected. Despite that, we proceeded as diligently and as expeditiously as possible towards the construction of a line. Members will be aware that we formed a Railway Executive Group which prepared reports in 1986 on the financial viability of a railway line to be operated by private enterprise. That project was found to be viable in a 20-year time frame. The income generation would exceed well beyond the 20-year period. As a 20-year repayment period, it would work. I have made 2 statements in the Assembly in the last 12 months with respect to that.

Mr Speaker, recently, I visited Japan as part of the work towards the development of a private enterprise consortium for the construction of this

rail line. I know there is degree of scepticism in the community as to whether or not this will be at all possible, and there is no doubt that it will not be an easy task to achieve a private enterprise line. However, it is far from being an impossible task. I have been very heartened by the response that has arisen in the last month and I suspect that that has been stimulated further by the recent re-election of a CLP government in the Northern Territory so that people will have the confidence of dealing with a government that is in existence.

It was our first visit to Japan and we anticipated opening the subject up and that, perhaps after several visits, we might arouse interest. The interest was far higher than that and, as a consequence, we have formed what we have called a Japan Australia Transport Study Group. This comprises, from the Japanese side, representatives from the Japan Railway Technical Services, known as JATS, Japan Railway and Freight Company and the Long Term Credit Bank of Japan, and from Australia, Henry and Walker, with the involvement of 1 of its shareholders, Kumagai Gumi. The study group will be chaired by a gentleman called Dr Robert Ishizaki. He is from Japan and he will be working as a coordinator of this project in Japan without consultancy fees or other costs. Dr Ishizaki will be in Australia next month and he will visit Darwin.

I was even more pleased when I arrived back in Australia on the morning of Good Friday and received a message at the airport that TNT Ltd had expressed keenness to be involved in the operational side of the railway. I have had brief discussions with Sir Peter Abeles since that time and, after these sittings, I will be taking the opportunity to have further discussions with Sir Peter Abeles and other potential Australian participants to bring together this consortium to develop a private enterprise line. I reiterate that it is and has been our intention that this be a completely private enterprise line if that is at all possible physically. I will not exclude the possibility of some government involvement, although my objective is to have no government involvement in the line.

I might say here that the project may involve more than a railway line. The line is really the linchpin in the development of a transportation system which involves shipping, ports and rail as related transport modes. It is possible that other projects can be mixed and matched with the railway in a consortium-backed, multi-project venture which could well improve the viability of the total scheme and provide more investment opportunities for the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, we have a long way to go. I am hopeful that I will be able to make a more definite statement to the Assembly in June. I am proceeding steadily but carefully, without making any wild claims. I made the statement yesterday and I repeat it again now: we will not rest until we see the railway line in place and the first train arrives in Darwin from Alice Springs.

#### Meat Inspection Services

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

Mr Speaker, I asked this question of the previous Minister for Primary Production but, not having received a satisfactory reply, I ask it again. Can the minister assure me that, when contractual arrangements regarding meat inspection services are finalised between the Department of Primary Industry and the Northern Territory government, there will be no detriment to our export and local abattoirs if a Mudginberri-type situation should arise?

ANSWER

The transfer of meat inspection services has taken place between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory officers. It occurred on 15 December last by proclamation of federal regulations by the Governor-General. At that time, we amended the act in the Northern Territory to enable the Administrator of the Northern Territory to send to the federal minister an instrument requesting that the act no longer extend to the Territory. The agreement affecting the transfer was signed in March this year by the then Minister for Primary Production. However, physically, it had come into force in December last year.

To come to the nub of the honourable member's question, the agreement includes provision for the Northern Territory government to keep specific Northern Territory public servants competent in meat inspection services and to assign those officers to any establishment where the Commonwealth cannot supply domestic meat inspection services. There is also an ability for the Northern Territory to terminate the agreement unilaterally if the Northern Territory government seeks to do so.

Those were 2 conditions which the Northern Territory government insisted upon with the Commonwealth as part of the arrangement for the Commonwealth government to take over meat inspection services for domestic abattoirs as well as export abattoirs. The proposal that the Commonwealth run meat inspection services throughout Australia really stemmed from reports following the meat substitution scandals of a couple of years ago. The Northern Territory government refused to accept that it would relinquish meat inspection services in the Territory for domestic abattoirs unless 2 conditions were met. The first was that we would keep designated public servants capable of instantly taking up the duties of meat inspector and use those people in our domestic abattoirs at any time that the Commonwealth could not provide a meat inspector. The second was that, if we felt that the whole arrangement was unsatisfactory over time, we could terminate the arrangements completely.

#### Dangerous Chemicals Incident at Woodcutters Mine

Mr McCARTHY to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

What were the results of investigations carried out by the Department of Mines and Energy into a report of an incident of inhalation of dangerous chemicals at the Woodcutters mine near Batchelor recently, and how has that incident affected operations at the mine?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I can provide the member for Victoria River with some details on the incident. He took a great interest in this incident, as indeed I have myself. The report explains in detail the incident of exposure of an employee to gases at the Woodcutters mine. It also covers actions which were taken and some of the results of investigations subsequently conducted over a period by a number of safety officers within the Department of Mines and Energy and some chemical suppliers involved with the supply of the material. The reports are quite detailed and I will make those details available to the member for Victoria River without taking the time of the Assembly to read them in full during question time.

However, as a result of the investigations and the report, I can say that a number of changes have taken place at the mine site and I believe that we have now reached a satisfactory conclusion for the continued operation of that particular mine.

#### Electricity Supply to Alice Springs

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

What action has he taken to have power restored to sections of the central business district of Alice Springs, particularly to the Anzac Hill high school, and to resolve the industrial dispute which is behind the problem?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the question of electricity supply seems to be very much to the forefront these days and nowhere more so than in Alice Springs. The Alice Springs situation was caused by a line fault which could have been rectified in a very short period of time. In fact, I have been told the supply could have been restored within 10 minutes. However, there was an industrial dispute and a stop-work meeting ensued. Unfortunately, I think some 9 consumers were without power in Alice Springs from lunchtime yesterday. An emergency generator was taken to the school.

It was very unfortunate that the opportunity was taken by the unions concerned to have a stop-work meeting and to stay out at a time when the power supply could have been restored quite simply. One has considerable sympathy with the Queensland Premier and some of the actions that he has taken when unions seize on opportunities such as this to inconvenience people and to have their own way. This type of opportunism should not be tolerated and I will be conducting further investigations about that stop-work meeting in an attempt to have such meetings curtailed in the future.

#### Federal Industrial Relations Legislation

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for LABOUR and ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

He may be aware that today's National ABC radio news carried a story that the federal Minister for Industrial Relations, Mr Ralph Willis, will introduce a bill for a new industrial relations act into federal parliament in 2 weeks time. The report went further and noted that this new act will negate recent amendments to Queensland's industrial relations legislation. What right has the federal government to introduce legislation that may negate state legislation, and what impact would this proposed act have on the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it has no moral right. The amendments to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act in the federal parliament raise the old issue of states' rights. The concern that this government has had in relation to states' rights over a long period is supported by all the states. As far as Queensland is concerned, the situation is a matter for Queensland and those people have to address those particular issues.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The question is out of order because it asks the minister to comment on something that is not within his province. It is not part of his portfolio responsibility and is not even a responsibility of this Assembly.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I would like to challenge the point of order. The matter of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act is of vital importance to the Northern Territory and does impact on this Assembly and, in fact, on the responsibilities of this minister because all of our public servants are covered by that act.

Mr SPEAKER: The question seeks specific information pertaining to industrial relations within the Northern Territory and, as such, there is no point of order.

Mr HARRIS: Mr Speaker, I thank you for your ruling. To continue in relation to matters within our borders, this is one of the concerns that we have in the Northern Territory because, as the Chief Minister has just said, unlike the states, we do not have industrial legislation. The federal act covers the whole of the field in the Northern Territory in respect of industrial legislation. The Leader of the Opposition is aware of that. It is a major concern and it is one of the reasons why we need statehood as quickly as possible so that we can set in place legislation which will have effect in the Northern Territory.

I am most concerned at the way in which the legislation will be introduced into the federal parliament. I have just attended an industrial relations ministers' conference in Fremantle where the issue of whether or not impending federal legislation should be made available to state ministers was discussed. Some 18 months ago, the federal Minister for Industrial Relations, Ralph Willis, said that the states would have the opportunity to view any impending legislation which would have an impact on them. However, in this case, we were not able to get hold of the legislation and, this morning, we heard on the radio that it will be introduced in a couple of weeks. It will have a vital impact on the Northern Territory and I am sending a telex to Ralph Willis today asking that copies of the proposed legislation be made available as soon as possible so that we can have an input.

The Commonwealth's centralist policy of controlling all the states is not on. Each state has a constitutional responsibility to look after the people within its boundaries. Industrial relations should be a matter for the states. I repeat that I have every right to answer questions in relation to this issue. The Leader of the Opposition may laugh, but this is a serious matter and it needs the serious consideration of this Assembly.

#### Development of Tolmer Falls

Mr TIPILOURA to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

Is the Tolmer Falls area under consideration for development as a tourist resort? If so, what is the nature of the proposed development, and will the minister make available to the public all the studies and submissions in relation to the development proposals?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, Tolmer Falls within Litchfield Park has been under consideration for development of a resort facility at various times in the past and at present. It was mentioned in a preliminary report conducted by the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory. In addition, further feasibility studies form part of a trade agreement that was reached with various parties involved with the provision of generators at the Katherine power station. As recently as last week, I dealt with the terms of reference

for that continued feasibility study into the suitability of various types of resort development within the Litchfield Park area. Tolmer Falls is not the only area under consideration. There are other areas including Wangi Falls and the Sandy Creek area. Each is subject to very tight terms of reference which protect the interests of all parties.

I do not expect to receive the final deliberations of the people conducting the feasibility study for at least another 3 months. I would certainly give an undertaking to the member for Arafura that, when it is appropriate, the proposals will be made available to members of this Assembly and the general public.

I would point out that the Conservation Commission, in conjunction with the Northern Territory Tourist Commission, has an ongoing program to develop a road link from the Berry Springs Nature Reserve to Wangi Falls and back through Batchelor, thus enabling people exiting Darwin to traverse across that country en route to Katherine or the back road to Kakadu.

Tolmer Falls area is under consideration for development of a resort and all the necessary environmental issues have been taken into account in the terms of reference and will continue to be monitored closely. I think it will be some time before we reach a decision-making stage. Nevertheless, the efforts of the government over recent years to develop these resorts in accord with proper environmental considerations stands alone. I think that we can stand on our record. The member for Arafura can be assured that the government will make the appropriate decisions in the best interests of all members of the community and its environment.

#### Work Health Court

Mr SETTER to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

There have been recent allegations that the new Work Health Court cannot operate because rules for the court have not yet been drawn up. Is this correct and, if so, when will the rules be put in place?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, in answering the honourable member's question, I would like to express my anger at recent allegations made concerning the Work Health Court. I do not know how many honourable members are aware of what was said but the allegations were raised in a very irresponsible manner by the Miscellaneous Workers' Union spokesman, Mr Peter Tullgren. If they reflect the advice that he has been providing to his members, I feel that he should be looking for another job. The simple fact is that the Work Health Court has been in a position to hear applications since the first day that the Work Health Act commenced. That meant that any person who needed to have a claim decided by the court was able to go through that process. From the date when the act came into force to the date when Mr Tullgren made his allegations, the number of people who applied to the court or who made inquiries about applications to the Clerk of Courts, who always has been and always will be the appropriate person to receive such applications, has been zero. The number of applications to that court or even inquiries totals zero, zilch, nothing. That raises 2 questions about Mr Tullgren's claims. Either there have been no people who needed to make application to the court or people have been advised, by people who do not know or who are mischievous in their actions, against making inquiries to the Clerk of Courts. Either of those scenarios is a damning indictment of Mr Tullgren's behaviour and I suggest that members of his union replace him immediately.

The formal rules for the Work Health Court have indeed taken some time to draft. However, that was anticipated, given the complex questions and discussions which had to occur before those rules could be finalised. There has been some suggestion that those rules had not been finalised because the Chief Magistrate was too busy and had to travel to Alice Springs frequently and was unable to set her mind to the task. I am appalled that such a suggestion should be made. The Chief Magistrate is certainly extremely busy, as all members would realise. As a result, she had to put in many hours of her own time to ensure that those formal rules were drafted as soon as possible.

I must point out that the drafting of those formal rules involved considerable liaison between the Law Society, the Department of Law and the Work Health Authority. The formal rules have gone through all those processes. They have undergone final drafting by the Department of Law and they were signed by the Chief Magistrate on Friday of last week.

Members opposite are laughing. We will go right back to the beginning for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Smith: No one knows the procedures.

Mr MANZIE: He says he does not know the procedures. He is a man who has been involved with unions. Obviously, he is a man who has been involved in workers' compensation matters.

Mr Smith: If I happened to be an injured employee ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, obviously he does not want to listen to the answer because he wants to remain ignorant. He seems to be adopting that attitude quite frequently of late; he would rather not know how things work. He would rather stay ignorant because, in that way, his conscience can operate a little better. If he does not know how things work, he can throw his hands in the air or he can tell people untrue statements.

I will just go back to what I said at the start. Since day 1, there has been provision for the Work Health Court to operate in the way that court operated in respect of the Workers' Compensation Act. Application is made through the Clerk of the Courts for any action that needs to be taken in that court. That has always been the case and always will be the case. Obviously, in his union days, the Leader of the Opposition had no experience of that but, in future, when he ends up going back to union work - because, as we all realise, he will not be the Leader of the Opposition for that much longer, because that is a job based on performance and he has not shown any - he will know the right place to go to make applications relating to work health.

I would like to point out that the Chief Magistrate has done an excellent job. The claim made by Peter Tullgren was completely inaccurate. Applications could be made to the Work Health Court as from the commencement of the act. I would like to point out also that all magistrates have had considerable experience in resolving workers' compensation claims because of the previous operation of the Workers' Compensation Act. Any suggestion that people have not been able to proceed with applications to the Work Health Court is absolute rubbish. It is untruthful and it is mischievous.

Safety Inspections at Mine Sites

Mr LEO to MINISTER for LABOUR and ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Has the Work Health Authority the obligation to carry out safety inspections at mine sites and, if not, who has that responsibility and why was the power devolved from the Work Health Authority?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the 1 area that is still being spoken about relates to mine safety inspections. Industrial safety has moved across in the rational change to integrate or collocate services. At present, we are discussing the issue with officers of the Department of Mines and Energy and, as soon as I have information on that, I will make it available to the member for Nhulunbuy.

Department of Education Reorganisation

Mr REED to MINISTER for EDUCATION

I understand that the Department of Education reorganised its supply section recently. What steps have been taken to ensure that bush schools will not be disadvantaged by that reorganisation?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Department of Education has reorganised its supply section and that move will devolve the responsibility for repairs and maintenance of audio-visual and computer equipment to the private sector at no extra cost to government. Also, the stores function has been rationalised to maximise private sector involvement.

The need to ensure that standards are not lowered and that bush schools are not disadvantaged has been one of the department's priorities in organising this move. I would take the opportunity of assuring all honourable members that we are aiming to maintain the level of services to bush schools and the department will be monitoring the new system to ensure that this aim is achieved.

I would like to outline the arrangements which will operate in relation to the department's regions throughout the Territory. First, in respect of bush schools in the Darwin south and east Arnhem regions, no change to the arrangements has been made. The local store in Katherine has been abolished. However, the department has period contractors making deliveries to schools in the region. This is in addition to trips by Darwin-based stores personnel and normal airfreight and road services. The only change is that the department will not have a storeman based in Katherine. The store and 2 storemen in Tennant Creek have been removed.

The department believes that there will be no difficulty in private enterprise taking over this role. In fact, already 1 freight business has indicated that it will definitely deliver to schools, either on a period contract or on an ad hoc basis. Other air and road freight services will be used also. Equipment needing repair will be picked up by period contractors of the Department of Transport and Works who service the region. Those arrangements have been made. On other occasions, such equipment will be collected by government department personnel who are moving through the region. Again, that is something that happens at the moment.

Schools in the Alice Springs region will still have the services of 2 stores people, a dispatch and receipts officer and a storeman. Deliveries in the region will be made by the storeman, period contractors and by normal road and freight services. The present arrangement for the collection of audio-visual equipment and computing equipment that needs repair are ad hoc. The equipment is picked up by whoever happens to be at the school at the time - stores personnel, departmental personnel, period contractors or any other government officers.

The only change will be that visits by stores personnel certainly will not be as frequent as before. However, if there is an urgent need that cannot be met under the normal arrangements, Department of Transport and Works period contractors will be used to transport equipment. I believe that there will be no risk that bush schools will be left high and dry by the reorganisation of the supply system.

It is important to point out that the actions that have been taken are consistent with the government's aim to promote greater private sector involvement in the Territory's economy. It is our aim to ensure that services are provided to the community at less cost to the government. To achieve this, the government will have to step back and the private sector will have to move in. As mentioned in His Honour's speech, that is something that we will be promoting. We also stated this aim in our undertakings prior to the election.

#### Tennant Creek Airport

Mr BELL to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

Will the Northern Territory government reopen negotiations with Ansett Airlines for the upgrading of the Tennant Creek Airport?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the question of upgrading of Tennant Creek Airport is a matter that has continued to be of concern to us. During the short period since I have had responsibility for the Department of Transport and Works, we have continued to talk not only to Ansett Airlines but to the federal government in relation to that matter. Ansett Airlines was asked some time ago whether it would like to contribute to the upgrading. The upgrading is entirely the responsibility of the federal government for a number of reasons. The most obvious is that the airport belongs to the federal government. Secondly, the federal government has neglected that airport for some 8 or 9 years. The ultimate failure of parts of the pavement resulted in the airport being precluded from F28 services.

In his wisdom, the federal minister thought that a commuter-type, light aircraft service was all that Tennant Creek was entitled to. The Territory government quite naturally was offended by that and, when Ansett Airlines was not prepared to make some contribution to ensure continued access for F28s, determined that it would contribute \$1m from NT taxpayers' funds to top up the \$1.1m that was dramatically overdue for spending on the strip to enable F28s to resume landing there. It is ludicrous that a jet airline flying that route should need to overfly Tennant Creek.

Tillair recently ran an interim commuter system from Tennant Creek to Darwin using light aircraft but found it totally uneconomic and discontinued it. The decision was purely economic and I guess was somewhat affected by

consumer resistance to travelling long distances in light aircraft, particularly into the northern part of the Territory during the wet season. Naturally enough, passenger numbers dropped off to a level at which Tillair was losing money. I seem to recall that Tillair announced through the media that it had lost around \$130 000 in the first 2 months of this calendar year. I am sure honourable members will agree that Tillair was justified in reconsidering its position. It did not want to leave Tennant Creek people high and dry, although it had no direct responsibility under the regional airline agreement, so it increased its services from Tennant Creek to Alice Springs. This meant that those people who needed to travel to Darwin at least had access to flights from Alice Springs.

The question of the timing of upgrading and of funding has been put repeatedly to the federal minister. I understand that re-documentation of the proposals is well in hand. New drawings and specifications have to be drawn up to cater for access by F28s and the project is now scheduled for completion by mid-December. Some recent discussions have been held with Ansett Airlines to ensure that Tennant Creek people are minimally disadvantaged. There have been talks regarding various types of subsidies and the question of an Ansett contribution towards upgrading the strip was raised again. Those negotiations are not yet complete. However, the honourable member can rest assured that the Territory government will continue to pursue these matters to ensure that all Territorians have access to the best possible transport system.

