

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fifth Assembly
First Session

PARLIAMENTARY RECORD

Tuesday 28 July 1987

Part I - Debates
Part II - Questions
Part III - Minutes

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

HEALTH SERVICES
AND COMMUNITY CARE

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES
AND COMMUNITY CARE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Fifth Assembly
First Session**

Speaker	Roger William Stanley Vale
Chief Minister	Stephen Paul Hatton
Opposition Leader	Terence Edward Smith
Deputy Chief Minister	Raymond Allan Hanrahan
Minister for Lands and Housing	
Minister for Conservation	
Minister for Tourism	
Treasurer and Minister for Local Government	Barry Francis Coulter
Minister for Mines and Energy	
Minister for Industries and Development	Marshall Bruce Perron
Attorney-General	Daryl William Manzie
Minister for Education	
Minister for Health and Community Services	Donald Francis Dale
Minister for Labour and Administrative Services	Terence Robert McCarthy
Minister for Transport and Works	Frederick Arthur Finch

Price, including postage, \$7.50 per calendar year. Subscriptions, made payable to the Collector of Territory Moneys, should be sent to the Editor, Hansard, G.P.O. Box 3721, Darwin, N.T. 5794.

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

1977-1978

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Arafura	Stanley Gabriel Tipiloura
Araluen	Eric Houquet Poole
Arnhem	Wesley Wagner Lanhupuy
Barkly	Ian Lindsay Tuxworth
Braitling	Roger William Stanley Vale
Casuarina	Nicholas Manuel Dondas
Fannie Bay	Marshall Bruce Perron
Flynn	Raymond Allan Hanrahan
Jingili	Richard Alfred Setter
Karama	Michael James Palmer
Katherine	Michael Anthony Reed
Koolpinyah	Cecilia Noel Padgham-Punich
Leanyer	Frederick Arthur Finch
Ludmilla	Colin Charles Firmin
MacDonnell	Neil Randal Bell
Millner	Terence Edward Smith
Nhulunbuy	Daniel Murray Leo
Nightcliff	Stephen Paul Hatton
Palmerston	Barry Francis Coulter
Port Darwin	Tom Harris
Sadadeen	Denis Wilfred Collins
Sanderson	Daryl William Manzie
Stuart	Brian Richard Ede
Victoria River	Terence Robert McCarthy
Wanguri	Donald Francis Dale

Chairman of Committees - Mr N.M. Dondas
Deputy Chairmen of Committees - Mr W.W. Lanhupuy
Mr E.H. Poole
Mr M.A. Reed
Mr R.A. Setter

House Committee
Mr Speaker
Mr N.M. Dondas
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy
Mr D.M. Leo
Mr M.A. Reed

Standing Orders Committee
Mr Speaker
Mr N.R. Bell
Mr R.A. Hanrahan
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy
Mr E.R. Poole

Publications Committee
Mr N.R. Bell
Mr E.H. Poole
Mr M.A. Reed
Mr R.A. Setter
Mr S.G. Tipiloura

Privileges Committee
Mr N.R. Bell
Mr N.N. Dondas
Mr C.C. Firmin
Mr M.B. Perron
Mr T.E. Smith

Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee
Mr E.H. Poole
Mr M.A. Reed
Mr R.A. Setter
Mr T.E. Smith
Mr S.G. Tipiloura

Public Accounts Committee
Mr B.R. Ede
Mr D.M. Leo
Mr T. Harris
Mr M.J. Palmer
Mr E.H. Poole

Sessional Committee - Environment

Mr N.R. Bell
Mr N.M. Dondas
Mr E.H. Poole
Mr M.A. Reed
Mr S.G. Tipiloura

Sessional Committee - New Parliament House

Mr Speaker
Mr C.C. Firmin
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy
Mr D.M. Leo
Mr R.A. Setter

Select Committee - Constitutional Development

Mr B.R. Ede
Mr S.P. Hatton
Mr W.W. Lanhupuy
Mr M.J. Palmer
Mr R.A. Setter
Mr T.M. Smith

PART I

DEBATES

DEBATES

Tuesday 28 July 1987

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following letter from Mr Kenneth Scott, CMG, Assistant Private Secretary to Her Majesty the Queen. The letter is headed 'Buckingham Palace':

Dear Mr Speaker,

I am commanded by the Queen to ask you to convey to the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory an expression of Her Majesty's sincere thanks for their kind and loyal message of greetings sent on the occasion of the opening of the First Session of the Fifth Assembly. Her Majesty much appreciated this message.

Yours sincerely,
Kenneth Scott.

PETITION

Educational Services in Nhulunbuy

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 394 citizens of the Northern Territory praying that the Northern Territory government ensure that there are no spending cuts that will affect educational services to the residents of Nhulunbuy. Unfortunately, the petition does not bear the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully showeth their concern that the quality of education and educational services provided to the residents of Nhulunbuy will be severely affected by the Northern Territory government's intended \$6.5m cutbacks to education spending. Your petitioners humbly pray that the Northern Territory government will ensure that there will be no cuts in spending that will affect class sizes, specialist support services for handicapped children, English as a second language for migrant children, allocations of numbers of high school teachers, compulsory fees for pre-school children, school funding and technical and further education. Your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I give notice that on the next day of sitting, I shall move that: (1) this Assembly censure the Chief Minister for (a) misleading this Assembly and the people of the Northern Territory on the extent of the budget cuts that the government needed to make, (b) failing to consider properly the impact of those cuts on the lives of ordinary Territorians, (c) failing to establish proper priorities for achieving those cuts, and (d) the incompetent and careless way he has handled

the crisis confronting the Northern Territory; and (2) that this Assembly call on the Chief Minister to resign.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, the government accepts the motion as a censure. Debate will ensue forthwith and I ask that all questions be placed on the question paper.

MOTION
Censure of Chief Minister

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that: (1) this Assembly censure the Chief Minister for (a) misleading this Assembly and the people of the Northern Territory on the extent of the budget cuts that the government needed to make, (b) failing to consider properly the impact of those cuts on the lives of ordinary Territorians, (c) failing to establish proper priorities for achieving those cuts, and (d) the incompetent and careless way he has handled the crisis confronting the Northern Territory; and (2) that this Assembly call on the Chief Minister to resign.

Mr Speaker, it is appropriate to comment on the agreement that I understand has just been ratified by the public service unions at their mass meeting this morning, and I think that it is welcome. The problem is that it is about 6 weeks too late. That is the essence of what this censure motion is about: the failure of this government to take appropriate action at the appropriate time, in the interests of all people in the Northern Territory, to solve disputes and problems that confront us. No one denies that it has been a difficult time for governments, not only in the Northern Territory, but in the states of Australia as well. Those governments have been able to handle the cuts imposed on them without getting to the stage we have reached where mass meetings are held outside the Legislative Assembly. Some call them riots but I do not call them riots. Those governments have managed to avoid meetings of that sort resulting from the feelings of concern and anger that public servants and others in the community have felt at the cuts that this government has imposed.

In the last 8 weeks, we have seen quite unparalleled scenes in the Northern Territory. We have seen the deliberate misleading of the public over the extent of the cuts that were necessary. Mr Speaker, I will come back to that. There can only be 2 reasons for that: either the government of the Northern Territory set out deliberately to mislead the people of the Northern Territory or it cannot add up. Since the Premiers Conference, we have seen the paralysis of the public service. It has been leaderless, it has been directionless and its morale is at an all time low. We have seen the complete and - as it turns out today as a result of the agreement that has been reached - unnecessary alienation of the public service.

Mr Speaker, if you want a graphic demonstration of that, I refer you to the recent federal election. The Chief Minister said this morning that a significant factor in the result of the Territory election and in the election of Warren Snowdon as our member on the House of Representatives was the public service dispute. I would agree that that is the case. Of course, the quality of the candidate ...

Members interjecting.

Mr SMITH: I am pleased that the members opposite are prepared to ignore the Hawke factor and ignore the Snowdon factor and put the whole blame on the Chief Minister's shoulders. It indicates how long he has to go in the job if

the members opposite are prepared to take that attitude in relation to their Chief Minister and his actions on the public service dispute. Thanks very much. That is the confirmation I was looking for and I am glad I got it so early in this speech.

The other thing that is very interesting in the context of the elections for the House of Representatives and the Senate is that the poor old CLP Senate candidate had to rely on preferences of the Labor Party to get his quota. Poor old Grant Tambling had to rely on the preferences of the Labor Party to get his quota. At the same time, I must say to the poor old Nationals that they must regret that they did not talk to us about the prospect of a deal on the Senate ticket. If they had, Jim Petrich could well have been the second senator for the Northern Territory on our preferences. The election result is an indictment of the Northern Territory government and an indication of the community's concern about its actions.

Another unparalleled feature of the last 8 weeks has been the number of government public servants who have been prepared to provide information on government incompetence and waste. I think that is positive, and I am glad that the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee has picked that up and will provide an avenue for it to happen in the future, because one of the things that we have said consistently throughout this debate, and one of the things that the unions have said consistently throughout this debate, is that there is plenty of room in the public service to eliminate waste, to stop the rorts and to get the public service into a lean and efficient shape. Public servants accept that themselves. The only people who have not been able to accept it and do something about it are the members opposite. They have taken the easy option. They cut services, pre-schools and health clinics. They have tried to cut public servants' terms and conditions of employment.

It is only when things get tough, when the public servants say that it is not on, that the government starts to talk seriously with public servants about the appropriate way to address the problem before us. Another significant thing is that the union movement has been galvanised by this action. It is the greatest shot in the arm that it has had in the last few years. Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the union movement on the way that it has conducted itself in the dispute. It has acted responsibly. It has always had its door open for negotiations with the government. It is a pity that the government did not reciprocate. If the government had adopted a consistent line and if it had known from one day to the other who was handling the negotiations - the Chief Minister, the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services or the Cabinet - this dispute could have been resolved weeks ago.

One of the major problems in this whole exercise has been the lack of command and the lack of control by the Chief Minister who is sometimes in and sometimes out. Only he knows when he is in or when he is out and perhaps even he does not know because other people tell him and he follows along. If you want an example, last week the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services spat the dummy for the second time and negotiations were off. Two days later, negotiations were on again. What had changed? The Chief Minister had the upper hand temporarily once again. 'Temporarily' is the word, Mr Speaker, in the life of the Chief Minister in the Northern Territory.

On this side of the House, we do not want to concentrate unnecessarily on the public service cuts. What we have in the Northern Territory are not only discontented and angry public servants but also an entire community that, in various ways and on different issues, has mobilised against the Northern

Territory government. One cannot explain the vote against the CLP in the Northern Territory in the federal election simply in terms of the dissatisfaction of the public servants. It was much wider than that. It should not be forgotten that the swing to the Labor Party in the Northern Territory for the House of Representatives seat was between 3% and 4% - the greatest swing in Australia.

The tourist industry is up in arms about the clumsy way that the government has handled the bed tax. The opposition supported the concept of the bed tax but, my goodness, the government has made it very difficult for members on this side of the Assembly to continue to support the bed tax by the incredibly inept way that it has gone about implementing it. The government has upset parents of pre-school children, and I am pleased to say that it has backed off that, but it has caused considerable anger and distress in the community among that group. The Chief Minister knows it and I know it because I have been receiving the letters that he has been receiving and there has been an avalanche of them. He has upset low-income people who have been forced into more expensive health care by the closure of a number of clinics. This has made life more difficult for them and has obliged them to consult private doctors or go to the hospitals. The Chief Minister has upset school councils. He is receiving the letters that I am getting from school councils because of the cuts he intends to make in education. What I am saying, Mr Speaker, is that much of it is completely unnecessary.

Another unparalleled occurrence during the last 8 weeks was the statement by a former Chief Minister that, if he had been the candidate for the Northern Territory in the federal election, he would have thumped the present Chief Minister. That would have been an interesting blue, Mr Speaker. I would think that that has never happened anywhere else in the world, that a former a former leader of government was so upset with the inept activities of the existing leader of government that he threatened to thump him publicly.

Mr Speaker, a further unparalleled scene is that we are in the second of our series of 1-day sittings, at \$20 000 a pop. We are here today, in the government's view, for the sole purpose of correcting the mistakes that we made in the last 1-day sitting. That is all we are here for. We are here to correct the mistakes that we made in relation to the bed tax and the cuts to public service conditions. Are we going to come back again in a month's time or in 2 weeks' time for another 1-day sitting if the legislation we pass today does not work? There is a fair chance that that is likely to happen because, once again, legislation has been put together in a hurry. It will be debated in a hurry and it will not receive the proper attention that it deserves from this Assembly.

Lastly, another unparalleled scene that we have witnessed is that that esteemed journalist from the Sunday Territorian, Frank Alcorta, has changed his mind and has expressed at least some lukewarm support for public servants. Mr Speaker, I would put it to you with some respect that, if Frank Alcorta starts publicly expressing support for public servants, this government is in real trouble. There is no doubt that, on that particular issue, this government is in real trouble.