#### Government Consultation with Unions

Mr PALMER to CHIEF MINISTER

On 16 March this year, the secretary of the Clerical and Administrative Officers Association, Mr Rod Ellis, accused the Chief Minister of not being keen to consult with the unions. Is that an accurate reflection of the Northern Territory government's attitude towards the trade union movement?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, that is a grossly inaccurate description of the Northern Territory government's attitude towards negotiations with unions. My own record in some 20 years of work in the field of industrial relations clearly shows that I have never had difficulty in consulting with unions. I have not always agreed with the unions but I have never had difficulty consulting with them, discussing problems or seeking solutions to problems. Nor have I ever had difficulty in sitting down with members of the trade union movement to discuss issues of moment to the community and to trade union members.

One example occurred shortly after I became Chief Minister last year. Because of our very difficult budgetary situation and the draconian fringe benefits tax, which placed considerable budgetary pressures on the Northern Territory, we took the decision to attempt to reduce the size of the public sector by some 400 employees during the course of the financial year. I am pleased to say that we have achieved that objective. I might say that that was done in close consultation with the public sector trade unions. If my memory serves me correctly, the Interpers records indicate there has been a reduction of some 570 persons in the public sector. With the recruitment of additional teachers and the school leaver program, which we maintained in the new year, that is of the order of 400 persons or slightly below that now. The target is still a reduction of 400 persons.

I might say that I was very appreciative of the positive approach adopted by the trade unions in that process. We are all aware that that proceeded properly and did not cause any industrial disputes. Obviously, individual problems arose but those were dealt with by the Office of the Public Service Commissioner and the trade union movement. Quite clearly, we are prepared to consult with trade unions.

Mr Speaker, of course, my view with respect to Mr Ellis is entirely different as a result of an incident that occurred last year. I know that there are some honourable members opposite who have been involved in a professional capacity in the industrial relations field and they would appreciate that a crucial element in the process of consultation in industrial relations is the maintenance of trust and the honouring of confidences. Once that trust is broken between people in the industrial relations profession, it is almost impossible ever to put it back together again. Any person on either side, employer or trade union, knows that, if he deliberately breaks a trust, he does almost irreparable damage to his own position in that profession amongst fellow professional people.

Inevitably, when you are discussing complex and difficult issues, you provide information that you do not necessarily want to be made public or revealed to other people. You do this to give people background information so that they may understand your position. That situation is not generally recognised by those who do not work in the industrial relations field. Many problems and disputes are resolved as a consequence of that. Once that trust is broken, that person's ability to work is dramatically reduced.

Last year, we had an incident with Mr Ellis where exactly that circumstance arose. Mr Speaker, you will know that we had a very complex, difficult and emotive situation in respect of the attempts to create a Water Authority and bring together the various water functions as part of the rationalisation process we were working on. Some information was provided by the Public Service Commissioner to Mr Ellis on a confidential, background briefing basis. I am advised that that information was then misinterpreted and misrepresented to the public service employees who were directly affected by that. This led to an industrial dispute and, in the end, to a breaking down of the negotiations to amalgamate those functions. We are now dealing with the issue as a fresh exercise. I say that that process was broken down quite deliberately, not inadvertently. I have been advised that Mr Ellis advised senior public servants that it was done for the purpose of ensuring that there would be no resolution of that dispute and that there would be embarrassment to the government, in particular to the minister concerned, then the member for Berrimah, with the intention of supporting Mr Ellis' mates in the Labor Party because they believed that that particular member was vulnerable in the coming election.

Any trade unionist who wants to play those games with my government has broken that element of trust. We have great difficulty in providing any confidential information to Mr Ellis. We want to work with the Administrative and Clerical Officers Association and re-establish that relationship with it. It is important for us as much as it is important for public servants. As a consequence of that action, I would be very surprised if my minister were prepared to provide Mr Ellis with any sort of confidential information again.

The statements made by Mr Ellis following Cyclone Kay were equally mischievous. I have never criticised public servants or the public service over the circumstances surrounding the Cyclone Kay exercise. Following that incident, I made the point that we had some problems in our administrative

procedures and that we needed to tighten up certain things so that we could better clarify the process of advising government officers when they should close down. I might say that the Emergency Service and the Counter-Disaster Council are already working on that. It is not a matter of criticism of the public service; it is a matter of our procedures needing to be tightened up.

I thought it responsible to be honest with the community. I said that we had found a glitch and we would fix it. That was all I said, but Mr Ellis has chosen to beat this up into some giant story that I was attacking every public servant in the Northern Territory. I might say that certain members opposite tried to do the same thing. It was a falsehood to even suggest that. I say here, and I have said it to the public service people before, that they performed excellently in the course of that particular counter-disaster exercise. The Emergency Service people, the liaison groups and the organising groups within the government performed excellently. It was a very good exercise in cyclone emergency procedures.

However, in that process, we found that people in the private sector were looking for some signal that would help them to determine whether they should send their employees home. They tended to look to the public sector as a guide. No one told the private sector employers to send people home. In the public sector, there was no set procedure to advise departmental heads and public servants as to when it was appropriate for them to go home, even though individual departments have their procedures well sorted out. Those procedures are now being linked through the Counter Disasters Council and will be built into the Darwin cyclone plan, and I do not anticipate that those problems will occur again. However, I refute totally any suggestion that that is a criticism of the public service, nor do I accept that there was negligence on the part of our government over that exercise. We have identified a problem. If there is a sin, we have committed the sin of being honest with the community, and that is something which I do not apologise for.

Mr Speaker, we are continually upgrading our plans and will continue to improve them. The beating-up of these issues by people like Mr Ellis and members opposite, for some short-term political gain, does more to cause trouble and dissension within the ranks of the public service than anything our government could do. I do not think they are doing the public service or the Northern Territory community any favours by these nonsensical headline-grabbing exercises.

#### Generator for Chan Building

Mr EDE to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

I draw the minister's attention to an enormous generator which, at this moment, is being installed next to the Chan Building. Is this indicative of a complete lack of faith on his part in the electricity system in Darwin or have his ministerial colleagues finally decided that, just because the rest of Darwin is in the dark and has to cope with cold meals and warm beer, there is no reason why they should have to do the same? It is not a gas turbine; it appears to be a diesel generator. Does it indicate that he has knowledge that we do not and that we are in for a series of blackouts over coming days, weeks, months and years?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to advise the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that I do have knowledge that he does not have. I was prepared for this

because I saw the Deputy Leader of the Opposition come back into the Chamber with a big grin on his face and talk to the Leader of the Opposition. I immediately turned to the page concerning the upgrading of computer facilities for the Chan Building. I am coming to know his small mind, and the issues that strike a chord. He does not have a lot of space up there and he has to handle things issue by issue. If the truck had run over him out there today, I think this subject would have been raised earlier in question time. However, it did not. He observed it, and it has taken him an hour to bring it to our attention.

The Northern Territory government would be amongst the most computerised governments in the world. Certainly, it is the most computerised government in Australia. The member for Ludmilla may be able to assist me with a figure on how much our computers are worth. I think it is somewhere in excess of \$80m. The basement of the Chan Building is installed with the most sophisticated computers for government operation in Australia.

The Northern Territory government was faced with a decision whether or not to build a purpose-built facility to house NCOM. Costing to provide such a facility originally came in at \$8m. In fact, in January 1987, the government took a decision, based on the revised estimates of \$15m for such a purpose-built facility, to upgrade the Chan Building to accommodate the computer facility. So far, this is estimated to cost \$1.7m which represents a considerable saving to Northern Territory taxpayers.

Computers are very expensive items and they run on electricity. I will put this into first grade terms so the Deputy Leader of the Opposition can understand it, if he pays attention. The importance of continuity of electricity supply is recognised by people who install emergency generators. The generator that is being installed now will provide continuity of electricity supply to a very valuable resource, a resource which operates in every department right across the Northern Territory. We must be able to ensure that continuity of supply.

Today's question indicates once again the crisis mentality and retarded thinking of the opposition. It is the reason why members opposite are in opposition. I would have thought that, in March, they might have sat down and asked themselves why they were in opposition. Perhaps they could have come up with some ideas. They have not.

There will be considerable activity in the field of energy this year in the Northern Territory. More generators will be shifted in and out of the Territory as the \$33m Katherine power station is constructed and the \$10m upgrading at Tennant Creek takes place. Energy, as I will outline in a ministerial statement during the course of these sittings, is what the Territory will be about this year.

Certainly, we are having some problems with power at the moment, but let us not become retarded in our thinking. Let us look to the future. Let us look at bedding down some of the problems that we are experiencing now. Let us look forward to the very bright prospects that will be available to us with the computer centre opposite. Let us not deny that a basic commodity, such as emergency power, is required to upgrade a facility that will save Northern Territory taxpayers millions of dollars.

I would also like to take this opportunity to give the Leader of the Opposition some information that I promised him. He is just leaving. If he leaves the door open, I will yell it out for him. The matter is of that much

importance to him. I refer to his question relating to the Beaufort Hotel. The figure for electricity was \$925 000 I do not want him saying that I have misled the Assembly. The figure for the water and sewerage is \$50 000 or, more specifically, \$49 914 and the figure for payroll tax is \$275 000.

Mining Companies and Aboriginal Land

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

With regard to recent efforts by the Northern Land Council to extract disjunctive agreements from mining companies for entry on to Aboriginal land, what is the government's attitude to such agreements and what are the advantages or disadvantages to the Northern Territory of such agreements?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the member for Ludmilla's question is timely indeed because I understand that, at this very moment, Pat Dodson, Director of the Central Land Council, is meeting with Clyde Holding in Canberra. I would like to be in that room to hear the conversation. It would be very interesting, taking into account Mr Dodson's stated position on Michael Mansell's recent trip to Libya. Indeed, I should imagine they will be discussing the amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. No doubt, the Minister for Mines and Energy, Senator Gareth Evans, would like to be present at that meeting because he would like to put through the federal parliament amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act to allow greater access to Aboriginal land for mining companies.

As I outlined to honourable members in the Address-in-Reply debate, there has been a 30% growth in the mining industry in the Northern Territory over the previous year. For the first time, we have exceeded \$1000m in mineral production throughout the Territory. If you will excuse the pun, Mr Speaker, we know that we have only just scratched the surface in terms of our mineral wealth in the Northern Territory, and that most of the access to prospective areas is being locked up because of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and the Northern Land Council's inability to negotiate. In fact, despite all the proposals that have been put to it, it has managed to negotiate only 1 agreement with 1 company to explore on Aboriginal land. That is a very sad track record indeed. At the moment, we have another problem with disjunctive and conjunctive agreements. I refer to the application by Queensland Mines to explore an area known as 2508, which surrounds Nabarlek.

I think Justice Toohey was the first to recommend that the act be amended to allow mining companies to explore on Aboriginal land. That is a disjunctive agreement. If they find something, they have to go back to the negotiating table and work out a whole new procedure to mine that particular area. There are great costs involved in exploration. For example, Petrel No 4 Well, in the Bonaparte Gulf, will cost \$13m to drill, and to test it will cost \$100 000 a day. In all, there will be a total cost of some \$20m just to explore. Getty Oil has spent \$40m proving up the magnificent Jabiluka gold and uranium fields. No mining company will spend that kind of money without an assurance that, if it finds something, it will be able to bring a mine into production. Thus, a conjunctive agreement is the preferred way to travel. The member for Stuart should be very pleased with the mining activity which is occurring in his electorate at the moment ...

Mr Ede: I am. On Aboriginal land!

Mr COULTER: ... in particular, with North Flinders at The Granites. If he would lift his head a little towards the horizon and have a look at some of the other mineral-rich areas in the Northern Territory and lend his weight to the development of mines such as Jabiluka, I am sure the mining industry would appreciate it. If he used the same philosophy ...

Mr Ede: Why blame the traditional owners for that one not going ahead? Why not get some facts into your argument?

Mr COULTER: ... as he uses in his own electorate.

What we need are conjunctive agreements that allow mining companies to spend millions of dollars on exploration and, if they find something, to develop a mine. In particular, the Goodall Mine of the Western Mining Company is a good example of a recent mine that has been brought into production after the company entered into a \$10m drilling program. That money is expended to explore what is in the ground. It is a very risky business with a success rate of 1 in 10.

I hope very sincerely that today is a significant day for the Northern Territory in Canberra, with Mr Dodson present in Mr Holding's office. I hope that common sense prevails, the amendments to the Land Rights Act go ahead and that Mr Holding has the courage of his own convictions because he has said on several occasions that he would introduce those amendments. Perhaps he has said that for too long because it has been going on for nearly 2 years. I hope that today there is agreement with Mr Holding and that he will agree with the Minister for Resources and Energy, Senator Gareth Evans, to allow the amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, to provide greater access to that vast area of mineralised country which currently is locked up ...

Mr Ede: The question was, would you agree with disjunctive agreements?

Mr COULTER: ... by the Northern Land Council. This government supports conjunctive agreements. The disjunctive agreement is a matter for companies to enter into as are private royalties. This government is against private royalties, and we have said so and have signed papers to that effect. Minerals are the property of all Australians. They belong to all Australians, not to any particular individual. The royalties paid by mining companies are the price they pay to exploit a resource that belongs to all Australians; they are the property of the Crown. This government prefers conjunctive agreements and is not inclined to support private royalties, on the ground that the minerals belong to all Australians.

#### Hungerford Refrigeration

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

Is the TIO's investment in Hungerford Refrigeration on the basis of equity through the purchase of new or existing shares or through the purchase of debentures previously held by Carrington Confirmers Pty Ltd or through a loan, either secured or unsecured?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am happy to provide the Leader of the Opposition with details of the agreement that has been entered into by the TIO, but the question sounds all too familiar to me in terms of what he would use that information for.

The TIO was in competition with a number of commercial companies which had the opportunity to buy into Hungerford Refrigeration. It did so after having the company investigated by a firm of chartered accountants and, indeed, it enlisted the academic experience of a professor from a university to investigate the proposal. On that basis, it entered into negotiations to

purchase a percentage holding in Hungerford Refrigeration. In fact, it has a controlling voting power on the board. I understand that the actual paid up capital to that company was something like \$125 000 which is what it cost the TIO in terms of the capital equity that it now has in the company.

The Leader of the Opposition will come back soon and say that he thinks that the TIO invested something like \$700 000 in the operation and that, in fact, Hungerford Refrigeration was in debt for something like \$400 000 at the time. Let me see if I can pre-empt the argument of the Leader of the Opposition; it is not that difficult to do because he has a line of gloom and doom that he runs with continuous monotony. He will say that the TIO has bailed out a company in Queensland. I imagine the Leader of the Opposition obtained his information from a person who has recently been removed from Hungerford, although maybe I am wrong. We will see if that comes to light soon.

Mr Smith: I have never come across that person.

Mr COULTER: I am just trying to present the scenario that the Leader of the Opposition will paint for us. He will say that the TIO bailed Hungerford out, because it was hopelessly in debt, and that the TIO made a very stupid, commercial decision to buy into such a corporation. The facts are simple. This was a commercial decision and the TIO was in competition with 3 other companies. The decision was made on the best of economic advice provided by a firm of chartered accountants and also on the best academic advice provided by a professor of an Australian university who investigated the Hungerford product and gave it a clean bill of health.

I have with me a heads of agreement for a \$500 000 contract under which Hungerford, operating from the Trade Development Zone, agreed to supply kenaf to Papua-New Guinea. This is only the first of many opportunities that will be realised as a result of TIO taking this commercial decision and bringing Hungerford into the Trade Development Zone. It will produce full-time jobs for Territorians and it will bear fruit in the very near future. I congratulate the TIO for its commercial decision.

#### Northern Territory AIDS Program

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

Can he provide this Assembly with a report on the present position of the AIDS program in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

I will take the opportunity to give an update on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, AIDS, at this time because I believe that it is appropriate that I take advantage of the listening audience on the various radio networks.

I would like to give a little background about precisely what is happening in the Northern Territory in terms of our management of this rather frightening disease. The number of cases of category A, or full-blown AIDS, reported so far in the Northern Territory is now 2. One of those people has died. The number of reported cases of category B, or lymphadenopathy syndrome AIDS, is 5 and, in category C, antibody positive and symptomatic AIDS, we have 17 reported cases.

Screening services are now well developed for HIV - human immuno deficiency virus. Screening is offered free of charge to all persons in the Northern Territory. Nightcliff Community Health Centre has been publicised as the main centre for screening in Darwin but an individual may present to any health facility or to a local doctor. All blood is forwarded to the Royal Darwin Hospital Pathology Laboratory. The screening is performed by consent of the individual concerned with the exception of new prisoners entering Northern Territory prisons for whom blood testing is compulsory under legislation. This is one of the areas in which the Northern Territory is leading Australia, and the current prison population in the Northern Territory is AIDS free.

Confidentiality of results is essential in order to secure public cooperation. All blood donors are screened. A statutory declaration is also required in order to cover the 'window period' during which a person may be infected with and transmit the AIDS virus whilst not having developed any antibodies. Almost all cases are antibody positive within 3 months of infection but some individuals have remained negative for up to 6 months. Pregnant women have been offered screening for AIDS for about 12 months. Compulsory screening of new prisoners in all Northern Territory prisons has been under way also for nearly 12 months.

A new program has recently been developed concerning the screening of individuals with sexually transmissible diseases who present to any health facility and this is proceeding region by region. Special clinics have been established to provide clinical facilities and screening for AIDS and other sexually transmissible diseases for prostitutes and the gay community of Darwin and other centres of the Northern Territory. Counselling facilities have been developed following the visit during February 1987 of Dr Michael Ross, the National Aids Task Force expert on the psychological aspects of AIDS and AIDS counselling. Dr Ross conducted courses in Darwin and at Alice Springs in a 'train the trainer' format. Participants were invited from community groups as well as government organisations. They include representatives from the areas of community health, social work, psychiatry, the gay community, escort agencies, churches and crisis line. Subsequently, government participants conducted training courses for relevant personnel of their departments. A counselling training program is being developed by the Communicable Diseases Centre at Royal Darwin Hospital to include participants from each health centre in the Darwin region over a period of time. Staff of the Communicable Diseases Centre in the other regions are developing similar programs. It should be noted that the program was instigated on the initiative of the Northern Territory, not as a result of the national program.

In Darwin, 2 community-based organisations have been established. They will provide AIDS counselling services and education awareness programs throughout the Territory. The Northern Territory AIDS Council focuses its activities on the gay community, prostitutes and IV drug abusers. This organisation has recently received a grant from the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments, on a cost-sharing basis, to establish an office at Darwin and to employ a full-time coordinator.

The AIDS Community Awareness Group includes members from the Departments of Health and Community Services, Education, the Police Force of the Northern Territory, the Darwin City Council, family day-care centres, the Northern Territory AIDS Council, the Aboriginal community, the churches, the gay community, prostitutes and the IV drug rehabilitation program. This group has selected youth as the target for an AIDS education program and is presently planning the launch of the Northern Territory edition of Streetwise comics.