Of course, what all that means is that people spread right throughout the community - whether in the public service, in schools, in health care or ordinary citizens - have lost confidence in the government and the Chief Minister that they elected such a short time ago. The rot started at the Premiers Conference. The Chief Minister and the Treasurer used the Premiers Conference to cover up the financial abyss they dug for themselves last

financial year. At the Premiers Conference, they tried their old trick of putting all the blame on Canberra. But, Mr Speaker, the recent exercise that we have been involved in has been different because Territorians did not buy that excuse. They will not buy that excuse because they know where the wasted money is going: it is going into the Darwin Sheraton Hotel to the tune of \$6m, it is going to the Alice Springs Sheraton at \$14m, into the Yulara project at \$4m, into the Trade Development Zone at \$14m all up so far, and into the Skywest appeals. No one knows how much money the appeals have cost and there are a couple of interesting questions there. One of them is: did the government, as part of settling the Skywest dispute after it was ordered to do so by the full bench, undertake to pay the legal costs of both Air North and Skywest? I would like an answer to that question, and I would like an answer as to how much that cost.

People of the Territory also know about the government's remarkably unsuccessful record before the High Court and we all know that that has cost us well over \$7m a year. People of the Territory know \$1m has gone into Hungerford Refrigeration and, of course, as was revealed in this very useful publication 'Northern Territory Blues', we all know that our good mate, the member for Casuarina, entered into an arrangement with his good mate, the now forgotten CLP candidate for the Northern Territory, to renegotiate the Centrepoint deal even though there was 3½ years to go on the lease. The terms and the conditions of the Centrepoint deal are to be on the new terms and conditions from the date that the deal was signed instead of from the date that the initial lease would have been completed. People in the Northern Territory know about those things and they are not prepared to put up with them any longer. People in the Northern Territory are asking why, if the government can introduce legislation to change the rights of compulsory transferees to the Northern Territory Public Service, it cannot get out of the deals involving the Sheratons and Yulara? If it is good enough for the people of the Northern Territory to suffer and pay their part of these cuts, it is good enough for the big boys to pay their share also. But that is too hard for this government to handle, too hard for it even to think about.

The government also misled the Assembly about the \$101m. It attempted to blame it all on the federal government. We all know that, if the government needs to save \$101m, at least \$40m of that amount is due to its own financial mismanagement. We all know that the last 12 months have told a very sorry tale indeed. Revenue projections were well down, as everybody advised would be the case when the initial projections were indicated in the August budget. Cash reserves have been raided to help balance the budget and those cash reserves have now disappeared. On 30 June this year, the last day of the financial year, \$15m was taken out of the Superannuation Trust Fund and put into the Consolidated Fund, by way of purchase of Housing Commission mortgages. This was done to balance the budget. I have agreed that the Consolidated Fund will be balanced, but it is the manner in which it has been balanced that concerns me. The lesson for this financial year is that you cannot use the same trick twice. The bin is empty. The Chief Minister knew that, even without any Commonwealth cuts at all, there would be a need to cut back expenditure to balance the budget this financial year.

We know that it is true that the \$101m is a flexible amount. Any realistic person who looks at the agreement with the public service announced today knows that, out of that \$20m, at least \$4.9m will not be achieved because there is no way known that this government can go to the Arbitration Commission and have the leave loading removed. That \$4.9m is a component of the \$20m. We know that the agreement with the trade unions is that they will not support that particular recommendation. They will oppose it before the

Arbitration Commission. We know what the Arbitration Commission will say because the runs are on the board. \$4.9m in that agreement with the public service unions is just window-dressing. The reason it is window-dressing is that the Chief Minister knows and his ministers know that we really do not have to save \$101m. That has been a convenient figure plucked out of the air and, in fact, there is considerable room for manoeuvring to reduce that amount.

Thus, \$4.9m on those public service conditions and a sum of money representing the pre-school cuts will no longer be achieved by the government. As the pressure from the public mounts over the next few days and weeks, there will be more concessions. It has now become clear that there is no need to save \$101m because that was a very convenient figure dreamed up by the crowd opposite at the Premiers Conference.

I accept that the government had to make cuts, as did governments in the states. People were prepared to accept cuts. But, as they demonstrated quite clearly by ensuring that Grant Tambling had to obtain Labor Party preferences to obtain his quota, the people also realised that it was the government's decision where those cuts had to be made. The government cannot escape responsibility for making the cuts in the areas that it has determined. What an appalling mess it has made of that! It has protected its friends. It has protected the Sheratons, the Yularas and its new-found friend, Hungerford Refrigeration, but the ordinary person has been hurt or threatened in a number of ways.

Only 4 weeks ago, this government was threatening to cut the salaries of many public servants by 10%. In an extreme case, a public servant on a lower income in the electorate of the member for Sadadeen was looking at a cut in his disposable income of up to 15%. That was only 4 weeks ago. We have come a long way from that, thank goodness, but we are suggesting that we should never have been in that position. The government should not have been so amateurish in its dealings that it could not think through the implications of the decisions that it wanted to make. It was saying that some public servants would lose 15% of their salary.

We have had parents with kids in pre-schools threatened with an extra charge of \$3 per week. We have had a fuel tax imposed, which is a most inefficient way of raising money but the most efficient way of fuelling the inflation cycle in the Northern Territory.

Mr Dale: We have heard it all before.

Mr SMITH: That is right and it is true. Wait until the CPI figures are released. The Territory will have a 10% inflation rate. 0.5% of 1% will be added to the Consumer Price Index in the next 12 months by that very decision. In an area that has the highest cost of living in Australia, this government imposes an additional tax that will increase our inflation rate. The government has forced people into more expensive health care services because it has reduced the community-based services in a number of areas. The Chief Minister and his government must take the blame for a series of decisions which have created the greatest civil unrest in Darwin since the Gilruth march of 1917. Territorians have discovered one more reason for the railway: it would provide a very convenient way to run the Chief Minister out of town.

Mr Speaker, in the time remaining to me, let me concentrate on the farce that the public service dispute turned out to be. It is only 8 weeks since we had the Treasurer consulting with employers but refusing to talk to the

unions. We had the situation where the Trades and Labor Council found out how much the government proposed to cut and how it proposed to go about the cuts on the day that the mini-budget was presented. The government then invited public servants to take the hatchet to themselves. It gave them the choice of taking off an arm or a leg, or perhaps one of each, in order to achieve the \$21.5m cuts. They were threatened with the loss of 1300 jobs by the Chief Minister and with the loss of a more conservative 650 jobs by the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services who obviously can think a bit and add up figures.

That is an interesting little point in itself. The figure of 30 jobs per \$1m became the accepted figure in negotiations but, 8 weeks ago, the Chief Minister said 1300 jobs would be lost if the negotiations were not settled. He not only said it but he put it in full-page advertisements in the NT News. I will read it: 'If we don't save \$21.5m in public service staff costs, we will have to retrench about 1300 public servants almost immediately'. Mr Speaker, simple arithmetic would tell you that, on the basis of 30 public service jobs per \$1m, 1300 jobs comes to about \$43m. That is a sign of the government's confusion and inability to get its act together. It could not do its basic sums.