These comics are ready for distribution to young people throughout the Northern Territory. A submission has been made to the Commonwealth in the 1987-88 AIDS budget for cost-shared funding of an AIDS youth worker.

The AIDS education program in rural Aboriginal communities is well developed in all regions with mobile teams consisting of a trained nurse and an Aboriginal health worker. These teams are responsible for education of Aboriginal communities concerning the transmission and prevention of AIDS. Condoms are now provided free of charge in these communities. The first antibody-positive category C (a symptomatic) tribal Aboriginal was detected in March 1987 in the Alice Springs region, but subsequently she moved to South Australia. Contact tracing and education programs were immediately commenced throughout the area involved. A team was sent to Western Australia to provide an education and awareness program for Aboriginal communities in the area bordering the Northern Territory. Additional funding will be required to increase the number of teams in high risk areas and, in March 1987, a senior staff member of the Commonwealth Department of Health, Canberra, visited the Northern Territory to assess this additional cost. It is anticipated that funding will be provided for the remainder of the 1986-87 financial year, but a further submission will be required for the 1987-88 budget.

A National AIDS Education Program, developed by the National Advisory Committee on AIDS, NACAIDS, commenced on 5 April 1987, launched by Dr Blewett. This campaign will provide media coverage throughout Australia. The Northern Territory has developed a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week telephone counselling service for the period of the campaign, commencing on 6 April until 10 May 1987, with 5 counsellors being employed on that project. The service is available on all weekdays between the hours of 7 o'clock in the morning and 9 o'clock in the evening, including public holidays, and from 4.30 in the afternoon until 7 o'clock in the evening on Saturdays and Sundays.

As a result of the AIDS Grim Reaper television commercial, AIDS telephone counselling calls have increased. 75 calls were received in the first week of the campaign and the average call rate prior to that was 12 to 20 per week. There were 5 telephone inquiries and 39 persons visited the Nightcliff Community Health Centre during the first week of the campaign. Prior to this, there were only 5 phone calls and visitors per week.

The Northern Territory government has taken a very responsible attitude to trying to make the community aware of AIDS and to educate people as to how they can prevent this rather abominable problem in our community. It is my personal priority that the high risk group in the Northern Territory comprises people between the ages of 13 and 20, no matter what their colour or creed. That is where the department will be giving some priority in so far as its educational programs are concerned.

It probably has been noted by most people that the retail industry has taken the initiative and has put condoms on sale in all night garages and in independent supermarkets. I am encouraging all retail outlets to take up that initiative so that condoms are readily available to those young people when they are more likely to want to use them. It is no good having these things on sale between 9 o'clock and 4.30 pm on weekdays. That is not the time that these young people will choose to decide whether or not a condom will be required. I congratulate the retail industry for its initiative in this matter. We look to the community of the Northern Territory to take a responsible attitude towards the education of all people in the Northern Territory in relation to this phenomenon. The Northern Territory government will be very straightforward in its application of an education program.

Hungerford Refrigeration

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

I am seeking confirmation of remarks that he made in answer to my previous question. Did he say that TIO has a controlling interest on the Board of Hungerford Refrigeration? Secondly, did he say that the total investment made by the TIO in Hungerford Refrigeration was \$700 000? Thirdly, did he say that, at the time that Hungerford Refrigeration received some capital injection from TIO, it had debts of some \$400 000?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will make figures available to the Leader of the Opposition but it is my understanding that the ballpark figures for the TIO's investment were somewhere in the vicinity of \$700 000 or \$750 000. I understand that Hungerford had debts between \$350 000 and \$400 000 on its books. The TIO does have control by way of voting rights on the board and has control of the company.

Hungerford Refrigeration

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

He also said that the TIO's contribution to Hungerford Refrigeration in the form of paid up capital was \$125 000. He is now telling me that the total investment was \$700 000. What was the other \$575 000 used for?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I believe that the paid up capital is about \$125 000 and the balance of the money, as I said in the previous answer, was made available to pay out those loans which had been incorporated ...

Mr Smith: You did not say that.

Mr COULTER: I did say that, as Hansard will show. I will read it for him because he probably has difficulty with reading as well as listening! I will make the exact figures available to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Smith: So the money has been used to pay out Hungerford's bad debts?

Mr COULTER: Bear in mind the commercial sensitivity of these types of figures. This is a commercial transaction that the Territory Insurance Office has entered into. The TIO is a body that is discrete from government and enters into commercial decisions in its own right. It has policyholders to whom it is responsible and it may consider that this is of such a sensitive nature that the full details may not be made available to the Leader of the Opposition because it knows full well the purpose that he would use it for. He would simply run with it: the Grim Reaper Revisited. If ever there was an example of the Grim Reaper, it is the Leader of the Opposition, given the way he walks around with his doom and gloom and his crisis week air. He is well assisted by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

The fact is that a great deal of that money was used to pay out debts owed by the company. I have not spoken about the amount of money that was owed to the company. It would never enter the Leader of the Opposition's head that maybe it was owed a substantial amount of money.

Mr Smith: Why didn't it use that money to pay off its bad debts?

Mr COULTER: In the 12 months to last March, it had an operating profit of some \$890 000. There are a whole range of other figures which I will not divulge in this forum because they are commercially sensitive. They will be available in the various documents that will be produced in time. Those figures will be available to the Leader of the Opposition through the Companies Act. At the moment, he is hell-bent on creating mischief over an opportunity that the Territory Insurance Office has taken in order to bring this company to the Northern Territory to enter the Trade Development Zone and create meaningful full-time employment for Territorians.

#### Accommodation Development for Litchfield Park

Mr MCCARTHY to MINISTER for TOURISM

Yesterday, in this Assembly, he mentioned proposals for accommodation developments for Litchfield Park, including studies of the Wangi, Tolmer and Sandy Creek areas and a hotel motel presently under construction in Batchelor. What are the details of accommodation developments proposed for Litchfield Park and when is the development likely to take place?

ANSWER

As I explained yesterday during question time, the developments at Litchfield Park are subject to a feasibility study. While we have a general idea of the type of developments that are likely best to succeed, based on tourism projections, the types of tourists - whether they be motorists, campers, budget-type tourists or 5-star tourists - the projections, as formulated by both the Tourist Commission and the former Department of Business, Technology and Communications in conjunction with the Conservation Commission, reveal that the feasibility study is essential to identify the proportion of those visitors who would go to Litchfield Park.

An interested party has presented information to the government that identifies and puts beyond any shadow of a doubt that there is a certain segment of the market for whom the Litchfield Park will be most suitable: the exclusive tourist, the 5-star-plus. Similar developments are occurring at the moment in the jungles of Malaysia, South Africa and other parts of Africa. We are incorporating that part of the tourist market into the feasibility study as well as making allowance for the campers, the budget-type and day tourists looking to visit Litchfield Park. Prior to receiving that feasibility study, the Conservation Commission has commenced work to expand the camping facilities at Tolmer Falls, Florence Falls and Wangi Falls. At this stage, we are preparing for the opening of the road which will occur later this year.

Part of the terms of reference, which I am sure will keep the member for Victoria River happy, are to take into account the planned development of additional tourist facilities in the Batchelor area. I am as conscious as is the honourable member that the economy of Batchelor will rely largely, in future years, on the development of tourism and the tourist market. We are looking at every possible angle. However, in the short term, I can say that the exclusive market has been identified. The campers' needs are being addressed immediately and whether budget-type accommodation will exist at various spots throughout the park or be concentrated into 1 area will probably come down to a matter of economics.

One thing is certain and that is that the Northern Territory government is moving in accord with the demands placed on it by the tourists wishing to visit the Territory. It is no secret that the value of the tourist dollar to the Territory economy is becoming more and more important every day. I would compliment those in the Tourist Commission, the development arms of government and the Conservation Commission who readily make themselves available and take into account all the rapid changes that are occurring in respect of tourism. A few years ago, I am sure no one could have predicted the growth that we are experiencing today, and I take my hat off to all those involved who are able to move with the times and change circumstances to accommodate the tourists. As a final point, I might add that it is encouraging to note that the complaints across my desk are becoming fewer and fewer. Obviously, Territorians are facing up to the fact that tourists are valuable and possibly we are becoming a very friendly community.

#### Hungerford Refrigeration

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

Why was the last annual financial statement of Hungerford Refrigeration submitted to the Corporate Affairs Officer, Queensland, in 1984, and can he confirm that that annual statement of 1984 revealed that Hungerford Refrigeration was a \$2 company with total assets of \$14 000?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will try to explain 1 small thing to the Leader of the Opposition before I answer his question. In today's economic situation, it is very difficult to do business. It is very difficult because of the constraints that are placed on new companies by federal government taxes, payroll taxes, awards which people are forced to adhere to, the addition of the fringe benefits tax and a whole range of other disincentives which have been heaped on pioneer industries in particular. It is very hard to get one's head up above the sand. I guess that is why the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy keep theirs in it; it is hard to get up above it and make a go of something in today's economic climate. However, Hungerford was able to do that. The export orders that it has and, indeed, the proposed orders that it has from places like China, Vanuatu and Papua-New Guinea, are excellent and they have been extremely profitable. Hungerford Refrigeration has been successful right around Australia, operating out of Brisbane to places like the RAAF base at Derby, where it obtained a \$750 000 contract. Not only has it done all that, it has developed a mechanism for and a means of chilling concrete.

Mr Hungerford's reward for this has been that he has had a cash flow problem. The tremendous growth of his company has taken place over a very short period. This innovative individual has risen above all the constraints and odds, and most of the constraints were placed on him by government. I guess that is why he is now seeking the security of the Trade Development Zone where he can rid himself of much of the red tape and bureaucracy that holds him down. I want to pledge my support and the support of my colleagues to all Australians who are trying to have a go, who are trying to rise above the bureaucracy and red tape and who are trying to succeed in spite of the attitudes of people like the Leader of the Opposition. Those people are trying to make this great country of ours a goer, and it is not easy.

As I said, the company has an operating profit this year. Its trading profit for the 9 months to 20 March 1987 was \$826 196.

Mr Smith: Where is the information? Why isn't it at the Corporate Affairs Office?

Mr COULTER: The Leader of the Opposition now asks me a question about how the company was structured in Queensland ...

Mr Smith: I asked you a question about its last annual financial return.

Mr COULTER: ... whether or not its paid-up capital was \$14 000 and whether its last financial report was made in 1984.

Mr Speaker, as I said, the firm of chartered accountants that was selected by the Territory Insurance Office to check out the figures did so very thoroughly and I am confident that the TIO would not have entered into any deal had it not been confident about the opportunities available and unless it were certain that everything was okay.

I do not have the precise information in my head, although I am sure it is in the Leader of the Opposition's head. There is probably little else there at the moment. However, if he so requires, I will provide him with the information during the course of these sittings.

#### Drink-Driving Sentences

Mr POOLE to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Could he provide this Assembly with details of sentences on drink-driving charges handed down in the Alice Springs Magistrates Court during the months of January, February and March 1987?

ANSWER

The question requires extremely detailed information. This is indicated by the report in yesterday's newspaper that the number of 0.08 charges heard before a particular magistrate in 1 morning was 75. The question concerns events of up to 4 months ago and I would appreciate its being put on notice so that I can supply the information in detail. As I said, it will take quite a long time to compile.

#### Dairy Farmers

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

What is being done to bring justice to a small-scale dairy farmer in the Top End and a large-scale dairy farmer in Katherine with regard to paying the dairy produce levy demanded under the federal Dairy Produce Act which came into operation on the 1 July 1986 and which will have an extremely adverse effect on this fledgling industry in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I noted that the member for Koolpinyah raised this matter in the adjournment last night. I can advise that the Territory government was aware of the preparation of this legislation by the Commonwealth. I have seen 2 or 3 letters from the then Northern Territory Minister for Primary Production, written in 1986 or prior to that, protesting to the federal Minister for Primary Industry that the proposed legislation should not apply to the dairy industry in the Northern Territory on the grounds that the

Territory had only a fledgling industry. There had been dairies here before, as the honourable member knows, but it has been a struggling industry developed by a few innovative people who were determined to demonstrate that milk can be produced successfully and commercially in the tropics.

As the member for Koolpinyah mentioned, there are 2 small dairy herds in the Territory at present, and this is a very commendable effort. No doubt the dairy farmers concerned are putting in a great deal of their time and resources. However, they seem to be having a degree of success which the Department of Industries and Development is encouraging at every opportunity. Recently, the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industry took the unusual step of sending an officer from Adelaide to Darwin, at goodness knows what expense to the taxpayer, to demand that these 2 dairies should produce their records and hand over a cheque for a couple of thousand dollars. Both dairies expressed amazement and I believe they have refused to pay, although some records were handed over in accordance with the law.

As I understand it, this levy has been imposed on the industry Australia-wide on every litre of milk that is produced. A very small portion of it goes toward research and development of dairy products. The balance is used by dairies which would like to subsidise their export of milk. I presume that we have to subsidise exports of milk to compete internationally. Obviously, it would make an exporter's product cheaper to sell elsewhere and it would encourage him to export milk out of Australia. What the levy seems to be designed to do is to attempt to reduce some of the production of milk in Australia by encouraging people to export it, because there is an oversupply.

The proposed levy is not really working inasmuch as some farmers in Victoria are proposing to move into NSW to sell milk at some 8¢ per litre less than the NSW dairy producers. This has caused quite a storm and the Victorians are not going to back off. As Australians, it is their right to sell their product wherever they like. The NSW people are applying to the federal minister to have the levy taken off the NSW producers and so provide a competitive edge for NSW producers to fight their Victorian counterparts.

All this sounds pretty alien to people who promote free enterprise in the country. However, there is a question that we do need to ponder on in the Northern Territory. If we are happy to allow a complete free-for-all in the dairy industry and abolish all forms of levies or apply them in some cases and not in others, the end result may be a very large and viable dairy industry in Victoria and none anywhere in the rest of Australia. That is a possible scenario if we remove all the levies and let them go for their lives.

I have protested to the federal minister about the demand by his department for these levies from Territory producers. I believe that there are some dozen or more producers in Queensland who also have refused to pay the levy and are not being 'monstered', as it were, as much as the Territory fellows are. Perhaps they regard the Territory producers as weak-kneed because the industry is small here and, if they can push them into paying the levy, they can then move against the Queensland producers and others as the next links in the chain.

The federal minister has called a meeting on 5 June in Canberra of ministers responsible for primary production across Australia and I will be attending. The subject of the meeting is the dairy industry levy and its imposition across Australia. It will give me an opportunity to meet the minister and introduce the Northern Territory's point of view on this matter. Before doing that, I will be holding talks with both the Territory producers.

Government Centre at Katherine

Mr REED to MINISTER for LABOUR and ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

As the minister responsible for property rented by the Northern Territory government, can he clarify what is happening with the proposed government centre at Katherine?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, members would be aware that the government called for expressions of interest in relation to the construction of a Katherine centre earlier this year. There were a number of very good applicants for the construction of that particular facility. In fact, 9 applications were received. The 9 initial proposals were the subject of deliberations in mid-April by a committee comprised of representatives of the Departments of Lands and Housing, Treasury, Transport and Works, and Labour and Administrative Services. I will be receiving a detailed report of this committee's recommendations in the near future.

Eventually, the 9 applicants will be reduced to a short list which will then be brought forward for consideration by government, and the construction of the centre should be completed by the end of 1988. It will provide a one-stop shop for the people of Katherine. The aim is to assist the public and to make the public service more efficient and effective. The people of Katherine will see the benefits once this facility is up and running. It will provide the opportunity for coordination with its inherent economies of scale as far as the government is concerned. I am very pleased to inform the member for Katherine that the facility should be completed by the end of 1988.

Grant to Katherine Racing Club

Mr COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Can he explain how some \$100 000 was suddenly found for the Katherine Racing Club just before the last election - a club which has only 4 meetings a year - somewhat to the annoyance of the Alice Springs racing fraternity which received \$90 000 last year even though it holds meetings almost every week? I digress. Why was this money granted when the Minister for Education finds it very difficult to raise a few thousand dollars to buy lockers for all students at the Sadadeen Secondary College who attend something like 200 times a year?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the only problem the honourable member has with the question is that he has asked the wrong person. He should read the administrative arrangements orders. I ask him to redirect the question to the minister responsible for Racing and Gaming.

Television Capricornia and Imparja Television Joint Venture

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

What are the principles of the proposed joint venture arrangement between Television Capricornia and Imparja Television, and what is the government's attitude towards this new proposal?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the government's position on the Remote Commercial Television Service has been consistent throughout the duration of the issue and remains unchanged. The Northern Territory government gave a commitment at the time of the hearings for the licence in central Australia that it would commit up to \$2m towards the purchase of a package of TV services for remote areas for at least 1 year, provided that the government was completely satisfied that the operator had the financial and technical expertise to provide a high-standard service. The government's attitude has not changed at any time on that.

Honourable members may be aware that negotiations have taken place recently between Capricornia and Imparja, the 2 parties who were applicants for the licence in central Australia. Negotiations between those 2 parties have been continuing and 1 of the 2 parties hopes to reach an agreement for a joint venture agreement whereby the Centralian licence takes on board the expertise and technical capacity of Capricornia as well as the input that Imparja is able to make to programming for the groups that it is particularly interested in. Should this venture arrangement come to fruition, the government's stated impediments to providing the services to Imparja would seem to be removed. My only reservation there is that, clearly, we would need to see the terms of the arrangement that the 2 parties might come to. The government is prepared then to meet its longstanding commitment and would be prepared to purchase a package of television services for up to \$2m for at least 1 year, which has been the offer all along. In talking to some media people on this matter over the last month, I noted that there had been a perception that the government had offered virtually a cheque for \$2m up front on the day on which the licence was settled in an undisputed way. That has never been the government's offer and I refer any member who may think otherwise to the submissions made to the tribunal.

Mr Speaker, I can advise members that the satellite that was to be launched by the French to provide the central footprint for the Remote Commercial Television Service for the Northern Territory, which was due to be placed into orbit in June or July this year, may not materialise. The project is in some doubt as the French have indicated that, due to delays in the project, a guaranteed date of launch cannot be given. That is sad news for the Territory government and those people in remote areas of the Territory who were hoping to have the facilities offered by that satellite, including television, at an early stage. However, I am also informed that there are no technical or managerial reasons why Alice Springs and areas on the centre route, such as Katherine and Tennant Creek, could not be provided with commercial television services almost immediately, subject to the lead times required to purchase transmitters. Such a service could be achieved with the installation of a satellite receiving dish in Alice Springs connected to a rebroadcast transmitter which is precisely the way the ABC television is delivered to Alice Springs currently and the same method used by NTD8 to provide commercial services to Darwin.

In addition to that option of transmitting via the existing satellite to Alice Springs and other centres in the Territory, there is also the possibility of the use of the terrestrial link from Darwin heading down to Alice Springs, because it is a service which is now available. Formerly, it was used by the ABC, which now transmits its services via satellite. Thus, there is a terrestrial link as well which is much cheaper, I believe, than the satellite link, and which could be used to provide commercial television services to Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs virtually within the

time taken to purchase transmitters. I am advised that could be in the order of 5 to 6 months because of the specialised nature of that equipment.