In passing, I must congratulate the Chief Minister on providing the Labor Party with its most effective advertising in the election campaign. The Chief Minister, single-handedly, made a most significant contribution to our success by consistently running that advertisement. I would like to congratulate him and, if he would like to accept honorary membership of the Labor Party at our conference this weekend, I will be happy to arrange it.

We have a government that has brought itself into disrepute through its handling of these matters. We have a Chief Minister who has shown himself unable to handle the disputes that have occurred. We have a Chief minister who has treated the people of the Northern Territory with contempt. The people have shown that the confidence that they placed in this government in the March 7 election is no longer there. Mothers of pre-schoolers, old-age pensioners and others in this community, all of whom are voters and exercised their votes in the federal election, have shown clearly that they no longer have confidence in the ability of this government to govern the Northern Territory. They have shown clearly that they no longer have confidence in the ability of the Chief Minister to lead and to provide fair and equitable government in the best interests of all Territorians. The Chief Minister can no longer look Territorians in the eye. He has shown himself to be totally lacking in leadership. He has been jostled by his Cabinet colleagues and by lack of support from his Minister for Labour and Administrative Services into a powerless position. He has bungled badly and he must step aside. This is the only way members opposite can restore the confidence of Territorians in the ability of the CLP to govern in the best interests of all Territorians.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I sat here wondering whether the opposition had for once come up with anything substantive that could be considered even remotely worthy of a censure motion. I waited with bated breath to find out whether the Leader of the Opposition could even address his own motion. Except for about a half a dozen words, the motion was totally ignored. As usual, the opposition has chosen to use a censure motion to grandstand and to try to grab some cheap headlines in the newspapers with a load of rubbish and nonsense. It has so devalued the use of censure motions in the House that they are generally ignored by the community and certainly are ignored by most members of this Assembly. The opposition's censure motions have no punch. Members of the opposition rarely raise anything of

substance, nor do they substantiate any of the allegations they choose to make in their headline-grabbing motions. Mr Speaker, allow me to put some evidence before this House. Once again, the opposition has shown its total lack of knowledge of budgetary matters and the processes of government. Once more, it has failed to sheet home the blame for the Territory's financial problems to where it properly belongs.

25 May was a black day indeed for the Northern Territory. On that day at Parliament House in Canberra, during the Premiers Conference, the Prime Minister and the federal Treasurer once again abrogated agreements with the Territory regarding levels of funding in this year's budget. Since Labor came to power in Canberra, we have become used to having agreements abrogated, promises broken and commitments dishonoured. Everyone in the Territory knows of the fate of promises regarding the Darwin Airport, the Alice Springs to Darwin railway line and the development of Kakadu. The list goes on, Mr Speaker. When I attended the Premiers Conference with my colleague the Treasurer, I made it quite clear to all present that the NT government recognised the horrendous economic position that Labor Party policies had led Australia into. I supported the federal government's initiatives to cut government spending and I indicated the preparedness of my government to accept our fair share of the cuts being proposed. However, the extent of the cuts to our budget allocation, by any stretch of even the most vivid imagination, cannot be described as a fair share.

The Treasurer, in his wisdom, had determined that \$1000m should be cut from the general purpose, recurrent and capital funds grants to the states and the Northern Territory, as well as a further reduction of \$1000m of state and Territory borrowing programs. The Commonwealth's own share of the \$4000m cuts was nowhere near as severe as that imposed on the states and the Northern Territory.

Before attending the Premiers Conference, we had anticipated budget cuts. We had planned for a reduction of \$51m and action was being taken to accommodate a reduction of that size. This was a reasonable expectation, given the size of the Territory's budget, its population and our agreements with the Commonwealth. What occurred, however, was totally unfair, inequitable and discriminatory. Where the states' allocations were cut by an average of 7.5%, the cut to the Northern Territory's funding was a massive 10.1% in real terms. This was despite the repeated acceptance by the Commonwealth Grants Commission of the Territory's special needs which reflect our diseconomies of scale, our isolation, our population dispersion, and the special requirements of our Aboriginal population.

Mr Speaker, in actual dollars, we will receive \$43m less in 1987-88 than we did in 1986-87. Add to that the additional funds needed to maintain real funding and the additional funding required because of our relative population growth compared to that of the rest of Australia, plus the legal guarantees in the federal parliament for the states and the Northern Territory to receive 2% real growth in funding, and you will see the level of the chop that the Northern Territory has suffered. It is well over \$100m.

I will detail the specific deductions enumerated by the federal government. \$56.1m came off our general purpose recurrent and capital spending. \$14.4m was taken through a so-called negative special grant, an action which no state has ever suffered. The only time it has ever been done before was when the federal government took \$10m from us last year. It was taken from us because of alleged overfunding by that amount in 1983-84. I say 'alleged' because a reading of the Grants Commission determinations and the

Commonwealth submissions indicates that the methodology used was inappropriate for the Northern Territory and very vague indeed. They discussed 1% of our budget, to the level of \$400 000, and that is a nonsense. Further, it is totally incomprehensible that a federal government should look at funds provided to a state 3 or 4 years ago and argue that a mistake had been made and funds would be reduced in the current year, even though funding is now at the correct level, and that the state would simply have to wear the resulting problems in the community. That, however, was the attitude of the federal government. It did not care at all about the Northern Territory. Was there any criticism of this from the opposition? Not a whimper, Mr Speaker. Not a whimper!

Mr Smith: That is \$70m. Where is the rest?

Mr HATTON: The rest of it happened to be a \$10m reduction in semi-government borrowings and a \$20.9m cut in specific purpose funding. They are specific amounts allocated by the federal government. And, Mr Speaker ...

Mr Smith: You have changed your story. That is not the story you were telling us 6 weeks ago.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, as a matter of interest, the Leader of the Opposition may wish to check Hansard and he will find that I did not speak on the matter in the House in that particular debate.

As I said, there are cuts of \$43m, in actual dollars, this year. To cope with a 10.1% cut, without reducing expenditure, would have meant a 45% increase in revenue-raising. On the other hand, the states will have to increase their revenue effort by only 12.5% to make up the 7.5% in cuts that they received. Mr Speaker, where is the equity in that? Let no one forget that it is the Hawke government that refuses to let us mine our uranium, that refuses to amend the Land Rights Act to allow mining to occur on Aboriginal land, that will not allow us even to build a new airport at Darwin at no cost to Canberra, that has reneged on promises to build a railway and to develop Kakadu, and that denies us revenue-raising opportunities through a number of our mining ventures.

Mr Speaker, let no one forget that it was the Hawke government that introduced the iniquitous fringe benefits tax and the capital gains tax, 2 major imposts that have had a disastrous effect on the Territory's economy. Let no one forget that, in the last 4 years under Labor, inflation is up, interest rates are sky high, rental levels have increased and the country's overseas debt is twice as high as it was under the last federal coalition government. In the last 5 years of hard Labor, inflation has increased by 35%, tax paid by the average wage earner is up by 77%, government spending is up by 53% and taxes and revenues collected by the government have increased by 60%. Never had Australia had a monthly current account deficit of \$1000m until Mr Hawke became Prime Minister. We have now had 12 such \$1000m deficits since Mr Hawke became Prime Minister in 1983.