Grant to Katherine Racing Club

Mr COLLINS to the TREASURER

I redirect my previous question to the Treasurer.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am not sure whether the member for Sadadeen has been to the Alice Springs Race Track at Pioneer Park recently, but I would look forward to seeing him out there for the Alice Springs Cup next Monday. I would like the opportunity to show him around the facility and explain the amount of money that has been spent by the Racing and Gaming Commission and the TAB through the Race Course Development Fund and the Industries Assistance Fund, and the amount of money that has been made.

We have spent a considerable amount of money on Alice Springs racetrack this year. We have spent the money that was made available from the TAB betting facility. We have shifted the betting ring from the fenceline into the centre field of the area to make that more enjoyable. \$78 000 is being made available for various facilities at the racetrack this year, and it is becoming a very picturesque and enjoyable place to visit. It has had a very good run this year in terms of financial assistance.

The Katherine racetrack would be one of the most dangerous racetracks in Australia today. It was built before pipe benders were available. The pipes were simply butted together and several horses have been gouged in the flanks as a result of coming in close to the rails. There is a 90° bend and it is not easy to negotiate at speed. In fact, it is quite dangerous.

For some time, I have sought the assistance of 2 very prominent racing personalities, Noel Buntine, in particular, and Richard Sallis, to go down to Katherine and get racing going again there, bearing in mind the tremendous development that that town is undergoing at the moment and the population increase there. To their credit, Noel Buntine and Richard Sallis have put a great deal of work into this. Membership is flooding in from the stations. Many people have signed up for membership and Noel Buntine, with his usual entrepreneurial skill, has recalled some past debts. With the \$100 000 that I mentioned, we have become the junior partners in the development that is occurring there. I believe they will spend somewhere in the vicinity of \$250 000 this year, with the help and assistance of business houses throughout the Katherine area and the help and assistance of some of the stations in the area. It is a magnificent tribute to the abilities of Noel Buntine and Richard Sallis that they have brought everybody together there.

I would like to pay tribute also to some of the contractors who are working on the Tindal Air Base. They have been able to pool resources and establish the facility there and I believe it will be a track worth somewhere in the vicinity of \$300 000. For \$100 000 outlay, it is a magnificent achievement and it shows that the community is prepared to help itself, get racing going again in Katherine and remove what could only be described as a very dangerous situation.

In relation to the lockers for Sadadeen Secondary College, I will take the matter up with the Minister for Education on behalf of the member for

Sadadeen, if he so wishes, and I will see if it cannot be treated as a matter of urgency.

Video Loans Scheme

Mr McCARTHY to MINISTER for EDUCATION

It is rumoured that the Video Loan Scheme, which provides isolated students with the ability to receive ABC programs which are available to all urban schools as well as other video learning materials, will cease. The scheme is operated by the federal government and is a valuable support service for students of School of the Air. Has the scheme ceased and, if so, what action does he propose to take?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I can inform the Assembly that the federal Minister for Education has not taken me into her confidence about this matter, but there are strong rumours that there is a possibility that the Video Loan Scheme may be tightened up or even removed. That is causing a great deal of concern. It is an excellent scheme which was initiated by the federal government. The scheme itself relates to the loan of video sets and the provision of video cassettes to supplement the normal lessons of children involved with School of the Air and who are living in remote areas of the Northern Territory. It has played a considerable role in helping children in isolated areas to come to grips with many of the complex aspects of their education. It has provided information that is available to urban students throughout the country.

As I said, I have received no official information about this scheme and I certainly intend to make contact with the federal Minister for Education to encourage her to fight hard for the continuation of the program. I hope that she is successful but 1 of the most unfortunate things we must face is that people who live in isolated areas of this country are in the minority and there has been a tendency over the last couple of years for the federal administration to cut programs for people in remote communities, especially those in the Northern Territory. Even though the federal Labor government has been particularly vindictive to Territorians, most people are aware that the Territory has been suffering this sort of treatment for years. Some governments, however, are harder on the Territory than others and the current Labor government certainly has been a little bit harder than the previous coalition government was.

Students should not be suffering because of politics and I hope that the federal Minister for Education is successful in preventing the Video Loan Scheme from ceasing. I will be doing everything in my power to encourage her to keep the program going and to encourage the federal Labor government to continue to provide that very important service to Territory students.

CAT Scan Facilities in Alice Springs

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

Is it the government's intention to have CAT scan facilities installed in the Alice Springs Hospital?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, at present, the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services is looking at what services we can provide right across the board for the people of the Northern Territory. I must confess that, at this stage, I have had no briefing on any time scale for introduction of CAT scan facilities for the Alice Springs Hospital. However, I will obtain that information and pass it to the honourable member before the close of these sittings.

#### Staff Reductions in Public Service

Mr FIRMIN to CHIEF MINISTER

What is the outcome to date of the statement he made on 14 July 1986 that it was the government's intention to reduce the public service by some 400 staff over a 12-month period from July 1986? Are efforts to achieve this target continuing and, if so, are the efforts being monitored and is the target of 400 achievable by 30 June 1987?

ANSWER

Since taking over responsibility for this area, I examined, over the weekend, the detailed briefings entailed for today's sittings. I must advise the Assembly that the information that I provided last week was dated. Last week, I referred to having achieved a reduction of almost 400. I think I indicated a figure of 375. In fact, as at the end of March, the service had been reduced by 305 from the figure at 30 June 1986. There are good and sound reasons for that. I will quote some figures so that members can gain an idea of what is occurring. On 30 June 1986, the public sector employed 15 456 people. By 31 December, that figure had been reduced to 14 910 which was a very considerable reduction in the size of the service. Since that time, to 31 March, it has increased to 15 151.

We sought deliberately to get the size of the service below the target of 400 in December because we were aware that there would be need for recruitment of additional teachers. There has been the effect of the recent new recruit intake into the police force and, of course, a requirement for nurses. In the rationalisation approach, it was made quite clear that, those categories of government employees such as teachers, policemen, prison officers, and nurses where there were specific formula requirements, would not be affected by the ceilings on the total number of people in those positions.

This has been a very successful program and, three-quarters of the way through the year, we are three-quarters of the way to our target of a reduction of 400. We are on track in the process of achieving the necessary reduction of 305. I have heard whispers and read newspaper articles about this being offset by everything coming off the bottom. I can advise that it has been achieved, as we indicated, by natural attrition. There have been no compulsory redundancies in the process of the reduction and rationalisation. The largest percentage reduction in the service, almost 9%, was at the CEO level. Reductions were made in the professional, administrative clerical, technical and semi-professional areas and so on down the line. In the schools area, there has been an increase.

By way of salary ranges, the largest percentage decrease was in the over-\$45 000 salary bracket, followed by the \$35 000 to \$40 000, followed by the \$25 000 to \$30 000 bracket. The largest increase was in the \$20 000 to

\$25 000 salary bracket which indicates that the decrease has been spread fairly consistently right through the public sector. The reason for the increase in the \$20 000 to \$25 000 bracket is that that is the level where teachers come into the service.

This process is being monitored carefully through the government's computerised personnel records system, which was substantially upgraded last year with the implementation of Interpers. That is providing us with month-by-month records and is enabling us to carry out some assessment of where the turnover is occurring within the service. Much more attention will be paid this year to taking that statistical data and developing programs to address problems in the turnover area.

I will give the figures without the extensive detail that is available here. The major turnover appears to be among female workers in the 20 to 39 years age group in the \$20 000 to \$25 000 per annum salary range. From other indications, particularly in relation to the teaching and nursing services, these are the categories to which attention needs to be directed.

I would think that we are, without doubt, the most advanced public sector in terms of being able to identify and direct our attention to developing modern personnel practices, addressing problem areas within the service and overcoming industrial relations problems. As a consequence, I have no doubt we will see a continuing improvement in standards and turnover in the service. Such improvements are already showing themselves in efficiency and performance within the Northern Territory public sector. I say here and now that I believe that the Northern Territory is well served by what is, in my view, the best public service in this country.

#### School Leavers in NTPS

Mr SMITH to CHIEF MINISTER

During the election campaign the Chief Minister indicated that, at any one time, approximately 250 school leavers were employed in the Northern Territory Public Service. Is he able to confirm that official public service figures, dated 31 March 1987, in fact reveal that only 18 school leavers are currently employed in the Northern Territory Public Service?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I find that an amazing statistic. I will check the details and come back to the honourable member because it is contrary to advice that I received from the Public Service Commissioner prior to and during the election campaign.

#### Horticultural Extension Officer for Katherine

Mr REED to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

Having regard to the urgent need for additional government support for the promising horticultural industry, when will the vacant position of Horticultural Extension Officer in Katherine be filled by his department?

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I suggest that it be pointed out to the honourable member that, when he is phrasing his questions, adjectives like 'promising' are scarcely apposite in that they are expressions of an opinion and therefore contrary to standing orders.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, no doubt, all members hold the view that the horticultural industry in the Northern Territory has a very bright future. I was concerned that the vacant position in Katherine for a Horticultural Extension Officer be filled at the earliest possible time. However, when I came into this position, action was already in train for that. I am pleased to inform the honourable member that an officer has been appointed and should take up duties today. I am advised that the gentleman, who comes from Tasmania, is very well qualified for the position. The officer will probably spend the first few days in Darwin on some orientation courses with the department before moving down to Katherine to take up duties there.

On the matter of horticultural support by government, I am hoping that, in the near future, we will be able to put at least an additional person in Katherine to assist the Horticultural Extension Officer and the Cropping Advisory Support Officer there. I am hoping to give both those gentlemen some additional support in their roles because horticulture certainly shows great promise for growth and the government should divert some of its resources to encourage maximum development of this exciting industry.

#### Darwin Prison

Mr LANHUPUY to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

Is he aware that Darwin Prison, which was built to house 150 prisoners, today is housing 257 prisoners, of whom 33 are sleeping on mattresses in C Block, and that there are only 2 toilets? What immediate steps is he taking to ease this tension?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am not sure whether the honourable member is referring to the tension in respect of the toilets or not. It is a fact - and I have a press release prepared on this - that, at the close of business on Friday last, the Northern Territory prison system had the highest number of inmates ever recorded: just in excess of 490 prisoners. I must say that this is a trend throughout Australia. It is not unique to the Northern Territory.

It must be stated that 70% of our prison inmates are Aboriginal and honourable members would know that we have taken a great deal of notice of this fact. We have officers working in some of the Aboriginal communities to counteract many of the offences that are being committed. It is hoped that, in the near future, these facilities will be extended to other communities also.

There is no doubt about the pressure which overcrowding puts on prison officers as well as prison inmates. It cannot be denied. It must be realised, however, that the situation would be even worse but for the Northern Territory government's initiatives such as community services orders. Approximately 150 people have taken up the option of those orders and, if that were not the case, the overcrowding situation would be even worse. One must understand that we have about 50 prisoners at Beatrice Hill, a prison situation which is quite unique to the Northern Territory. Honourable members would understand that, if those 50 people had to be spread throughout our other institutions, we would have many problems.

It is my intention to introduce legislation at the June sittings concerning home detention orders. Under these, people who commit minor offences can be restricted in their free movement around the community, but they will be able to go to work and sustain their family units and they will not be thrust upon welfare institutions around the Northern Territory. They will be able to maintain the dignity of their family units. The children will not have the stigma of a parent being in an institution and the wife or husband who is left to look after the family unit will not be plunged into the welfare system. The family unit will maintain its integrity.

Mr Speaker, in the Northern Territory, we are leading the way in the penal system throughout Australia, and that is well and truly recognised. I am sure that that will be restated by the Correctional Services Ministers' Conference that I will be attending in a fortnight's time in Melbourne. In the Northern Territory, we stand with our heads high for the way we are endeavouring to combat the very high numbers of people going into our institutions.

I do not place any stigma whatsoever in saying this - I state it simply as a fact of life - that some 70% of our inmates are Aboriginals, and that means that we must place a great deal of emphasis on that particular area if we are to cut down the intake to our penal institutions. Given that the opposition members are responsible for most of the major Aboriginal population areas in the Northern Territory, for the first time in their existence, I would see them supporting the Northern Territory government in the initiatives that we have in place and in talking to the leaders in the Aboriginal communities about the various ways in which they can assist us in keeping law and order within those communities.

I have had a great deal of influence in introducing community government to a great number of those communities in the 12 months since I have been minister. Through my work in that particular area, I happen to know that the people in those communities are willing and able to take on responsibility for proper management of those facilities.

During the last 3 or 4 working days, a leader of one of those communities contacted me about a Department of Health vehicle being used by members of his community for running grog to the community. He was asking me for help and I intend to give it. I may have to implement some moves that are pretty unique, but I can tell the rest of the Northern Territory community that, as minister responsible for the new Department of Health and Community Services - and 'services' is the key word - I do not care to what lengths I have to go to introduce the various services that we as a responsible government know must be introduced right throughout the Territory.

Mr Speaker, I challenge the opposition, for the first time in its existence, to get behind the Northern Territory government, to get out into the communities ...

Mr Ede: We have been telling you for years what you should be doing.

Mr DALE: ... where 70% of the penal population comes from, and to help introduce a learning process into those communities so that we can, in a sensible and responsible way, reduce the number of prisoners in our system.

### National CPI Figures

Mr DONDAS to CHIEF MINISTER

I refer to the national CPI figures issued last Thursday. Could he advise on the figures relating to Darwin compared to those for the states?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I was quite surprised last week to find that, for once in his life, the Leader of the Opposition was silent when the CPI figures were released because he has gone to great pains to paint himself as a watchdog over the cost of living in the Northern Territory. He introduced a so-called price watch. All he was doing was duplicating work that has been carried out by the Consumer Affairs section of the Northern Territory government for the past 7 or 8 years. He does not take the time to examine the work that is already being carried out by the Northern Territory Public Service.

He never wants the facts to get in the way of a good story. That is quite obvious from some of the statements he has made in recent times. I think they are important when one considers the figures that were released last Thursday. He has said that the CLP government is a total and abject failure because it has failed to control prices, taxes or charges. The Centralian Advocate, in an article of 18 March said: 'Labor leader Terry Smith has urged the government to establish tax reduction goals to slow the growth of the Territory's cost of living. Mr Smith said the government should aim to slash its contribution to the consumer price index movement. Acceptable levels should be achieved by mid year'. That is what he said.

Mr Smith: Perhaps you could take my advice.

Mr HATTON: We all heard him ad nauseam during the recent election campaigns. The actual situation in relation to the cost of living became available through a document published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics last Thursday. Given that the Leader of the Opposition made great play during his Address-in-Reply speech last week of how the opposition would be fair and reasonable when the government did something good and achieved something, it should give us credit for it. Nevertheless, silence was the stern reply from the Leader of the Opposition when these figures were released which indicated that the Darwin figures were low on the national scale. Most importantly, when one examines the figures, they show that rents of privately-owned dwellings increased in all cities except Darwin. Also, there was no increase in health insurance contributions whereas these increased in all other cities.

Mr Speaker, that is fairly consistent. Only on the odd occasion since 1981 has the CPI for Darwin been above the national average. A simple examination of the CPI figures shows that there has been a reduction in the relative cost of living in Darwin since 1981. That is a fairly consistent trend. The odd hiccup where it has been higher than the national average has occurred in only 3 or 4 quarters since 1981.

Mr Smith: It goes up when there is an increase in taxes.

Mr HATTON: He is digging an even deeper hole for himself, Mr Speaker. I hope he keeps talking.

Because of policies of CLP governments and the growth that we have generated, the increased productivity in the Northern Territory, which flows

back to the community in terms of more competition and a wider range of services and goods at prices relatively comparable to those in the rest of Australia, our cost of living is consistently becoming closer to the national average. The Leader of the Opposition has been blaming the Northern Territory government for increases over and above those at the national level. He has said that the government's aim to slash its contribution to the CPI movement to an acceptable level should be achieved by mid year.

These are figures from last Thursday. There is a section on page 4 that indicates the contribution of selected state and local government charges to total changes. The figures are not available for Sydney because of strikes in the Australian Bureau of Statistics. For every other state, there has been a nil increase and, for Darwin, the figure is minus 0.01%. There has been a decrease in the government charges contribution to the CPI. I would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition, being such a fair-minded citizen and member of this Assembly, and making such a play of how fair and honest he is going to be and how cooperative with the government, would have stood up and praised the Northern Territory government for achieving reductions in the cost of living as a consequence of government charges.

Mr Speaker, the figures are for the period up to 31 March. The figures were relevant at the time of the Northern Territory election which was held in that quarter. The Leader of the Opposition's advice had already been acted on because our government has worked consistently to reduce the relative cost of living in the Northern Territory, unlike the members of the opposition who carp and criticise at every opportunity, whose only goal in life is to attack the morale of the people of the Northern Territory, the business community of the Northern Territory and the Northern Territory Public Service. As indicated by their cheap political moves, that is their only goal. They should examine the facts which speak loud and clear. This government is working solidly to reduce the relative cost of living. Opposition members could save themselves some time and effort with their nonsensical price watch if they read the document produced by the Consumer Affairs Unit of the Northern Territory government which has been reporting on the CPI for years and is somewhat more expert at the task than they are.

#### Hungerford Refrigeration

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

In the Assembly last Thursday, he undertook to provide me with information on the agreement between the Territory Insurance Office and Hungerford Refrigeration. When will I receive that information?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I undertook to provide the Leader of the Opposition with some details regarding the Hungerford proposal and the negotiations that had been entered into by the Territory Insurance Office. I had several calls from the Leader of the Opposition's office and it is my understanding that that information is either on its way to him or that he has that information at the moment.

Alice Springs Traffic Planning Study

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

What are the results of the traffic planning study recently conducted in Alice Springs with regard to plans for the Wills Terrace and Stuart Highway intersection?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am now in a position to advise the honourable member of the outcome of the traffic study in Alice Springs. If we could get drivers to accept their responsibility to obey normal traffic laws, we would not need to go to the expense and trouble of putting in expensive traffic light systems at various intersections in the major towns.

The intersection of the Stuart Highway and Wills Terrace has been under observation and statistics have been gathered. The police have advised that, during 1985 and 1986, reported accidents at that particular location numbered 18 and 23 respectively. Some of those accidents have been of quite a serious nature. The traffic study was undertaken principally by the Alice Springs Town Council, at a cost of \$25 000, and I gather that there is some discussion between the council and the Department of Transport and Works about some financial contribution towards the study. The outcome indicated that the intersection required some regulatory provisions through traffic lights. An estimate of \$150 000 was obtained and that item has now been included in the 1987-88 draft capital works program and will be subject to budgetary determination, as is normal.

In the meantime, design and documentation for the intersection is progressing with a contract target date of September 1987. The installation of traffic lights at that intersection should greatly improve road safety aspects, but I caution honourable members that the installation of traffic lights is not always the be all and end all. For example, in many cases, the installation of lights might be counterproductive and lead to a more dangerous situation than if they had not been installed. I am most conscious of that as, of course, are the technical sections of the department. Certainly, we need to be assessing all matters relating to road safety around towns and I commend the Alice Springs Town Council for the work that it has done in its traffic study which, I am sure, will lead to much safer roads for our people in the long term.

Hungerford Refrigeration

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

Was approval sought from the minister by the Territory Insurance Office Board before it made its investment in Hungerford Refrigeration?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will give the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Nhulunbuy a few basic facts about the operation of the TIO under section 7 of the act. Last week, I tried to explain to the Leader of the Opposition some of the basic facts in respect of the Hungerford Refrigeration deal. I also pointed out to honourable members what I believed would be a long-drawn-out scenario that the Leader of the Opposition would enter into as a result of the TIO acquiring an interest in Hungerford Refrigeration to bring it to the Northern Territory.

The simple fact is that the TIO is responsible to its policyholders. They are the people that the Territory Insurance Office is responsible to. It has to provide a return on their investments and adequate insurance coverage, etc. It is the TIO and the TIO Board that does that, not the Northern Territory taxpayer. It is necessary that the honourable Leader of the Opposition understand that very basic point. The TIO can enter commercial deals, have them investigated and make commercial decisions, knowing that it has the full power to do so. Section 7 provides the government with the power to direct. In this particular case, the Territory government did not direct the Territory Insurance Office to acquire. The TIO made that commercial decision on information that was provided to it, as I explained last week, after the commercial aspects of the company had been fully investigated by a firm of chartered accountants and after academic advice had been obtained from a professor who is involved with the particular processes that are being entered into by Hungerford. The board then made that decision.

Mr Speaker, I would point out to honourable members another example of the vacillation of the Leader of the Opposition in what he has said about the Trade Development Zone. The Chief Minister pointed out this morning how the Leader of the Opposition changes his figures. We have had examples of it in the budget debate, in his contribution to the Address-in-Reply debate last week and in relation to the Trade Development Zone. Once again, the Leader of the Opposition has decided to change his stance. In his column in the Sunday Territorian the other day ...

Mr EDE: A point of order, Mr Speaker! This is not relevant to the Territory Insurance Office. He is talking about the Trade Development Zone and the Leader of the Opposition's column.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, these matters are inseparable because the TIO has invested money in a company to bring it into the Trade Development Zone and the Leader of the Opposition is attacking that zone rather than the Territory Insurance Office.

Let me point out what he said in this Assembly on Wednesday 23 August 1984 whilst speaking on the report into the feasibility of a free trade zone. He said: 'This will be one of those occasions where there is complete unanimity between the various parties in this Assembly. Hopefully, the occasion of the tabling of this report will become a quite significant day for the history of the Northern Territory. The opposition is as excited as the government in the potential opportunities of a free trade zone. Certainly, it has our wholehearted support'.

He has turned around 180° since then. In his column he says: 'Wouldn't it be good if any business company could have the same opportunities as Hungerford Refrigeration and line up at the Treasurer's office for support?' Yet, on Wednesday 23 August 1984, he said: 'Obviously, a primary benefit would be in generating economic activity in Darwin where previously none existed'. Now, because of some incentives, when the zone is in its infancy and at its most vulnerable, he starts kicking heads. We are trying to attract firms to the Northern Territory and he is trying to condemn this one before it gets off the ground. He is trying to condemn the commercial realities of the world. He is trying to suggest to this Assembly that something has gone wrong.

Mr Smith: I am trying to find out whether you have been doing your job, and you have not.

Mr COULTER: He is in more trouble than the early settlers. He really has a problem with this one because he will stand condemned by the Northern Territory for his anti-development stance. I can assure honourable members there is nothing wrong at all with the deal that has been entered into by the Territory Insurance Office.

#### Hungerford Refrigeration

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

I draw his attention to section 6(2)(n) of the Territory Insurance Office Act. The preamble to the section reads: 'Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), the office may, for the purpose of carrying out its function or exercising its powers, including the powers conferred on it elsewhere in this or any other act ...'. Paragraph (n) reads: 'invest its money in any investment available to the Public Trustee under the Public Trustee Act and in investments or investments of a class of investments approved by the minister'. The Public Trustee Act certainly does not provide the Territory Insurance Office with any precedent for this. If the minister did not approve the investment by the Territory Insurance Office Board into Hungerford Refrigeration, why not? He has a clear legal obligation to do so.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I do not have the benefit of having the act in front of me. However, what the Leader of the Opposition wants the Territory Insurance Office to do is to buy Commonwealth bonds so that it can help finance the national deficit. He does not want us to become involved in any other product or any innovative projects.

Mr Smith: Did you or did you not carry out your legal responsibilities?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will be heard in silence.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I draw the Leader of the Opposition's attention to the facts that I have pointed out to him. Under section 7, the Territory Insurance office is responsible to its policyholders. The member for Nhulunbuy was talking to us the other day about taxpayers' money. He does not understand that it is the policyholders who have their money invested in the Territory Insurance office.

Mr Leo: But it is propped up by the taxpayers.

Mr COULTER: Maybe they are taxpayers as well, but not all taxpayers have their money invested in the Territory Insurance Office. It is necessary to distinguish between those groups of people.

I can tell the Leader of the Opposition that I have no hesitation in endorsing the deal that has been entered into with Hungerford Refrigeration. The point I was making is that the Northern Territory government does not direct the Territory Insurance Office to enter into any particular deals, neither should it!

### Crocodile Industry

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for CONSERVATION

What is the status of the Northern Territory's crocodile industry?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am happy to advise the Assembly of details relevant to the Northern Territory's fledgling crocodile industry because, when I have heard the word 'crocodile' of late, I have sometimes not known whether to laugh or cry. One important point needs to be made at the outset: the Northern Territory's wildlife management program includes the development of a viable, commercial industry based on the utilisation of crocodiles. Many people often overlook the fact that the course of action that is taken under the program has the support of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, IUCN. It also has the support of its specialist crocodile group and the parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna. Honourable members will recall that the Northern Territory Conservation Commission sent quite a delegation to the convention seeking support for its moves to commercialise the crocodile industry. An integral part of that program is the protection of the species as well.

There are 3 commercial crocodile farms in the Northern Territory at the moment and 2 of them are gearing up to begin slaughtering farm stock and to build flesh-processing facilities. It has been necessary for the third farm to undertake a rebuilding program and it is unlikely that this farm will commence processing crocodile flesh before 1988. The rebuilding of this farm has come about largely because the industry has formed an association to represent all 3 farms in terms of marketing not only the flesh but also the skins, skulls and teeth. I am happy to report that the government's marketing arm, Nortrade, is assisting the association in developing its marketing expertise and ensuring that the product comes on to the world market.

One of the integral parts of developing this marketing philosophy has been the development of a quality product. To that end, the freshwater crocodile skins are being sent to France, Japan and the United States for testing and international assessment of their quality and tanning requirements. We are dealing with a fledgling industry that must have all the correct criteria attached to it. It is important to note that commercial tanning of skins and their export to world markets has not taken place officially for some time. Therefore, the product is being tested so that its value and quality are known to the association.

Prior to exporting the skins overseas to France, Japan and the United States, it has been necessary to seek approval for these trial shipments from the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in Canberra. One would assume and hope that, because of the great lengths that the Northern Territory Conservation Commission and the association representing the 3 crocodile farms have gone to to investigate the marketing of the product and to seek the support of the international organisations involved, the Territory will not be subjected to the normal delays in obtaining approval to send these skins overseas to have them tested.

I am sure all honourable members here today will be more than happy to support any move that the Conservation Commission, and myself as minister, will make to ensure that the relevant approvals are received speedily from the

Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in Canberra, who is known to all of us. We are all working actively at converting him to an avid supporter of the Northern Territory. I am sure honourable members are aware of the difficulties that we face in that regard.

The Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory is coordinating approaches to state agencies so that crocodile artefacts, the by-product of the marketing and processing of crocodiles, such as skulls, claws and teeth, can be legally transported interstate. We all know that the crocodile is a protected species and we do not want any illegal shooting or processing of crocodiles in the wild to the detriment of the industry and to the detriment of many years of support and progress that have been made towards the commercialisation of the animals.

Mr Speaker, the crocodile industry, the Conservation Commission, the Department of Health and the relevant division of the Department of Industries and Development have reached agreement on minimum standards for processing the flesh which now satisfies public health requirements and allows for interstate trade. It is a very important aspect of the development of the industry and shortly I will come to the point that is most relevant: the value of the skins for export trade as compared to the value of the flesh.

The use of crocodile meat for human consumption is a side issue. As far as the industry is concerned, the prime value product is the skins. I know that recently the crocodile flesh that has been made available at 2 local restaurants has been imported into the Territory, under strict regulations and agreement between the Conservation Commission and those restaurateurs, for sampling and tasting within those Darwin restaurants. It has proved very popular and I am sure Darwin people will remember the reports in all local media which gave the restaurateurs, who were handling the crocodile flesh for human consumption, quite a boost. In fact, it was a great novelty item and I think the restaurants had quite large queues and several inquiries, especially from overseas tourists who, at that time, seemed more willing than the locals to sample some unique foods. For the benefit of honourable members, I have not had the pleasure - which I am advised it is - of consuming any of the crocodile flesh but I look forward to my first tasting. The Chief Minister advises me that it is A1.

One of the difficulties that we have with the commercialisation of the industry is a difference that relates to people who live elsewhere in Australia. They do not fully appreciate that commercial crocodile farming and production are key factors in the conservation of this unique natural resource and, of course, I am talking about the crocodile in the wild. Many people reading the local and interstate newspapers might believe that crocodiles are nothing but a very dangerous species that inhabits the wild and which has no right to be there. Certainly, that has never been the view of the Northern Territory Conservation Commission or the Northern Territory government. We believe in an ongoing education program aimed at making this reptile a valuable resource to the community. We feel that we can gain the support of the general public for the direction that the Northern Territory government is taking. The future of both species of crocodile in the Northern Territory is assured by the carefully planned and executed balance between conservation in the natural environment and farming in the commercial environment. The Conservation Commission can be justly proud of its activities in catching nuisance animals in the wild and in places that are frequented on a regular basis by tourists and local people.

Territory-based research shows that 80% of the value of the farmed crocodile is in the skins. I have had to point that out to the restaurateurs who, unfortunately, have not yet had a ready supply of crocodile meat. I have pointed out that the industry is targeted towards profitability and therefore gives highest priority to the development of its skin trade. I anticipate that crocodile skin production in the Northern Territory will be worth a conservative \$1.5m a year within about 2 years. That is why there is no great rush of crocodile flesh onto the market. The 3 crocodile farms, in forming their association, have obviously determined that, for the success of the commercial venture, priority must lie with the skins. In contrast to this conservatively estimated \$1.5m per annum value for trade in skins, the value of the flesh product over the same period is put at only \$300 000 per annum during the same period. Unfortunately, the avid eaters of crocodile flesh will have to wait just a little longer until the farms are developed further. Having said that, I expect that production will begin early in the new financial year, at least from 1 of the farms. That is not a long time for restaurants to wait for crocodile flesh to be available.

Problem crocodiles, that are trapped and removed by the Conservation Commission rangers, form a nucleus of the commercial farm breeding stock in addition to the continuing harvesting of eggs from the wild and from farm crocodile nests. We have all heard reports about many problem crocodiles. For example, many have been caught in the Gove area recently. One was taken recently at Buffalo Creek and there are other places throughout the Territory where problem crocodiles have been caught. They are not simply hit on the head or hit with a bullet. They are taken to the crocodile farms and become an integral part of the breeding stock. We all know that the industry could not survive unless it had adequate breeding stock. The egg harvest has the potential now to produce 4000 hatchlings each year and 4000 hatchlings each year from the current breeding stock is quite an incredible achievement by the industry. As far as breeding goes, we are really only talking at the moment of 2 crocodile farms with a third yet to come on stream.

I fully support the Northern Territory's crocodile industry and I think it has every chance of being highly successful. The success of the industry is the culmination of many years of research and planning. It commenced many years ago with the initiative of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission to attend the overseas organisations. I believe that this fledgling industry deserves the support of all honourable members. Not only does it add to the protection of the species but it is a very interesting step that the industry has taken and it will continue to be a major tourist attraction. I am sure I do not have to advise honourable members that that is a major point in generating income within the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, in closing, may I thank the member for Jingili for his interest.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
School Leavers in NTPS

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I would like to respond to a question asked by the Leader of the Opposition earlier in relation to school leavers. I now have the information.

In the period of the school leaver program, from 1 December 1986 until 31 March 1987, the Northern Territory government employed 246 school leavers. This figure does not include NTEC. I might say 78 of the 246 are technical trainees and apprentices. We still have 260 apprentices and technical

trainees employed through school leaver programs in past years. I would be curious to obtain from the Leader of the Opposition the official report that he is referring to so that, if there is any discrepancy, I can deal with it. However, this is the information that I had available to me previously. It is consistent with the advice I have always received and it is still more than the program the Leader of the Opposition tried to promote as his 'Youth Guarantee Program' which would have reduced the number of school leavers being employed by the Northern Territory government.

### Hungerford Refrigeration

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

In question time yesterday, he intimated that the Territory government had not approved the TIO entering into an arrangement with Hungerford Refrigeration. Subsequently, outside this Assembly, as I understand it, the Treasurer indicated that a minister of the government had, in fact, approved that transaction. Did a minister of the government approve a transaction under the terms of the Territory Insurance Office Act section 6(2)(n)? If so, who was that minister and what was his responsibility for the Territory Insurance Office Act at that time?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am happy to answer the Leader of the Opposition's question. Honourable members will be aware that he was the economic spokesman under the previous Leader of the Opposition and that his responsibilities included the Territory Insurance Office. I said that this saga about Hungerford Refrigeration would be a drawn-out one. I outlined how it would go to honourable members at the outset.

The answer is that a minister did approve the Hungerford deal. The Leader of the Opposition asked what minister, at what time, under what authority. Remember, he is the shadow spokesman on economic affairs with responsibility for any comment regarding the Territory Insurance Office. It has been described best by a public servant who wrote to me last evening and said: 'Please note that Mr Smith was interviewed on the lunchtime news and said that you have not done your job because you should have been the one to sign the approval, not your Cabinet colleague, Mr Hanrahan. Mr Smith is confused'.

We all know that he is confused but it is interesting to note that the message is getting out to the public service as well. It is the responsible minister who is required to sign, not the Treasurer, and the member for Flynn was the responsible minister at the time. He was the minister who had responsibility for the Territory Insurance Office. Under the administrative order signed on 15 May 1986, he became the minister responsible for the Territory Insurance Office. He retained that position until 19 March 1987. At the time, the Leader of the Opposition was the opposition spokesman on the TIO. The agreements were signed on 13 March. For 10 months, the Leader of the Opposition did not even know which minister was responsible for the Territory Insurance Office.

Mr Smith: You did not know the answer to the question yesterday.

Mr COULTER: That is the type of representative that the Labor Party has put in this Assembly to answer questions for 10 months as the shadow spokesman. He did not even know who the responsible minister was.

Mr Smith: I did not know when the thing was signed so how could I know that?

Mr COULTER: He did not know a lot of things, Mr Speaker. I do not believe he knows what day it is.

I can advise the Leader of the Opposition that the member for Flynn, as the responsible minister, approved this particular deal with Hungerford Refrigeration on 13 March.

Mr Smith: Thank you. Why didn't you know that yesterday?

Mr COULTER: I would hope that other honourable members opposite would learn by the mistake that the Leader of the Opposition has made and avoid the sort of ignorance and arrogance that he has displayed over the last 4 or 5 days. Have a look at the administrative orders and make sure what you are the opposition spokesperson for, and get to know your portfolio areas so that we can get on with government in this Northern Territory with, at least, an effective opposition to provide some meaningful and worthwhile debate in this Assembly.

#### Education Department Policies on AIDS Sufferers

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for EDUCATION

I understand that the Department of Education is to develop policies in relation to teachers and students suffering from AIDS. In view of the importance of this issue, will the general public be given the opportunity to contribute to the development of these policies?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, this issue is extremely important. I think honourable members will be aware that information about AIDS is already included in a number of areas of the curriculum in Territory schools. However, that does not address the question of what action the Department of Education should take when it is discovered that a teacher or a student has AIDS. Certainly, it would be unrealistic to believe that that situation will never arise. Clearly, we have a responsibility to ensure that we can deal with such a situation when, inevitably, we are faced with it. It is also fair to say that we have a responsibility to ensure that the community has the opportunity to contribute to any policies or guidelines that may be established.

As a result, I have directed the department to establish a task force to consider the issue and to develop policies in relation to the matter as quickly as possible. I intend that the task force have representatives from the Department of Health and Community Services, the Department of Education and the Department of Law. I have asked that we have representation from the Council of Government Schools Organisation, the Teachers Federation, the Principals Association and the Institute of Senior Education Officers. The task force sounds a bit large and unwieldy but it is a very important issue and we must involve as many people in the community as we can. I have also said that submissions should be accepted from concerned individuals and groups in the Territory.

The first meeting of the task force has been set for 8 May. I want the matter finalised by the end of June. It is an issue on which we must act quickly and decisively but it also requires considered consultation with the community. I intend to ensure that that consultation takes place and that, when the inevitable happens, we are in a position to take steps which will result in the least number of problems. We must also ensure that the victims of this terrible disease are not discriminated against in such a manner as would cause undue stress to them and their families.

### Hungerford Refrigeration

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

Mr Speaker, last night, I gave the Treasurer a series of questions concerning Hungerford Refrigeration. I leave it up to him whether he wants to answer those collectively or one at a time and whether he wants me to read them out or he can take them as read.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition provided me with a list of questions and I will read them out to the Legislative Assembly and supply the answers. The first question is: 'Is Hungerford Refrigeration Pty Limited a trustee company for the Hungerford Family Trust Sheetmetal Fabrication?' The answer is no. A company by the name of Epilawn had been a trustee for the Newcombe Family Trust and the name was changed subsequently to Hungerford Refrigeration Pty Ltd. The company ceased to be a trustee in August 1984.

The second question is: 'What form is the Territory Insurance Office's capital investment in Hungerford Refrigeration Pty Ltd - shares, debentures or loans?' The answer is 122 500 fully paid up shares at \$1, and a loan of \$627 500.

The third question is: 'What charge, if any, does the Territory Insurance Office have over the assets of Sheetmetal Fabrication?' The Territory Insurance Office has a first floating debenture charge over the assets of Hungerford Refrigeration Pty Ltd.

The fourth question is: 'How has the \$700 000 investment of the Territory Insurance Office been disbursed within the Hungerford corporate structure and how has the investment been secured?' Territory Insurance Office involvement will enable a complete financial restructuring of the company. Existing loans will be paid out, capital equipment purchased and working capital increased. A small portion will go towards a reduction in the trade creditors. I spoke about Hungerford's operating profit this year. The Leader of the Opposition painted negative scenarios and spoke about how much the company is in debt. There is a considerable operating profit in Hungerford Refrigeration.

The fifth question is: 'How many directors from the Territory Insurance Office have been appointed to Hungerford Refrigeration Pty Ltd board and who are they?' The answer is 2. Mr Phillip Temple is the Chairman at Territory Insurance Office and Mr Vivian Hawke is the General Manager.

The sixth question is: 'Has the charge over the assets held by Carrington Confirmers been discharged?' The answer is that it will be lifted during the next few days.

I believe I have answered those questions in detail. I thought there were more than 6 questions. Indeed, they were taken from the list supplied by the Leader of the Opposition. However, may I put members of the opposition on notice. In future, if they ask me questions that are of a confidential nature or which follow their anti-development strategy on some of the issues which they have raised in this Assembly which have demonstrated their negative attitude towards the development of the Northern Territory, as a responsible minister, I will not be rising to my feet in question time to answer such questions as I have done in the past. I am sick and tired of the negative attitude of the members opposite. There is too much to do in terms of the

development of the Northern Territory. The opportunities are enormous and I do not intend to waste my time in debating issues which are meaningless and which undermine the confidence of the people of the Northern Territory and the companies that I spend considerable time trying to attract to the Northern Territory. I have been fortunate. When they ask me about what the alternate government is likely to be, I say: 'Don't you worry about that'.