I find it repugnant that the Prime Minister should single out the Territory for the type of discriminatory treatment that it has been subjected to this year. My message to Territorians is simple: don't shoot the messenger, let the blame lie where it rightly belongs. The Prime Minister and the federal Treasurer are responsible for the savage and unjustified cuts meted out to the Territory. It is my government's task to attempt to accommodate the cuts, as best it can, so that adverse effects on Territory development are minimised.

Mr Speaker, I would like now to turn my attention to the measures the government has taken to deal with the massive cuts that we have endured. I might say that the Leader of the Opposition, having criticised every measure that has been taken to reduce cuts, has never once suggested how he would find the money. It is very easy to say: 'Oh, isn't this terrible, isn't that terrible. You cannot do this because you will hurt this person or that person'. Never once has he stood up in a responsible fashion and said: 'Mr Speaker, we can achieve these savings by doing this or that or by doing something else'. The facts of life are that a government cannot trim its budget to the extent that we have had to trim our budget without causing some hurt in the community. We knew that, and I might say that I went to great pains to advise the Prime Minister and federal Treasurer of what they were doing to the Northern Territory and the consequences of their actions. Mr Speaker, we have not shirked the task. We have not dodged or tried to pretend that we are fair-weather friends or hard-times friends of people whom we have been kicking to death for years. We have stood up and made our case. We have told the community where we are going and how we are going about doing our job.

The Leader of the Opposition made a great play of the federal election campaign and it is true that the actions of the Northern Territory government did have an adverse effect on the election campaign. Nobody will deny that. But the fact also is that at least our government had the honesty to go to the community and tell the people what would be required. We did not try to hide behind some cloak until the election was out of the way and then announce a whole series of draconian measures which would have needed to be more draconian. We were open and honest with the community. Mr Speaker, I did not regard that as a bad trait. We recognised that there would be difficulties in the election as a consequence of that. I am quite sure it passed through the mind of the Prime Minister as he was meting out these discriminatory cuts to the Territory. I would think that our government's credibility would have suffered fundamentally had we not addressed the issue openly recognising the danger it had in an electoral context.

I guess the opposition has some strange views of myself and my colleagues, but allow me to say that we are not so electorally or politically naive that we would assume that we could introduce a series of measures that will cause pain right throughout the community and expect that that would not have an electoral backlash. How anybody could think that we would deliberately go out of our way to hurt wide-ranging sections of the community in the middle of an election campaign without some very good cause defies comprehension. Mind you, it probably does not defy the comprehension of the Leader of the Opposition, but clearly it would defy the comprehension of any normal person.

The fact is that we did it because we needed to move promptly to effect change that was essential for good government and a new foundation on which the Northern Territory could grow. That is a fundamental issue that members opposite have chosen to ignore. They chose to make hay while the sun was shining during the election campaign. Also, I found it fascinating to see people such as the member for Barkly suddenly becoming very cosy friends and protectors of the conditions of the public service, particularly given that that honourable member has a lengthy record of performance in respect of the public service and its conditions. Election campaigns bring out the character of people.

Mr Speaker, the Treasurer will go into much more detail in relation to specific measures that have been adopted. However, I would like to deal briefly with some of those. It will refer to 2 of the revenue-raising

measures that have been introduced, both mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition. These were aimed at raising \$9m as part of the measures to ensure that we achieve a balanced budget. Our objective was to minimise additional tax charges on the community as a result of this horrendous cut that has been imposed on the Northern Territory. In doing that, we introduced 2 new revenue-raising measures. The first was the tax on petrol and on-road diesel to net the Treasury \$7m per annum and the second was a tourism marketing duty which aimed at raising \$2m as the tourist industry's contribution towards marketing its product - the Northern Territory. The funds from the tourism marketing duty are specifically earmarked and will provide the industry with the opportunity to make a direct contribution to ensure there will be a continuing source of funds available to market tourism to the Northern Territory.

That contribution will represent 20% of the tourism marketing costs over this coming financial year. That is what the tourism marketing duty is about: the industry making its contribution towards the marketing of its own product. It is not a tax that will vanish into consolidated revenue. It is not a impost like the departure tax imposed by the federal government that vanishes into the maws of consolidated revenue and 50% somehow springs out to go into marketing with the federal government gobbling the rest up in administrative and other charges. It can be allocated only to direct marketing of the Northern Territory. It provides a platform to ensure that there will be funds available to continue the vital task of marketing the Northern Territory and fighting through a very competitive market to keep the Northern Territory tourism industry growing and the job-creation and prosperity that can flow from that.

The introduction of the fuel tax is quite a different matter. The government was fully aware of the effect this would have on the cost of living in the Territory. However, it is also a fact that the Northern Territory was the only place in Australia where a fuel tax was not payable and the continued non-imposition of such a tax would have had a continuing detrimental effect on future grants to the Northern Territory. On a number of occasions, the Grants Commission has noted the fact that that particular levy was not being imposed. It was recommending reduced levels of funding as a consequence of our not having raised that particular form of taxation. We have fought for many years to avoid having to impose such a tax but, in the current financial climate, it was not possible to avoid the introduction of that tax. We recognise the burden that that imposes. However, allow me to say also, for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, that his own colleague, the federal Treasurer, at the Premiers Conference and on a number of other occasions, has made the specific statement that the Australian people will have to incur a drop in their standard of living.

It is my view, and I think it is supportable, that that is a consequence of gross explosions in Commonwealth expenditure over the last several years. The fact is that Australia is living beyond its means and, with respect to that, I am at one with the federal Treasurer. When we are living beyond our means, we need to wind back our standard of living to be able to live within our means, and it is inevitable, with a federal government on a campaign to reduce people's standard of living, that costs will rise without consequential adjustments to earnings and that services and facilities provided by government will be reduced. That is a clear directive from the federal government. It is a recommendation from EPAC that action be taken by the federal government to reduce those provisions.

During the federal election campaign, I was also grateful to Hon Paul Keating, the Treasurer, who came up here and supported the actions of the Northern Territory government in reducing its expenditure as a result of the cuts. He regarded that as a responsible course of action and he stated publicly that it was a responsible way to go about dealing with the financial situation that we were faced with rather than simply loading more and more taxes on the community.

Mr Speaker, in respect of the other matter that is obviously on everybody's mind and obviously will be debated more fully later today, the Minister Labour and Administrative Services will deal with that in some detail. I refer specifically to the arrangements in relation to public service conditions. It is a fact that about a third of our budget costs relate to the employment of public servants. It was a fact that we would have to reduce that proportion of our budget as well in the process of spreading the cost broadly across the community. All elements of the community, in some way or another, will be affected by what has occurred in the Northern Territory. That is a fact of life which we cannot escape.