Land Councils Meeting at Lake Bennett

Mr McCARTHY to CHIEF MINISTER

Is he aware of the reasons for the joint land councils meeting at Lake Bennett today?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, my knowledge of the meeting at Lake Bennett today is derived from information received unofficially from Canberra and information that I have been able to glean from the media. Given that it appears that this meeting concerns negotiations on a matter of vital importance to the Northern Territory, the amendments to the Northern Territory Land Rights Act, a matter with which this government and many sectors of the community have been deeply involved for a lengthy period of time and into which they have put an incredible amount of effort, time and patience, not even to be given the courtesy of advice as to the current circumstances is a gross breach of propriety in my view.

Mr Bell: You blokes were not interested in the Land Rights Act last night.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell ought to know that the Northern Territory Land Rights Act is one of the most vitally important pieces of federal legislation affecting the Northern Territory. The proposed amendments have been the subject of intensive negotiation and discussions between the Northern Territory government and the federal government.

Mr Bell: A fundamental Territory issue.

Mr HATTON: The member opposite presumably is criticising the fact that I made some comment yesterday.

Mr Bell: You have turned through 180°.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will cease his running commentary and the Chief Minister will be heard in silence.

Mr HATTON: The member for MacDonnell is obviously perturbed that I made some derogatory comments about the member for Arafura's speech in the Address-in-Reply debate yesterday, because he was specifically addressing a federal Liberal Party Aboriginal affairs policy.

Mr Bell: Which relates to the Northern Territory.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HATTON: I made it quite clear that a federal Liberal Party policy had nothing to do with the debate in the Assembly. I felt that it was a shame that, in his maiden speech, the member acted in contravention of the

conventions of this Assembly. If a member wants to speak controversially in his maiden speech, it happens to be a convention of parliament that he advises members opposite of his intention to do so. This then invites interjection. If members opposite studied parliamentary convention, they would know that. I have no problem with members opposite debating Liberal Party policies. I would thoroughly enjoy it and I have no doubt that this side of the Assembly would win such a debate.

I was asked a question about the Lake Bennett meeting. I understand that this meeting was called last week at the insistence of the Prime Minister. I understand that it has been funded by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs on the instructions of the Prime Minister and that the land councils have received a direct payment in the order of \$70 000 to convene it.

The circumstances that have led to the calling of this meeting are of particular concern to me. I have had advice from pretty reliable sources which I am not at liberty to reveal. Of course, it is unofficial because I have not received any official advice from the federal government and, in fact, we cannot get responses to telephone or other communications concerning this particular meeting. For some reason, it is particularly secret and the federal government does not want to communicate officially with the Northern Territory government about it.

The situation is curious. Since 1985, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has been giving undertakings to this government and Northern Territory industries on amendments to the Land Rights Act. In April 1985, the first undertakings were given on some important matters such as stock routes, stock reserves and non-conversion of pastoral properties. Undertakings were also given in 1985 and 1986 to the mining industry in respect of special provisions in amendments to the Land Rights Act. These undertakings were reiterated as recently as 23 April this year. I understand that the proposed amendments, which were to go to the parliament, were approved by the Caucus subcommittee on Aboriginal Affairs. They received the approval of the Cabinet, but the full Caucus of the Australian Labor Party in Canberra decided that it would hand over the reins of government to the land councils of the Northern Territory.

Mr Ede: You do not know what you are talking about!

Mr HATTON: I understand that the instructions ...

Mr Ede: You do not understand. You have got it completely wrong.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have already warned one honourable member about constant interjections. I now warn the member for Stuart. The next member who runs that line will be named. The Chief Minister will be heard in silence.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I understand that the instructions from the Caucus were: 'We do not want any arguments, justifications or cases to be brought forward. We simply want to know what the land councils want and we will do what the land councils say'. They are handing over government decisions to the land councils.

What about the views of the other 75% of Northern Territory residents? What about those other people, such as those in the pastoral industry, who have particular interests in these issues and who have honoured the undertakings they gave to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs with respect to

excisions? What about the views of the mining industry which finds itself continuously hamstrung because of the procedures required under the Land Rights Act? What about other Territory citizens who believe that they should have a right to the use of public purpose land in the Northern Territory and not have it handed across to specific individuals or groups for control and direction? These are fairly legitimate interests and they should be the concern of every person in this Assembly. What about undertakings that have been given by a federal minister of the Crown to those interest groups and to the people of the Northern Territory? Why is it that we are not invited to engage in further consultation?

Contrary to the allegations of Mr Bob Collins, the ALP Senate candidate, this is not a normal process of consultation. It is a meeting called at short notice. I could be wrong, because they keep changing the arrangements, but I believe that the Minister for Resources and Energy and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs are flying up with the Caucus subcommittee on a VIP jet with the requirement that they report back tonight to Canberra. They are coming for their riding instructions on how to handle the federal parliament. That is a disgraceful way to carry out government.

A process was undertaken concerning the development of amendments to legislation. Considerable goodwill was generated in the community and, for the first time, there were signs of cooperation on many of the very contentious land rights issues.

I noted the remarks of the member for Arafura yesterday and I congratulate him for recognising the plight of people on pastoral properties and the needs for excisions, a process which this government has been addressing with vigour. We have been far more effective than 20 years of federal government efforts on that problem. That is being undermined by this backdoor lobby.

Members know that Warren Snowden, the CLC man from central Australia, just about lives in Canberra. He spends his time running around amongst his left-wing mates, drinking in the stranger's bar at Parliament House, promoting his particular views and the land councils' views and trying to undermine considerable intergovernmental and conscientious work to resolve some of the really contentious problems in this land rights legislation so we can get this Territory going in a direction whereby we can all live together without these sorts of nonsensical fights.

It is a tragedy that this sort of nonsense continues. After 2 years, after several draft bills, and after round after round of legal opinion and consultation with the land councils, the Aboriginal communities, the pastoral industry, and the mining industry, it is about time that the federal government should honour its undertakings and introduce legislation so that it can be debated. Only in that way can this contention be removed so we can get on with the business of building the Northern Territory for everybody.

#### Hungerford Refrigeration

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

Mr Speaker, I must make a point about the so-called confidential information and commercially sensitive information that we are seeking, including the 6 questions that I asked. If the Corporate Affairs Office were operating properly, that information would be freely available. If the TIO was aware of its responsibilities in this matter, it would have ensured that that information was available there.

Having regard to the previous answer, that TIO has 2 directors on Hungerford Refrigeration, and having regard to the fact that the latest information available to us on the structure of Hungerford Refrigeration, which was that, in 1985, Hungerford Refrigeration had 4 directors - 2 Hungerfords, a Mr Dick and a Mr Stack - how does that relate to his statement last week that TIO had a controlling interest in the company and was controlling the affairs of the company?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I understand Mr Stack is no longer in the employment of Hungerford Refrigeration. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition may like to confirm that?

Mr Smith: I have no idea.

Mr COULTER: He has no idea. That is not the only thing that he has no idea about. I understand that he has now left the employment of Hungerford Refrigeration. As I explained to honourable members last week, the voting rights on the board have been organised to give the TIO control of the company.

#### Access to Aboriginal Land for Mining Companies

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER FOR MINES and ENERGY:

With regard to statements by the Chairman of the Northern Land Council about ready access to Aboriginal land for mining companies in the Territory and, in particular, the chairman's claim that mining companies are dragging the chain in respect of exploration applications, can he clarify the situation and advise the real position?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Ludmilla for the question. I would like to take the opportunity to provide the facts on land applications to the Assembly, how many land applications have been requested by various mining companies, how many companies have been vetoed by the Northern Land Council and how many have been successful. There has been some misleading information in the media of late. In this Assembly last evening, the member for Stuart was trapped into making similar misleading statements. For example, he made claims about the location of the major mines of the Northern Territory today. He did not tell anybody that they were all deposits that had been explored and developed and which were governed by agreements that were entered into before 1976 - before the Lands Right Act came into force. That applied in every case and, by that, he condemned himself. That was when access to Aboriginal land ceased and it was good of him to point out just how much exploration had taken place and how much activity had occurred in the Northern Territory before the enactment of the Lands Right Act. The mines at Koongarra, Ranger, Nabarlek, Gove and Groote were all developed before 1976. The thing that stopped everything was the Land Rights Act. I would like to clarify that for the member for Stuart.

Mr Bell: Tell us about the Alice Springs to Darwin pipeline.

Mr COULTER: You will get yours in a minute too, honourable member for MacDonnell.

The NLC effectively vetoed some 32 applications for exploration licences in Arnhem Land. In marked contrast, consent has been given to 1 application only. The member for Victoria River tried to display graphically the location of some bombs yesterday evening. I am not sure how the Hansard reporters will handle this, but I will try to show a bigger bomb. For the benefit of honourable members, on this map, the areas shaded in yellow are areas of land where mining has been vetoed. Companies such as Comalco, Stockdale, CRA, BHP, United Uranium, Total, Esso and so on have all applied for land out in that area. In fact, the land that has been applied for covers some 18 554 km<sup>2</sup>. The amount of success that mining companies have achieved is indicated by this little purple dot which represents a miserable 64 km<sup>2</sup> of a total of almost 600 000 km<sup>2</sup> which are now under Aboriginal or national park control in the Northern Territory.

That demonstrates the success rate of the Northern Land Council in negotiating. As I said in the Assembly last evening, the traditional owners have now lost faith and confidence in the Northern Land Council and its ability to represent their interests. A good example of that would be the Queensland Mines negotiations which broke down. I brought the parties together again but negotiations have broken down since. I received a telex today indicating that the Chairman of Queensland Mines wrote to me on 4 May saying that negotiations have broken down. It is a ridiculous situation. I received a telex from the Northern Land Council today which says it does not accept that negotiations have broken down. It is a bit like a marriage where 1 partner says, 'We are divorced', and the other says, 'We are not divorced'. It does not promise a very happy union for the future or for development if that type of situation exists.

When the honourable member spoke of the 4 major mines in the Assembly last evening, I said that he had the timing spot on. They are significant areas of Aboriginal land which have been mined but mining was stopped on the day the Land Rights Act came into force. The Koongarra agreement, of course, was based on pre-1976 discovery and, therefore, was not subject to the veto provisions of the act. 12 of the 13 which the Chairman of the Northern Land Council referred to are exploration licences on land under claim and are not agreements under the provisions of the Land Rights Act. Once again, that is testimony to the fact that, if a company wants to mine and there is a claim over the land, it is in big trouble.

In answer to the member for Ludmilla's question, the Department of Mines and Energy offered some 179 mineral exploration licences to a number of mining companies provided an agreement could be reached between them and Aborigines under the Land Rights Act. The act has failed dismally in the years that it has been in force. As the member for Fannie Bay mentioned last evening, the amount of wealth that is now locked up is incredible. 4 km<sup>2</sup> at Ranger have produced in excess of \$1000m of mineral wealth for Australia in 5 short years.

In last night's adjournment debate, I mentioned that Senator Walsh, the Minister for Finance, has said that the Northern Territory economy is parasitic but more parasitic than it needs to be because of outside influence. All we are asking of Senator Walsh is that he take his foot off our neck and give us the opportunity to mine this vast mineral wealth. Let us get on with the job of developing the Territory, creating wealth and removing this social welfare umbrella that has been created over the top of Aborigines and the industry that has been set up to ensure that a social welfare mentality is maintained and, in fact, strengthened. Give the traditional owners the right to negotiate with mining companies directly so that they can create meaningful full-time employment and extract themselves from the situation that is forced

on them by white advisers, lawyers and people who work for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs who are ensuring that these people will never rise above the poverty line. An industry has been created by these people to ensure that they keep their jobs. They would not get a job anywhere else.

A number of mining companies are actively negotiating or seeking to negotiate with Aboriginal land councils. Others have held back waiting to see what happens to those. Given the mining industry's experience with land councils, such caution is readily understandable. Mining companies have expressed considerable concern to me about the way that the Northern Land Council handles applications and the way that it claims to represent the traditional owners. There are many examples of this that can be gathered throughout the Northern Territory. We have witnessed situations like that at Coronation Hill, where traditional owners were prepared to agree to mining but where, all of a sudden, a magic sacred site appeared out of the ground. It was alleged to be a sacred site that had been mined extensively, which is why it was named Coronation Hill.

None of the applicants is satisfied that the proposals were adequately or fairly presented to the traditional owners by the Northern Land Council. I am talking in particular of those 32 applicants that have been knocked back in Arnhem Land alone. In early June, the Director of the Bureau of the Northern Land Council, Mr John Ah Kit, publicly berated mining companies in general, and BHP in particular, for being dilatory in forwarding detailed proposals. Advice of the NLC's resolution was not forwarded to the companies until early in September. In that advice, the NLC suggested that the traditional owners would like to have met with the applicants. As explained in the BHP letter, the company would have more than welcomed the opportunity to discuss the question of exploration with the traditional owners, but the NLC did not inform it of the meeting.

In the meantime, representatives of BHP had held meetings with the NLC in July. At those meetings, BHP proposed a reconnaissance of the areas to assist with the development of detailed proposals. The proposal included the use of traditional owners as guides, and was to be restricted to very preliminary assessments only. At those meetings, the NLC made no mention of the council's June resolution, nor was the traditional owners' desire to meet with the company conveyed to BHP. How can companies have any confidence or faith in the Northern Land Council? How can the traditional owners have any faith or confidence in the land councils? What has happened ...

Mr Ede: Why don't you make it a ministerial statement so that we get a chance to rebut this nonsense?

Mr COULTER: In response to that interjection, I am trying to bring home the facts.

Mr Ede: Those are not the facts.

Mr COULTER: The facts are simple, and the honourable member for Stuart pointed them out in this Assembly last evening. As soon as the Land Rights Act came into force, mining ceased. That is a fact, and he knows it. Yesterday evening, he said: 'What about the 4 major mines in the Northern Territory?' It just so happens that those 4 major mines came into production before the Land Rights Act came into force. It is farcical to say that 13 mining agreements have been concluded. It is not true.

This map says it all, Mr Speaker, even in respect of Arnhem Land alone. If you look at the 32 applications, the vetos and the approvals, it is a shame and a disgrace. This is a matter which involves millions of dollars of wealth and meaningful full-time employment for Aboriginals, which would bring them out from underneath the social welfare umbrella created by the leaders of the Australian Labor Party and propped up by mining companies because of the royalty payments they are forced to make. These royalties are paid for the right to exploit a resource which belongs to all Australians. They are paid to prop up the Northern Land Council and the Central Land Council. Millions of dollars are involved, and the companies are quite concerned that this snake they have created is biting them on the ankles with their money.

It is a suicidal situation, as I said in this Assembly last night. What are we doing to this great country? What are we doing to the Northern Territory? Give us a go, Mr Walsh. Take your foot off our neck and we will show you that we are not parasites on the national economy. We have great wealth. We have some great Aboriginal people who want to create meaningful jobs for their children. They do not want to live under the social welfare umbrella that is propped up by the white advisers, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the land councils. All they are asking for is a fair go.

#### Nuclear Waste Disposal Facilities

Mr BELL to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

I refer to the member for Karama's speculation yesterday about the placement of nuclear waste facilities in the Northern Territory. Secondly, I refer him to a report emanating from his department about the prospect of siting such facilities to the north-east of Alice Springs, presumably in my electorate. Which government members have indicated their willingness to have such nuclear waste disposal facilities in their electorates?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I understand that negotiations are occurring between a very close colleague, who is involved in the Aboriginal movement, and the member for MacDonnell. I think the facility might be going to Libya now.

The fact is that involvement in the nuclear industry is an opportunity which should exist for the Northern Territory. Certainly, Senator Button thinks so. He has just formed a Base Metal Industry Council which is to look at ways of processing raw materials mined in Australia. There are a number of examples of this already occurring. You would be aware, Mr Speaker, of negotiations with BHP in an attempt to develop a manganese dioxide facility.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I refer the minister to standing order 113 which says that an answer shall be relevant to the question. I will repeat my question in case he did not hear it. I asked which government members have indicated their preparedness to have nuclear waste disposal facilities sited in their electorates? I do not want a rundown on the nuclear energy industry. We have had a number of debates about it in this Assembly.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The minister may answer the question in any way he sees fit, provided that his answer is relevant to the question.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I am not sure that the member for MacDonnell is not actually getting in early with a lobby to ensure that the facility is sited in his electorate. Perhaps he is worried that competition from other members of the Assembly might result in his missing out on his opportunity to become involved in this industry. Perhaps he has taken note of my point regarding full-time employment for some of his constituents. I will bear that in mind and no doubt he will speak to me further about the issue as time goes by.

The fact is that we have to become involved in the total processing of our mineral wealth in the Northern Territory. Recently, I had the opportunity of looking at a nuclear reprocessing plant at Le Havre in France. It is Europe's biggest project. It is a \$12 000m project and employs some 4000 people. I believe there are some wonderful opportunities for the Territory to become involved not only in the processing of yellowcake but in developing and leasing fuel rods to the various companies involved. Those fuel rods would be returned to the Northern Territory for reprocessing and eventual storage. The only way we can really guarantee the safety of our nuclear material in world markets is by having total control of the product, just as Howard Hughes had some years ago with his drill bits. If we were in a position in the Northern Territory to mine, process, develop and bring the rods back to the Northern Territory for reprocessing and eventual storage, we would be able to tell if anybody was milking the plutonium out of them. We would be able to contribute much more to safety in the nuclear industry. It is simply a discussion paper but, no doubt, there will be many members in the Assembly who will now vie for the opportunity to become involved in such a venture should it happen. At the moment, it is merely a discussion paper.

#### Funding of FORWAARD

Mr REED to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

Is it true that the federal government is withdrawing funds from FORWAARD?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, FORWAARD is the Foundation of Rehabilitation with Aboriginal Alcohol-related Difficulties. I touched on this yesterday when the member for Arnhem asked me a question relating to overcrowding in Territory prisons. Over the last 12 months, I have tried to warn the Legislative Assembly, particularly the opposition, that the federal government is adopting the attitude that it must cut the social welfare budget. The most expedient way it can do that is to cut funds to the Aboriginals, the majority of whom are in the Northern Territory. This is yet another example of the federal government taking that attitude.

FORWAARD operates from premises in Stuart Park and offers a medium stay for a 6-week rehabilitation program for alcohol dependent persons. It has been funded entirely by the Commonwealth government. In February this year, the Commonwealth government decided, as a matter of policy - and I want the opposition to note that it is the federal government's policy to withdraw funding to all Aboriginal residential treatment programs - that this funding is to cease on 30 April 1987. The federal government ran the pen through it in February and dropped it cold. In a matter of 6 weeks, they run like mongrel dogs from a matter that is extremely important to 25% of the Territory's population.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I believe the expression 'mongrel dogs' is scarcely parliamentary.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the minister to withdraw that remark.

Mr DALE: I certainly withdraw the remark unreservedly. I would like to explain that I was not referring to the federal government as mongrel dogs. I was simply indicating that the manner in which they retreated from this particular issue may be likened to the scampering feet of a dog.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw without comment.

Mr DALE: I withdraw it without comment.