The Leader of the Opposition made a great play about some alleged refusal on our part to negotiate with the trade union movement. Allow me to say that very emotional issues are involved in any negotiation, particularly where one is seeking to reduce conditions or wages of people when they affect a work force of some 15 000 members. The larger the organisation, the more emotional the issue becomes. Smaller organisations seem to be able to cope with these situations far more easily than large organisations do. Since 7 July, we have spent some 36 hours on negotiations. Those negotiations occurred on 7, 8, 12, 13, 15, 20 and 27 July. We were working through the process, and I think it is a credit to the government and the trade union movement that we have been prepared to put that effort into resolving what was seen in June to be an insoluble problem. It was not seen simply to be an insoluble problem from the point of view of the government achieving cuts by agreement, but certainly also by the trade union movement.

Members will note that, following the economic statement by the Treasurer, there was a period of a fortnight when the unions were invited to participate in negotiations and consultations with the government about cuts to conditions. The public record shows that, on a number of occasions, the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services sought to bring the unions to the negotiating table. He sought consistently to do that, to the point where there was at least one informal discussion in which both the honourable minister and myself participated to try to encourage the unions to come to the negotiating table. It was not until 48 hours before we were due to appear in the Legislative Assembly that the trade unions produced a document detailing alleged savings of \$21m. I am not saying that they were fabricated figures. I believe the trade unions genuinely believed they had achieved \$21m in savings through their assessments. However, that arrived 48 hours before we were due in the Assembly and at a time when the unions were well aware of the fact that we were in a budget Cabinet lockup for 2 days.

The unions then decided that they wanted to negotiate but they were not prepared, in any way, to consider any conditions of employment, salaries, air fares, loadings on annual leave or any conditions. They wished only to work through their own document. The minister spent 6½ hours on the first night working through that document. He did not get through it. The figures that were assessed by Treasury showed dramatic differences in the costs and there was some dispute about that. On the second night, when the minister again sought to initiate negotiations on conditions, the negotiations broke down.

Following that, of course, on the Assembly's last 1-day sitting, at lunch time, the situation evolved into what the Leader of the Opposition politely calls a mass meeting outside the Chan Building. I think he would be the only person in Australia who would describe it in that way. Even then, he sought to gain some cheap political capital but he did not really succeed even in achieving that. We took the opportunity not to process the bill through all stages at that sitting, but quite clearly stated the government's determination to proceed to achieve the savings. We were prepared to recommence the negotiations and they recommenced on 7 July. They proceeded almost daily from that point forward and I think that shows the wisdom of not taking final, pre-emptive action but rather allowing the processes of negotiation to proceed. It is a fact that our government stated consistently that we needed to make savings of \$21.5m and that, whilst we had proposals for making the savings, we also said consistently that, if there were alternative ways of making those savings, we were prepared to examine those through the process of negotiation. It has taken some 36 hours of negotiation to achieve those savings.

Some decisions will need to be taken unilaterally by our government in respect of air fares for new recruits and there is the necessity to take the 17½% leave loading to arbitration. The Leader of the Opposition clearly has not done much advocacy work. I have heard so many people say that one could never win this or that through negotiation and one could never achieve this or that through arbitration. In 1981, I was told that we would never achieve a freeze of Northern Territory district allowances, but we did. It took 2 years, in that particular case, but nothing is beyond the realms of possibility. I do not believe that the issue of loading on annual leave has been properly tested and examined before the commission. I do not believe the cases have dealt with the issues as they should have and there is a general feeling in the community that it is a bit of a joke. Even the architect of the 17½% loading for day workers, Clyde Cameron, has recanted and now believes it was a mistake to have put it in place. It is a matter which can and should be tested before the commission. However, far be it from me, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, to prejudge the views of the commission.

Mr Speaker, we will achieve our savings. We will achieve our balanced budget and we will do that because this government has always been prepared to negotiate and consult with groups in the community. The trade unions failed to take full advantage of the available fortnight and that certainly heightened emotionalism when legislation was put before the House last month. One can always say that it is pleasing to see the end results. Despite media comment this morning, the savings are historic. We have achieved the savings we required whilst protecting existing contractual conditions of current employees. We are putting in place a mechanism that, over time, will remove the cost burdens of things like air fares and drive-out time. If someone had suggested 6 months ago that these things could be achieved, people would have said it was impossible. These are historic breakthroughs which will gradually normalise conditions in the Northern Territory Public Service in a way that does not assault existing rights. People coming into the Northern Territory Public Service will do so knowing that the conditions of their employment contracts will not include those provisions. The resultant cost savings will benefit the community either through improved services or lower taxes and charges. That is a good thing for the community as a whole and part of our normalisation process as we move through the various stages of our development as a community.

Mr Speaker, I would like to deal with a couple of matters. The Leader of the Opposition referred to my statements about 1300 jobs needing to be cut and

said that was incorrect in view of the 30 jobs per \$1m figure, which would have entailed the loss of only 650 jobs. It so happens that public service redundancy provisions would require each person who was made redundant to be paid 6 months salary. To pay for that, another job would have had to go. Pre-emptive redundancies would have meant 2 jobs for every total annual salary saving that would have been required, and that is how the figure of 1300 jobs was reached. \$43m divided by 2 is \$21.5m and therefore my mathematics cannot have been too far wrong. That is how it works out.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister's remarks before he uttered the last lot of garbage were quite incredible. He stood there talking about how he had eliminated drive-out time, was working on eliminating leave loading and had reduced the amount paid in district allowance. He was taking great pride in those achievements, saying how marvellous it was and what a hero he would be. It is incredible. When his own mates, his friends in the business community, make increased profits, he takes pride in that and says it is good. He is pleased that they have more profits and money but, if the same thing happens in the case of the workers, it is not a cause for pride. In fact, the reverse is the case. He takes pride in reducing workers' terms and conditions. That is exactly what this government is all about. Those are its priorities and I will be demonstrating that today.

What I have to say will at least be better than the boring lecture, the drawn-out litany of economic gibberish, that we have just heard from the Chief Minister. I think the education system for not turning him into a school teacher or a lecturer because any student who had to listen to that long, boring monologue would have drifted off to sleep without taking in even the most basic fundamentals that may have been in there somewhere, although they certainly escaped me.

The Northern Territory government has taken a course of action which will get rid of the best and the brightest in our public service. It will get rid of those who have the ability to find positions elsewhere. These are people who came here from other states, who left their families behind, saying: 'We will give it a go for a few years and we will give it our very best. It is worth it. It is a good economic choice'. The member for Sadadeen would support that; he is very keen about economic choices. People have been willing to make that economic choice. They have come here to assist the Northern Territory in its development in return for a certain set of conditions of service. The government has now told them: 'Sorry, fellows. You came up under those terms and conditions but those are not what you will receive'. That is the fundamental cause of the paralysis in the public service today. In department after department, middle- and upper-level public servants will tell you exactly the same thing: nothing is happening. They will tell you that their divisions are moribund and that the best people are swapping South Australian Gazettes for Western Australian Gazettes in order to keep abreast of where positions are coming up elsewhere. Meanwhile, those who cannot get out are simply trying to work out how they will jump into dead men's boots. That is what is happening in the Northern Territory today and it is a sorry picture.

The Chief Minister said that he should get the kudos for not putting the legislation through all stages at the last sitting. He stated that this showed how it was better not to take pre-emptive action. I believe that it shows how important it is not to rush legislation through. Certainly, I hope that the Chief Minister will take that attitude in relation to the items of legislation which are to be introduced this afternoon. I, for one, cannot countenance measures like the 2.5% levy on the tourist industry being put through as matters of urgency without proper discussion and debate.

The Chief Minister spoke about Australia's huge trade deficit. He said this had occurred during the Hawke Labor government's term and it was therefore the Hawke Labor government's fault. As the member for MacDonnell said to me, the Latin expression is 'post hoc, ergo propter hoc'. It is a classic fallacy in logic: 'after this, therefore because of this'. Even the Chief Minister knows that the \$100 000m annual deficit is not due to government expenditure and government outlays. The total amount of \$100 000m which he and the Treasurer trot out from time to time is only 20% to 30% accounted for by federal government outlays and federal government moneys. The vast majority of it is in fact the result of private enterprise borrowings overseas and the need to raise capital, often to finance takeovers which create no jobs or industries but simply serve to redistribute money. That is the type of fallacy that the Chief Minister perpetrates.

He spoke about how he lost all this money for us and how he went down to Canberra and told everybody that it was all right to take \$51m from the Territory. As I said when the Assembly last sat, it is the most ridiculous, naive and stupid tactic to commence a negotiation of that nature by saying: 'Right, you can take \$51m off us. That amount is okay, but please leave it at that'. It is amazing. I can only surmise that possibly there may be some warmth left in the heart of the federal government because, as I pointed out before, when you adjust the previous year's grant by taking out the capital grants for the Channel Island Power Station and furlough entitlements, the actual cuts are not significantly above the \$51m which the Chief Minister stated that he would accept.

In advancing his simplistic arguments, the Chief Minister has not given one reason why the government refused to look at the other options that were available to it. Why did the government refuse to look at the options? The Sheraton Alice Springs has had a cash injection totalling about \$14m this year, the Sheraton Darwin some \$6m and Yulara some \$4m. Why won't the government sell off the Trade Development Zone on which it has spent some \$14m? It says the Frances Bay marina is profitable and yet it will not talk about selling that off either. It will not sell one off because it is making a loss and it will not sell off another one because it is making a profit.

This government has shown where its priorities lie. It consists of a mob of frustrated small businessmen. They could not succeed at the wharves or the repair shops at the DIT so they decided to enter politics and play with the taxpayers' money. It does not have a very good record to date. There is only one project on which it has even claimed to have made some money: the Frances Bay marina, and it had to close down the prawn industry to be able to get that one off the deck.

It is my belief the Northern Territory as a whole will never get out of the mess that the CLP has put us into until such time as we address the deals that were done over the years, in particular the problem with the Sheratons. We must unravel all those deals and get out of that unholy mess that successive CLP governments have put us into. The government would not consider those options. It started to attack public service conditions and the people of the Northern Territory who needed the services. It did not look in the other direction because there were too many of its mates involved.

As we pointed out at the last Assembly sitting and as my colleague pointed out again this morning - and this is something which has yet to be addressed by the government opposite - there is the deal that was done with Mr Paroulakis. A week or two before the last election, a minister decided

that, even though there was a 5 plus 5 year deal on Centrepoint that still had 3½ years to run, he would renegotiate and make it 10 years plus an option of a further 10 years. The point is that, if that was a good deal, we still had between 7½ and 8½ years left to run on that deal. If it was a bad deal, we could have been out in 2½ to 3½ years.

Is it a good deal or is it a bad deal, Mr Speaker? I have not been given the details. I know the complaints about the lack of hot water and the air-conditioning. I know that one department has moved out and the Department of Mines and Energy has now moved in. The fact is that we are now locked into that deal for some 7 to 8 years whereas we could have got out in some 3 years. That demonstrates how this government is able to do deals for its mates which it is not prepared to do for normal Territorians.

Why doesn't it get out of those other deals? It says that there is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow and that we will all live in luxury and in a tax free society as a result of the Sheraton deals. That argument will not wash with lower-level public servants who are bearing the brunt of inflation that will hurt so much this year because of the changes in the package which the Chief Minister was talking about earlier. Those are the people whose dream of the Territory has turned to ashes. Don't tell those people about the beautiful pot of gold at the end of the rainbow with the Sheratons, the Yularas and the TDZ because they know that they will not last here long enough to enjoy it. Their dream has turned to ashes.

Do members opposite intend using some argument about honouring their contractual obligations? Do they want to talk about how they have to honour the contractual obligations in order to protect their commercial reputation? If that is the argument they intend to use, we come back to the problem that, by their own actions, they have severely tarnished their reputation. We all know the types of problems that people have to look at when they enter into negotiations with government. As a result of the casino deals, people found that Crown risk in respect of a deal with the Northern Territory government is a very real problem indeed.

Members opposite will say that was years ago and that this is the bright new Hatton ministry. This is the government that would be squeaky-clean and show a new direction. I think it is fair to say that the bright new Hatton ministry is now a tired, old, political prostitute. That has been demonstrated by the Skywest fiasco. The government hid behind that court case for months. It ran an outlandish line that any debate here would somehow influence the courts. It said that the 4 judges of the Supreme Court would be influenced if we were to discuss the problem. In fact, the only person who came out looking reasonably well in that deal was the member for Port Darwin who was mentioned by Mr Justice Kearney. He said: 'I should emphasise the Minister for Health in fact appears to have behaved with complete propriety throughout'. The same certainly cannot be said for the Chief Minister nor for the Minister for Health's successor. It can be said for the member for Port Darwin because, to his credit, too honest Tom made his first big mistake. The member for Darwin found to his cost that, while you can close schools and reduce services out bush, while you can hurt the little people, you cannot touch the rich and the powerful. In that case, he hurt the rich and powerful - a company called Henry and Walker.