FORWAARD has been directed to change its direction towards the provision of outpatient services, with particular emphasis on education and prevention services. I believe the opposition should be taking some note of this point. The implications of this redirection will have impact on the Northern Territory government. FORWAARD is the only residential program for Aboriginal people which is used by the judiciary as an alternative to prison sentences. Its closure will mean more Aboriginal prisoners and these people now make up 70% of the prison population.

FORWAARD provides a valuable social service by taking alcohol-dependent persons out of the community for a period of rehabilitation. If the residential component closes, this will place more stress on other services, including the police, emergency accommodation and welfare services in general. My departmental officers and this government are taking a far more responsible attitude to this matter. We are negotiating with the people involved in running FORWAARD to see if we are able to keep it operational.

Mr Speaker, in answer to a question from the member from Arafura yesterday, I said that I need members of the opposition to play their part in overcoming the problems relating to the penal system in the Northern Territory. What have they done in relation to this?

Mr Ede: I have written letters about FORWAARD.

Mr DALE: To whom?

Mr Ede: To the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr DALE: Good on you. Perhaps this is an example of the worth of the opposition when it comes to negotiating with their leaders down in Canberra. How many times have I stated that they are the puppets of their leaders in Canberra? Here is another example. They made representation, on behalf of the Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, relative to FORWAARD, but still the pen went through it. They are useless at representing the people of the Northern Territory, particularly the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. They do nothing to represent their constituencies in this Northern Territory.

#### Beaufort Hotel's Outstanding Accounts

Mr SMITH to TREASURER

Last week, he stated that he was having discussions with the management of the Beaufort Hotel about arrears in electricity, water, sewerage and payroll

tax. What was the result of those discussions and is the Northern Territory likely to recoup the cost of supplying electricity, water and sewerage services and the arrears on payroll tax?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, my filing system does not seem to be working terribly well at the moment. I had a letter from the company involved. I will make a copy of that letter available to the Leader of the Opposition.

I had discussions with some of the people involved in Burgundy Royale concerning the sale of the facility. Last week, I had discussions with people from Westpac Bank which is involved in the financing of Burgundy Royale for its development on the Esplanade. A Westpac representative was in Hong Kong during the previous week negotiating the sale of the facility and Westpac is confident that a buyer will be found within the very near future, and discussions are at a point where an announcement will be made within the next 30 days.

In response to the Leader of the Opposition's question, the Northern Territory government is in a very good position to obtain the moneys that are outstanding. It has entered into an agreement with the banking company that will ensure that the Northern Territory government will be paid the amount of money that is owing to it in payroll tax and for electricity, water and sewerage services before connections are granted to the buyer. When the government controls some of the basic facilities, it puts it in a very strong position. That is the position that the Northern Territory government is in. I believe that a satisfactory resolution will be announced within the next 30 days. Indeed, the letter that I have come from Hong Kong and contained the latest information. I intended to make a statement on it yesterday.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Land Councils Meeting at Lake Bennett

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I would like to make a correction to a position that I put to the Assembly earlier this morning with respect to the Lake Bennett meeting. I wish to ensure that I am not in any way misleading the Assembly on information that is available to me. In my statement, I indicated that the federal government's Caucus subcommittee on Aboriginal affairs was supportive of the amendments proceeding and that that was supported by the Cabinet. Mr Speaker, I am advised that I was in error in that respect. In fact, the Caucus subcommittee was opposed to the amendments going through. It was overruled by the Cabinet and the Cabinet, in turn, has been overruled by the full Caucus.

In no way do I withdraw the rest of my comments, and I would ask honourable members to think of the implications of that. Effectively, the Caucus is saying that it has no confidence in the Cabinet.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The Chief Minister stood up to correct a misleading impression that he said he gave, and has now gone on to advance the comments that he made earlier this morning.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I believe that my additional comments are relevant to the correction that has been made, and are important to give a complete statement in the context of the implications of that alternative information.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the point I was making was that I believe that, effectively, that is a vote of no confidence in the Cabinet. If a decision is made at Lake Bennett that the amendments should not proceed, the people of Australia will be placed in the rather awkward position, within our Westminster system of parliament, where a federal minister puts proposals of that kind to people. In these circumstances, I would think anybody in the Northern Territory, indeed anyone in Australia, would be quite entitled to say: 'Have you obtained permission from the full Caucus of your party to speak as a government minister and make undertakings on behalf of your government? If you do not, I have no confidence in accepting your word as a minister of the Crown'. That is the effect of that decision and I think that it is absolutely reprehensible. It is sufficient that, if the Cabinet is comprehensively rolled and that legislation does not proceed, then that is a vote of no confidence in the government, and it should resign and allow its Caucus to elect a new Cabinet.

#### Lockers for Sadadeen Secondary College Students

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Has the Department of Education made provision for lockers for students at the Sadadeen Secondary College?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, certainly the lack of lockers for the use of students at the Sadadeen Secondary College is receiving the attention of a number of members of this Assembly. The member for Sadadeen raised this matter the other day. You, Mr Speaker, have made a number of representations to the Director of Education in Alice Springs, and the member for Araluen is now pursuing the matter. I think that the sort of interest shown by local members in Alice Springs is quite worthy and appropriate. 168 lockers have been ordered and installed at the college, as you would be aware, because I believe you have correspondence that shows this to be so.

Mr Collins: For the matric students. What about the Year 11s?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will be heard in silence, and the member for Sadadeen will allow him to reply to the question.

Mr MANZIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have not forgotten the Year 11 students. I wished to tell members that the 168 lockers that have been supplied will be used by Year 12 students. There are some extra lockers which will be utilised by Year 11 students.

The principal has made a request for an additional 200 lockers in the next financial year. Obviously, I hope that we can fund those lockers but I cannot give any undertakings because that will depend on our budget allocations and Territory-wide priorities in relation to education. I can assure honourable members that I will certainly keep the subject of the lockers in the forefront of my mind. I am very sure, Mr Speaker, that you and the members for Araluen and Sadadeen will continue to make representations and keep me up to the mark in relation to lockers at Sadadeen Secondary College.

Fruit-fly Outbreak in Alice Springs

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for INDUSTRIES and DEVELOPMENT

He is aware that there has been a fruit-fly outbreak in Alice Springs area over the last few months. What do he and the department intend to do about that outbreak?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I do not have details in front of me in relation to a fruit-fly outbreak in Alice Springs. However, I will undertake to obtain the information and provide it to the member during the course of these sittings.

### Teachers in Outstation Schools

Mr McCARTHY to MINISTER for EDUCATION

My question relates to matters raised by the member for Nhulunbuy on Tuesday. I was concerned to hear his claim that teachers in outstation schools are laid off at the end of each school year. Is this indeed the case?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I must admit that I have some difficulty in answering this question, not because I do not have information from my department but because, as usual, it was very difficult to understand what the member for Nhulunbuy was talking about. First, he claimed that teachers in the East Arnhem region were laid off at the end of the school year. He then said that those teachers did not receive any holiday pay. He went on to say that the people referred to are not teachers. He then went on to say that there are often delays at the start of the new year because these teachers - the ones that are not teachers - have to wait until they are reappointed before they can start teaching again. I will try to do my best to sort out the question that I think the member for Nhulunbuy was trying to raise and which has led to the member for Victoria River's question this morning.

First, I would like to make it quite clear that no teacher employed by the Department of Education works on the basis that he or she is laid off at the end of each school year and is then reappointed at the beginning of the next school year. Obviously, that is absolute rubbish. Teachers who are servicing outstation schools automatically begin their rounds at the start of each school year and certainly there is no delay while they are re-appointed. I think the member for Nhulunbuy may be referring to the department's assistant teachers on outstation communities. Even if that is the case, he still has not got it right.

Assistant teachers are employed on a limited-tenure basis, usually for the period of the school year, but it is not true to say they do not receive holiday pay. They receive a pro rata payment which is based on the percentage of the year that they have worked. That means that an assistant teacher who works a full year receives full holiday pay. If he works half the year, he receives half holiday pay. I hope that the honourable member for Nhulunbuy can understand that concept.

Mr Speaker, limited-tenure teachers are automatically considered for re-employment at the start of each school year. That means they are not expected to reapply. They are reappointed automatically provided their prior service has been satisfactory and that their school is still entitled to the position and, of course, if they are available for reappointment. This system enables assistant teachers on outstations to begin teaching automatically at the start of each school year. Delays in reappointment and, therefore, salary payment can occur if the principal or the regional officer cannot find out if the assistant teacher is available for reappointment or if recommencement papers have not yet been submitted. If there are any initial difficulties along those lines, the department back pays those people accordingly.

The department has developed a process, which will be introduced next year, which will simplify this process even further. This process will enable the department to notify assistant teachers before the end of the school year that they will be required for the following year. I must point out that there are many problems associated with taking education to outstations.

Obviously, the problems range from teachers not being able to travel because of flooding, to students not turning up at the right time. However, the claims made by the member for Nhulunbuy seem to be extremely confused and grossly exaggerated. I would like to suggest that, if the member has any specific cases that he is worried about, he should provide me with details of those cases immediately and I will have them investigated. I would also like to suggest that, before the honourable member thinks about running off at the mouth again, he should check his facts more carefully rather than cause concern about circumstances which in fact have not occurred.

#### Prison Facilities

Mr LANHUPUY to MINISTER for HEALTH and COMMUNITY SERVICES

Will he give an undertaking that he will support his department's proposal, which was put to the prison officers on 5 May, for its building of a remand facility in Darwin, a new prison in Katherine, a new industrial complex in Darwin, a prison reserve and an extension to the women's section at Darwin Prison? When can we expect the building to commence?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, perhaps I ought to put the honourable member in contact with the parents of a number of disabled people who are looking to me to spend some money to build respite care facilities. Perhaps I can direct him to the aged or to the people who require child care. I have not yet received the submission from the prison officers or the department, as the member put it, but I would imagine that it has come from the Prison Officers Association. I certainly hope it has. I can tell this Assembly that it is a financial impossibility for this government to build any institution whatsoever in the forthcoming 12 months as a priority within my department. I think it is time that I took some of the Assembly's time to outline what the penal system is all about for the education of members opposite.

Let me first give a profile of our prisoner population. 95% of people in the penal system are male and 40% have not previously been in prison. 33% are married and 54% are single and I do not know what the rest are. 70% are Aboriginal and 45% have primary or lower education. The usual offence categories are driving or property offences. 74% were unemployed at the time the offence was committed. 15% are under 19 years of age and 52% are over 25. 62% were born in the Northern Territory and 60% of offences were alcohol related. 34% of sentences are for fines or estreatment of bail and average 7 days each. 64% of convicted prisoners serve less than 3 months evenly spread between urban and rural areas.

The most recent figures, obtained in the last week of April, indicate that there were then 477 prisoners held in Territory institutions as follows: Darwin Prison, with a design capacity of 150, was holding 242; Gunn Point Prison Farm, with a design capacity of 60, was holding 60; and Alice Springs Prison, with a design capacity of 110, was holding 130. The Northern Territory has the highest imprisonment rate in Australia and it is 4 times higher than the Australian national imprisonment rate. The April figures show that 926 adult offenders in the community have been placed in conditional liberty programs by the courts. Of these, 538 offenders were on probation, 131 offenders had been released from prison on parole and 246 offenders were working on the community service order program. At that date, 43 juveniles were in custody in the Northern Territory and, on the same date, there were 203 juvenile offenders who had been placed on conditional liberty orders by

the court. These included 143 on probation and 59 on community service orders.

Let me remind honourable members that the factor of 70% Aboriginal runs right through the juvenile area as well. It costs approximately \$90 per day to maintain a prisoner in custody. It costs approximately \$10 per day to maintain an offender in the community on some form of conditional liberty. The cost to build a new maximum security institution, and I hope the honourable member keeps this figure in mind, is around \$150 000 per cell. I think the figures that the honourable member just ran past this Assembly as being from the submission that is coming from the POA, or the department, as he said, would be in the vicinity of 400 to 450 cells. I would like the honourable member to do his own arithmetic on how much that would cost and what the opposition is expecting us to do in the next 12 months. Those are capital costs alone. When the figures of \$90 per day to institutionalise offenders as against \$10 per day to have them on some conditional liberty are considered, it is clear why it is common sense for this government to pursue the latter course rather than the former.

Since March 1985, prisoner numbers have increased by 45% to 480 on 18 April 1987. The current figure is some 488. This is a system peak and we are nearly 30% overloaded. Rated capacity for adult institutions is 370. There has been an increase of 71% of offenders on probation or adult conditional liberty, with numbers rising from 313 in March 1985 to 538 in March 1987. Those systems have been successful in keeping 225 offenders out of institutions. In the parolee area, there has been an increase of 72%, with numbers rising from 76 in March 1985 to 131 in March 1987. Once again, this represents a significant increase in the number of people out of institutions. There has been an increase in community service orders with numbers rising from 14 in March 1985 to 246 in March 1987 following the introduction of the legislation in this Assembly late last year. One in every 90 people in the Northern Territory is currently under some form of correctional program.

The correctional policy is: to restructure the prison system; to provide secure custody, and protection for the public; to make prisoners productive to earn revenue to offset costs; to teach prisoners work skills and ethics and to use prison labour to rehabilitate land and pastoral holdings which can be made viable as commercial enterprises; to provide conditional liberty programs acceptable to the courts and the community; and to divert as many juvenile and adult offenders as possible from the costly imprisonment custody option; to aggressively implement juvenile programs for offenders which will cause behaviour modification and subsequent diversion from graduation to adult criminal behaviour. The wilderness camp is an example of the last mentioned aim.

I will give some examples of what we are doing in the fine default diversionary program. During 1985-86, 34.6% of all persons received into Northern Territory institutions were admitted as a result of fine default. The figure was somewhat similar for the previous financial year. On 19 January 1987, the government introduced a fine default option program to divert significant numbers of these people from costly and apparently unnecessary imprisonment. Since that time, 105 persons have been diverted from fine default imprisonment to the community service order program, 266 persons have been able to work off their fine at a rate of \$100 per day for every 8 hours of community service order work performed. This program offers the courts the option of requiring offenders to perform useful, unpaid work for the community during their free time as an option to imprisonment. Currently, 89 offenders are working under the community service order program

in addition to the 157 involved in the fine default diversionary program. Notwithstanding these initiatives, prison numbers have risen from 329 in March 1985 to 480 as at midnight on 18 April 1987. As I stated earlier, they rose to some 492 late last week.

The Beatrice Hill rehabilitation project was brought on line during the last 12 months. This minimum security institution is able to take up to 50 minimum security prisoners, who are fully employed rehabilitating a rundown cattle venture which will eventually be given back to the government.

The 1986-87 appropriation for the Northern Territory correctional services is \$17.1m which is a 58% increase on the \$10.8m provided 2 years previously in 1984-85.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! We have been fairly lenient to the honourable minister on this particular question because it is of interest. But, he was asked a very specific question concerning the government's building programs in the prisons area. He has answered it comprehensively and we do have a very limited time for questions.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I think this question is the second or third that I have been asked on correctional services by the honourable member. He asked whether I would be accepting a submission put to me by the department, as he said - and I believe that would be from the Prison Officers Association and possibly the Senior Prison Officers Association. I certainly will be receiving it and I am trying to tell him how I will respond to it.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The honourable minister may reply in any manner that he sees fit, provided it is relevant to the question. However, I would ask ministers and members to keep both questions and answers as brief as possible.

Mr DALE: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The simple explanation for this increase in costs is that correctional services take offenders into the criminal justice system by the order of the court. There is no function discretion.

The following programs have or are being implemented in effect to reduce the number of juvenile offenders either coming into contact with the criminal justice system or being placed in costly custody.

Pre-trial diversion: this concept will enable juvenile offenders, charged with relatively minor offences for the first or perhaps second time, to be diverted from the court system provided they enter into an agreement which will address the problem which led to the juvenile's conflict with the law and will ensure the juvenile avoids further conflict with the law.

Community care program: this program will provide accommodation in a family environment for juvenile offenders who have no proper home environment or parental control. The concept provides for a juvenile to be placed with a specially-selected, trained family rather than the juvenile being remanded in custody whilst his or her case is being considered by the Juvenile Court. Currently, it costs in excess of \$200 per day to remand a juvenile in custody in a detention centre. The payment to a care-giver family is significantly less at \$20 per day.

Wilderness camp work: this concept provides a realistic, rigid custodial treatment program for juvenile offenders. The community, particularly tourists, are benefiting from the work projects carried out by the juveniles placed on this program. While allowing for the protection of the community, this program provides punishment and self-help for juvenile offenders through their participation in every aspect of day-to-day activities at the camp - its initial construction, meal preparation, camp industries and undertaking useful community work. Young offenders placed on this program learn on-the-job skills and life survival skills with the aim of improving their self-esteem, pride, their spirit and team spirit as well. Following the success of the first wilderness camp, which operated for 8 weeks on a trial basis during 1986, the government has now given approval for the camp to become a permanent element in offender treatment programs for juveniles. A major emphasis of the wilderness work camp program is placed on education, particularly remedial education for the young offenders going through the program. Close consultation with the Department of Education is being maintained in this regard.

The home detention program: this concept is available for juvenile and adult offenders, particularly those ...

Mr COLLINS: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I refer to standing order 113. I believe that the question was answered very early in the minister's reply. He said that there would be no money available for any major project. It was a very clear answer. We are listening to a prepared answer and the time available for questions is being wasted.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I wish to speak to the point of order. The question did not mention money. It mentioned the prospect of my receiving a submission from the department.

Mr Ede: It referred to building.

Mr DALE: I have been asked several questions in this Assembly and outside of this Assembly on what I am doing about various aspects of the correctional services system. I am trying to give the answer to those various questions, including the matter that has been raised by the honourable member. If the honourable member did not want me to answer the question, he should not have asked it.

Mr SPEAKER: I would remind the honourable minister and the honourable member of my previous ruling, and again request that answers be kept as brief as is humanly possible.

Mr DALE: The home detention program: this concept is available for juvenile and adult offenders, particularly those who have been convicted ...

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! Obviously, the honourable minister is not taking any notice at all of your ruling. You ruled, quite specifically, that he should provide as brief an answer as was humanly possible. For the third time, the minister has resumed at the place in his prepared script where he was interrupted and has simply continued to read.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I most certainly wish to speak to the point of order. I am offended by the Leader of the Opposition saying that I am not abiding by your ruling. I am terribly sorry if the Leader of the Opposition believes that an answer to a question of this nature can be given in 1 minute. That is not my understanding of the seriousness of this matter. We have a

crisis situation in our prisons and I believe the matter ought to be addressed. I am addressing it and I am trying to tell the Assembly how I am addressing it. If the Leader of the Opposition is not interested, he should direct his members not to ask such questions.

Mr Leo: You can make a ministerial statement.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, the opposition is interested in this matter and we are prepared to extend to the honourable minister any cooperation he needs to have this matter placed before the Assembly today. However, he has been given a fair go in question time. He has been on his feet for 20 minutes and we have 35 minutes left of question time. In the view of any reasonable person, he has been given an appropriate amount of time to answer the question fully.

Mr SPEAKER: Again, I rule that there is no point of order and that the minister has the right to answer the question in the way that he sees fit. However, I would remind the minister again that answers should be as brief as possible.

Mr DALE: Mr Speaker, I thank you very much. In the spirit of giving the opposition members every chance to make some of the feeble points that I believe they have been wasting the time of this Assembly on during the past 5 sitting days, I will cut my answer short. I want to indicate to the honourable members opposite that I have another 8 pages of comprehensive notes containing the explanation of what we are doing to address these problems. I will make those available to the honourable member and I will make a briefing available, at a time to suit him, on precisely what we are doing in relation to correctional services.

I think it is vitally important that not only the honourable members opposite, but the people of the Northern Territory, understand that correctional services do not advertise the wonderful facilities that are available for inmates. We do not commit offences on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory to build up our numbers. We do not go to the courts to be convicted and sentenced to various institutions. The Department of Correctional Services has no choice. It has to accept those people who are sentenced by the courts.

As a member of a responsible government, and a responsible minister, I have to find ways whereby we can accept those offenders into whatever facility we see as being the most viable as far as their security is concerned. We have people in institutions who need to be in institutions. Quite frankly, I do not believe the public at large would like some of the people we have in institutions to be roaming the streets. However, the dollars that would need to be spent on the proposition put by the honourable member both on television and in this Assembly, that we should simply build more institutions, make the idea almost irrational. Suffice it to say that this government is addressing all possible angles to alleviate what I confess is a crisis situation in the penal system of the Northern Territory. I say again that 70% of adults and juveniles in prison are Aborigines and I say again that the communities must play a role in managing not only people who are in the penal system but people who are likely, because of their actions, to become involved in the system. Therefore, I call upon the members of the opposition, who are representatives of the majority of the Aboriginal population in the Northern Territory, to get off their backsides. They should work with the leaders in their communities, who are only too eager to cooperate with the department in preventing their people from being placed in the penal system.

Proposed Changes to Aboriginal Land Rights Act

Mr SETTER to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Following his meetings yesterday with the federal Minister for Resources and Energy, can he outline the ramifications of the proposed changes to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and, in particular, the effect they are likely to have on the Northern Territory mining industry?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I shall try to be brief in answering the question, but I would like to point out to honourable members that the proposed amendments should be treated with extreme caution. I will probably be condemned by the opposition for suggesting that such caution should be exercised and perhaps even by the media and certain segments of the community, but I say it with very good reason. It worries me when people like Gayler, Blanchard and Hand, the lunatic left of the ALP, arrive up here from down south and say it has been a magnificent achievement at Lake Bennett.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The minister will not refer to members of other parliaments in derogatory terms and I ask him to withdraw that remark.

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, I unreservedly withdraw that remark.

These people have public views which are known to us. They are southern experts who trespass from time to time in and out of the Northern Territory telling us what to do and how to do it. I become very cautious when I read newspaper reports like the one I read the day before yesterday. On 5 May, the NT News had a headline 'No Compromise Over Veto Power' to an article written by Mr Dave Nason. It indicated that the land councils would not compromise over veto. When I hear that 200 Aboriginal people unanimously supported the amendments and that Mr Pat Dodson and Mr Yunupingu are saying that it has been a magnificent day and a wonderful day, I become concerned.

When I heard that the mining industry supports these amendments, I rang the Australian Mining Industry Council. I was told that it had not seen a copy of the draft bill or any information, but it had been told yesterday that such action would take place in Darwin. The Chief Minister responsible for the government of the Northern Territory did not receive a copy of the draft bill and was not even told that the meeting would be held.

The rest of the community should become concerned. The headline in yesterday's NT News was 'Mining Veto To Go Says Evans'. I think that the correspondent, in particular Mr Dave Nason, has been conned because something is not just right when you consider the people involved. The Chief Minister and I were given a verbal briefing yesterday by the federal Minister for Resources and Energy. I intend to wait. From what I hear, it is his first step on a long march. I am extremely concerned that amendments may now be rushed through the federal parliament without the Northern Territory government seeing a copy of the draft bill.

One of the things that concerns me is the fact that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs will have the power to decide now whether mining goes ahead or not after the land councils have negotiated with the traditional owners. Let us have a look at the current situation. Since last August, there has been an agreement on Mr Holding's desk which simply needs his signature. That has been agreed to by the traditional owners, it has been approved by the

Northern Land Council and it has remained on the desk of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs since last August. We have been waiting 9 months.

Mr Ede: How many are awaiting your consent? 41.

Mr COULTER: He talks about 41 being on my desk. This could develop into a war of words in terms of the number of applications.

The scenario is starting to build up now and the press clippings will make the picture very clear to Northern Territorians. In The Australian of 30 April, there was an excellent article by Mr Yunupingu about Aborigines and mining. The trouble was that it contained incorrect information. The member for Stuart talks about how many applications are on my desk awaiting approval. Let us have a look at some of the ones that are on NLC desks, remembering that it claims to have processed 13. We have already pointed out to the member for Stuart that the NLC has, in fact, processed 1 application.

Mr Ede: It is 17 now.

Mr COULTER: He says it is 17 now. He really must do his arithmetic. Let me explain to him, as I did in yesterday's question time that the 4 mines producing 90% of the \$1000m that is being produced on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory were all approved before the Aboriginal Land Rights Act came into force in 1976. 12 of the 13 applications were on land under claim and had nothing to do with the Land Rights Act at that stage. These related to places such as Nicholson River. The figures are wrong.

The claim was made that there are 11 exploration licence areas over which the traditional owners have sought, but are still awaiting, proposals from the mining companies. The fact is that the Department of Mines and Energy does not have details of that claim but, even if the NLC's own figures are correct, its performance is woeful. Of 200 applications, it says that 97 are being proceeded with at this stage. This leaves a balance of 103 applications which, by implication, are being processed. Nevertheless, the NLC admits that it is negotiating only 14.

Paragraph 11 of Mr Yunupingu's statement in The Australian refers to 44 cases where the NLC is either negotiating, has entered agreements or is waiting for proposals. The quoted figures simply do not add up. I intend to make those figures available today so that honourable members can have an opportunity to do some basic arithmetic. I will give a hand to the Leader of the Opposition and to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition because I know that they are not very good at it.

Mr Ede: Have you heard of the traditional owner identification program?

Mr COULTER: The point I am making is that, as Territorians, we should take this very cautiously, and I will point out another reason for that.

Mr Ede: How do you negotiate if you don't know who the traditional owners are?

Mr COULTER: One reason for this amendment package was the inability for Aboriginal people to purchase pastoral leases and then convert them to Aboriginal land under the Land Rights Act.

Mr Ede: First tell us about all 41 on your desk.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have been fairly tolerant to date with the member for Stuart, but his interjections will cease.

Mr COULTER: I ask honourable members if they remember McLaren Creek, which was bought as a pastoral lease and immediately converted to Aboriginal title under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. It is locked up and cannot be touched now. The same occurred with Eva Valley Station. That amendment is being discussed now which means that the other 50% of the Northern Territory that is available for miners to get on to pastoral leases etc may no longer be available. I may be condemned by the opposition which means that I am on the right track. I say that honourable members should treat this very cautiously. It is like the wooden horse. Let us wait and see what comes out of its belly.

#### New Berry Springs School

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Can he assure me that, in the building of the new Berry Springs school, the wishes and the interests of the people of the rural area regarding the education of their children have been and will be taken into consideration?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable member for her question. I see that some children from the Berry Springs school are in the gallery today. I take this opportunity to assure the honourable member that the basis for building the school is to provide first-class educational opportunities to students in the Berry Springs area. That role will be carried out with maximum consultation with the community at all times. Consultation is something that our government is noted for, especially in relation to education. I can assure the honourable member that at all times we will be considering the well-being of the students in the Berry Springs area.

#### PubTAB Agencies

Mr LEO to TREASURER

How many PubTAB agencies have been opened since the passage of legislation allowing the introduction of PubTAB, and is it still the government's policy not to allow PubTAB outlets to open in areas already serviced by TAB sub-agencies, as was stated when the legislation allowing PubTAB was passed?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Nhulunbuy for his question. I would like to have a prepared briefing to give him exact details on that. I am prepared to make available to the honourable member the full details of the proposals for PubTAB. At the moment, there are many requests for PubTAB. There are 2 agencies and they are working extremely well. One is in the electorate of Palmerston and the other at Jabiru. I believe there is also provision for an agency at the Stuart Tavern in Alice Springs and I understand that is being proceeded with at the moment.

It is the government's policy not to approve PubTAB agencies where they would be in competition with existing agencies. This is of particular concern to a number of people. It is a magnificent facility and I can assure honourable members that it is working extremely well in the areas where it has been implemented. At the moment, the priority is to have it implemented in

areas where there is no agency. That is why Palmerston and Jabiru were considered first. Negotiations are continuing whereby, if an agent wants to operate out of an hotel, that application may proceed. The problem is that the number of inquiries far outweighs the amount of equipment that we have available to enable us to enter into agreements to provide the facility. Because of the financial constraints that are upon us and the limited amount of machinery that is available to us through which to introduce PubTAB across the board, agencies will be established on a fairly selective basis for some time to come.

I will be happy to provide a more exact briefing for the member for Nhulunby because I know of his interest in this matter. I will provide him with full details on that during the course of these sittings.

#### Daly River Road

Mr McCARTHY to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

The government, through the Department of Transport and Works, has promised the people of Daly River for some time that the Daly River Road would be fully sealed. Due to financial constraints, the work has been delayed for several years. Can he assure me that he will do his utmost to ensure that faith is kept with the people of Daly River and beyond by completing the sealing of this road during the 1987-88 financial year as promised?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I can assure the member for Victoria River that the Northern Territory government's commitment to road development throughout the Northern Territory will remain as high as ever. That commitment has been somewhat constrained of late as a result of a number of cutbacks, particularly in federal funding. During the Address-in-Reply debate, I mentioned the effects of the implementation of the Cameron Report and, more pertinently, the fears that I have that the Cameron Report resolutions may be carried forward into future funding. At present, the resolutions will be directed at 10% of the next 3 years' ALT program but I fear that they may be directed across the board.

The Victoria Highway comes under the national highway network and is regarded as being of fairly low priority. It is a responsibility of the federal government and is subject to federal funding. The traffic across that area has been fairly low. Despite that, a few years ago, the Northern Territory government was able to persuade the federal government to give some priority to construction of the first 15 km west of Katherine. The cost of the further extensions towards the King River, which are expected to begin in June, will be some \$5.5m.

In addition, members will be aware of the substantial commitment that we have given to ongoing maintenance to keep the road as trafficable as possible. Considerable work has been done on the shoulders of the Victoria Highway. The total cost involved in upgrading the Victoria Highway to the border would be some \$150m. Naturally enough, that work will have to be programmed over quite a few years.

The Daly River Road involves about 80 km of road of which half remains unsealed. The Northern Territory Department of Transport and Works has included in the draft 1987-88 capital works program some \$2.5m to continue works in that area. That would cover another 12 km of road. Naturally

enough, the inclusion of those works will be subject to the constraints of the budget.

The federal minister, Mr Morris, announced recently that the Cameron Report would form the basis of future funding. In the next 3 years, it will involve at least a \$0.5m cut in funding for local roads and urban roads in particular. The federal mini-budget next week may involve some more bad news, particularly for projects related to the more remote and undeveloped areas of Australia. The full impact of the Cameron Report is something that ought to be dealt with as a separate matter. The tales reflect the federal government's attitude towards providing facilities and infrastructure for people in remote areas. Honourable members opposite, who have electorates in the scrub, will be finding that the pressure will really be on to meet their needs.

In summary, the member for Victoria River can be assured that I will do my utmost to ensure the continued development of roads throughout the Northern Territory.

#### Alice Springs Gas Pipeline

Mr POOLE to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Can he report on the conclusion of the investigation into safety of the Alice Springs gas pipeline?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am in a position to advise honourable members of the safety of the Alice Springs gas pipeline. Honourable members will remember that it has been the subject of considerable debate in this Assembly. We have had people suggesting that the sky will fall in etc. I presented to honourable members recently the report of Mr Alder who was brought up from the Gas and Fuel Corporation to inspect the line and determine its safety. Since then, we have run the intelligent pig down the line. Honourable members will remember the definition of an 'intelligent pig'. They will also be aware of a pig that is not intelligent, the dummy pig. In fact, both pigs have been along the pipeline and, in some sections of the pipe, they showed 5 defects which needed further investigation. The pipe has been excavated in specific areas and honourable members will be pleased to hear that the defects that were located during that exercise were external. They were external marks on the pipe and these small problems will be rectified quite easily.

I will explain for the Leader of the Opposition just how an intelligent pig works so that he will be able to recognise one the next time he sees one. The pig actually has the capability of measuring the wall thickness of the pipe. It can measure very small indentations, external bruises or corrosion which may be occurring inside the pipe. Next time he sees one, he will be able to recognise it. I guess he comes across them from time to time.

I have written to the member for Stuart giving him a full briefing and I notice that he has been fairly silent during these sittings. I would say that those people of Alice Springs who bought bomb shelters as a result of his telling everybody that the sky would fall in, can now emerge from them. The small number of defects that need repair will be attended to. I can assure the people of Alice Springs of the safety of the line, having had these exhaustive tests carried out. The survey contractor has been requested to re-evaluate the results in light of the information that is now available to him.

School Leavers in NTPS

Mr SMITH to CHIEF MINISTER

Mr Speaker, earlier this week, I indicated that there was a public service document that revealed that there were 18 school leavers employed in the public service as at 31 March. Subsequently, the Chief Minister informed us that 246 had been employed in the period between 31 December and 31 March. How many of those 246 are still employed and how many of the 246 are employed in permanent positions in the public service?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I must humbly apologise but I do not keep in my mind the details of the employment history of all of the 15 000 people who work in the Northern Territory Public Service. I ask that the question be placed on notice and I will obtain an answer for the honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Proposals for Dam in Batchelor Area

Mr McCARTHY to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Mr Speaker, land transactions and proposed developments in the Batchelor to Adelaide River area and the various proposals for new dams have caused considerable concern to persons who have settled on small holdings in the region. In some cases, people have spent large sums of money on development of land which would be flooded if proposed dams were constructed. Can he inform me and affected landholders of the government's intention with regard to future water supplies for Darwin and whether any of the options affect the Batchelor Adelaide River area and, if so, when dam developments will take place?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I acknowledge the interest of the member for Victoria River because I understand that 1 of the sites that was considered for the development of a dam was near Batchelor. The other option is to develop what is known as the McMinns Lagoon bore field. Water supply is quite vital to our survival and, in Darwin, we have 2 options. One is to use the underground water that is available to us and the other is to dam water. Unfortunately, we do not have any mountains that would enable us to avoid the very expensive cost of having to pump water. Yesterday, the member for Koolpinyah mentioned some of the problems being experienced in the Darwin River Dam area as a result of that. No doubt, she would be interested in the McMinns Lagoon bore field because that is in her electorate as well.

There are a number of options available to the government and we will be examining those in the near future. I will make available to the member for Victoria River full details of those options. Indeed, I will make them available to the member for Koolpinyah too, just to show there are no hard feelings.

Uluru Board of Management

Mr BELL to CHIEF MINISTER

Whom does the Northern Territory government intend nominating to the Uluru Board of Management?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to advise the Assembly. If my memory serves me correctly, we have already sent our nomination to the federal minister, Mr Cohen. The Minister for Lands and Housing and Minister for Conservation, Mr Hanrahan, will be the nominee. The honourable minister was one of the nominees that we forwarded to the federal minister last year. Immediately before Christmas, he finally responded to us and indicated that we could nominate only 1 person. He would not allow the Northern Territory to have equal representation with the federal government. We nominated Mr Hanrahan and that has been confirmed. The honourable minister holds the relevant portfolios of conservation and tourism.

Review of Domestic Air Fares

Mr FIRMIN to MINISTER for TRANSPORT and WORKS

What was the outcome of the recent review into domestic air fares and what effect will this review have on Territory travellers?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, a couple of days ago, I received a copy of a press release issued by the so-called Independent Air Fares Committee on their triennial cost allocation review. The heading of that news release was: 'Better News for Shorter Distance Air Travellers'. Therefore, air travellers from the Northern Territory, Western Australia and other more remote areas will pay increased air fares. The purpose of the triennial review is to set the formula for passenger costs for the ensuing period. That is broken into 2 components: flag fall and mileage components. It is quite obvious from the summary of the news release that the flag fall component will be reduced and offset by increases in the mileage component.

Examples given by the IAFC included 1 for Darwin. Darwin to Sydney passengers will pay an increase of 1.2%. The Sydney to Canberra route has a cut of 5.6% for those federal politicians who will be travelling between Sydney and Canberra and Canberra and Melbourne. One would have to suggest that it might be more in the national interest that Canberra be isolated altogether. That might be the way to pay for some reduction in air fares for people in the more remote areas. We probably ought to consider building a moat around Canberra and cutting off the telephones. That would be a better approach than giving them cheaper air fares to trot backwards and forwards at the taxpayer's expense. I suppose it is fairly cynical of me to suggest that relatively lower air fares to the golden triangle in election years could only be an absolute coincidence.

While this increase is only 1.2%, it means that, as future air fare increases are implemented, as they inevitably will over the next 3 years, Territorians will be paying a greater share of those increases. Not only that, they will be paying for the reductions and relative decreases in other areas, particularly the Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide triangle. We all know

that internal air fares are a prohibitive factor in the proper development of tourism in the Northern Territory. We ought all to be concerned that we are witnessing another example of a Canberra-influenced, derogatory, retrograde step.

Mr Bell: Do you mean it is bad, Fred?

Mr FINCH: It is bad. It is bad for Territorians, although it is probably good for Canberra bureaucrats and politicians. It is another example of how people in remote areas, who are working towards the increased productivity of the nation, are trodden on again. I can only suggest that, the sooner we correct the imbalance of power in the nation which leads to this sort of determination, the better it will be for all of us.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
CAT Scan for Alice Springs Hospital

Mr DALE (Health and Community Services): Mr Speaker, earlier in these sittings, the member for Sadadeen asked me a question about a CAT scanner being made available to Alice Springs Hospital. I can now advise him that negotiations have been in progress for some time with a private doctor. I am extremely hopeful, whilst I am not committed to the fact, that a CAT scanner will be available in the Alice Springs Hospital in about 10 weeks time.

ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Fruit-fly in Alice Springs

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I have an answer to a question asked by the honourable member for Sadadeen in relation to fruit-fly in Alice Springs. Since 1980, a regular fruit-fly monitoring program has been maintained in Alice Springs. In December 1985, an outbreak of Territory fruit-fly occurred in the east side area of Alice Springs. Following this outbreak, the monitoring program was upgraded and, on entomological advice, it was decided not to conduct any eradication and control program until the effect of the 1986 winter was assessed. This was done in October 1986. Given an estimated cost of \$250 000 for eradication of the pest, and the absence of any commercial horticulture in Alice Springs township, it was decided not to carry out a government-sponsored eradication and control program. Instead, the public were advised by the press of the measures which could be undertaken to control the pests in individual fruit trees. Monitoring of fruit-fly in the Ti Tree-Pine Hill area was intensified at this stage and no fruit-fly have been identified in that area. Regular certificates of area freedom from fruit-fly are issued for the Ti Tree-Pine Hill area and negotiations are taking place to ensure access to markets in South Australia.

Further assessment of fruit-fly spread in Alice Springs will be made throughout the year and it is expected that a severe winter may eliminate the pest.

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