Even though the whole procedure had been correctly carried out and even though the Chief Minister said on radio the next day that Skywest appeared to have the legal right to the tender, that did not stop him from blasting the Department of Health and the too honest minister for having the temerity not

to realise the political considerations and that there was no way in the world that the money would not go to Air North. The government then tied the whole matter up in a legal tangle. During the entire period of the court case, \$83 000 per month extra was paid out to Air North as compared with what it would have received had it won the contract. That was a gift of \$83 000 a month. On top of that, we had the money being paid out by the government in legal fees. Who has paid the legal fees for Skywest? That is a question that I hope will be answered soon.

What that case demonstrates is that, while the government is quite happy to demonstrate a complete lack of propriety on its part in relation to deals like the Skywest deal, it claims that somehow it is clothed in the mantle of honesty and integrity when it comes to deals like the Sheratons, the Yularas and the Trade Development Zone etc. It will not look at the other items that we raised at the last Assembly sitting. I have heard nothing as yet from the Minister for Education about how he intends to handle the Katherine Rural College. The Katherine Rural College costs \$52 000 per student per annum and still cannot find students. It has to import them from interstate.

This Chief Minister has been responsible for demoralising the public service, for destroying its sense of direction, for destroying the morale of the average Territorian and for having average Territorians lose complete faith in this government. They have lost that faith. They come to us in droves and say: 'When can we have an election so we can get these clowns out!'

Mr Finch: We have just had one, and there are only 6 of you over there now.

Mr EDE: We have just had an election, and we won and we will win the next one. But the real problem Territorians have is the damage that can be done in the meantime. That is why the Chief Minister has to go because, as I said, he has presided over an unholy mess in the public service. He has presided over this unholy debacle during which he could not control even the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services, and anybody who cannot control a wet squid like that does not deserve to be the Chief Minister. All he has demonstrated to Territorians is that he has lost direction and that he is incapable of governing. All he can do is retreat into his mileage in the one area where he has had some experience - industrial relations. He has abrogated the broad ground. He has abrogated his job and deserves to be sacked.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour and Administrative Services): Mr Speaker, we have heard a great deal of diatribe this morning from the Leader of the Opposition and his deputy about a matter of which they show very little knowledge and which, if they had their wits about them, they would probably stay right away from because they can be made to look very foolish indeed.

The Leader of the Opposition stood here this morning and congratulated the trade union movement for the riot that its members held outside this Assembly on our last sitting day. He made a great play of that. No doubt, he would go out there and praise the President of the Trades and Labor Council, Robertson, for his untrue statements and inflammatory remarks from the steps of the Chan Building which created that riot. He stood there and made statements that created that riot and the President of the Trades and Labor Council had his cohorts from the Seamen's Union spread amongst that crowd, egging on those faithful public servants. He made derogatory remarks and untrue statements. He made inflammatory statements which were designed to bring about a riot that he believed would make the government cower. Mr Speaker, we are made of

stronger stuff than that. There is no way that a riot will make me cower, nor any of the members on this side of the House.

The Leader of the Opposition went up on the steps of the Chan Building and supported that riot. He supported Robertson and he made statements that did nothing to alleviate any of the anger that might have been building up in response to Robertson's statements. I think he should be thoroughly ashamed of himself. I do not believe that he has sufficient wits about him to be ashamed but I believe he should be.

It is true that there have been information leaks from the public service, again encouraged by those people over there. One day that may come back on them but I suppose that would be a vain hope because the chances of their ever being in government and having to cope with leakages of information from the public service would be an unlikely event. That leakage of information was actively encouraged. It related mainly to areas of so-called 'waste' in government. Anyone knows that any major organisation, be it a private-enterprise organisation or a government, has such areas. There was \$20m worth of waste by the federal government on the other side of Darwin Airport. Look at the waste in Parliament House, Canberra, right now. It occurs all the time. In any large organisation, there are matters that ought to be picked up and are being picked up.

As long as this government has been in power, it has been working to be rid of those areas of waste. Unfortunately, there are many people in the public service who do not want to see those areas of waste attacked until such time as this sort of exercise comes about. They want to use them. There are a few people who leak documents in the night and only a very few people in the public service would be prepared to do it because most of them are honourable people. If they were in the public service, I would suspect that any one of the members opposite would be the sort of people who would be inclined to do this.

Mr SMITH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The Minister for Labour and Administrative Services, in his excitable style, has just impugned the integrity of members on this side and I would ask you to direct that he withdraw the remarks which implied that, if they happened to be public servants, members on this side of the House would be less than professional in their attitude as public servants.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The government is working to eliminate areas of waste in the public service. As a part of our stringency measures this year, we introduced a number of measures that would overcome areas of waste in the public service.

The 2 members opposite who spoke this morning raised the matter of the Centrepoint building and demonstrated that they do not know what they are talking about. There has been a renegotiation of the lease on the Centrepoint building. There is no extra cost in that and there is no extra space required. We are using all of that space and we will be using it for ...

Mr Ede: What is the length of time?

Mr McCARTHY: It is 5 years plus 5 years option.

Mr Ede: Why?

Mr McCARTHY: Because we need that space. The Department of Mines and Energy is in there. We have a good agreement which does not involve any extra cost to government and it gives us that space potentially for the next 10 years.

We have an organisation, the Public Accounts Committee, that can handle those sorts of complaints. That is where they should be directed and I hope that is where they are directed in future. We have members from both sides of the Assembly on that committee and they will have the opportunity to make a judgment on whether those areas of waste can be eliminated.

The handling of this dispute is the main reason that I rose to speak this morning. We all know that, later today, we will be debating a bill relating to public service conditions. In its usual style, the opposition has set out to debate the issue this morning by means of a censure motion rather by means of normal debate ensuing from a bill. Today, we will be talking about the outcome of almost 8 weeks of negotiation. That period was dented in the middle by 2 weeks of non-negotiation when the TLC absolutely refused to talk to us while it was collecting pieces of paper from the friends of the 6 opposite who were handing them over in the dark of night. It was Deep Throat all over again.

The negotiations of the last 8 weeks have been a joint effort from day 1. From day 1, we have worked through the procedure of negotiation to find \$21.5m out of staff costs. We have not achieved that through sitting down and calling one another nice fellows. That is not the way you win those sorts of agreements. Nowhere else has this ever happened before. Nowhere else has the government sat down with the trade unions and worked out a means of obtaining \$21.5m off staff costs.

Mr Smith: Have you heard of the accord?

Mr McCARTHY: All that has ever happened with the accord is that the federal government has caved in every time the unions have made any sort of a request. The federal government has always said that it will be able to dress it up to make it look okay. Mr Deputy Speaker, don't doubt for a minute that it is just dressing up. The accord is nothing but dressing and hardly salad dressing.

The negotiations commenced in June with myself putting forward a list of options. It was not a proposal but a list of options. That list of options included such things as the elimination of the 17½% leave loading, elimination of drive-out time, the payment of salaries by cheque, tightening up of the bylaw 54 provisions on rental subsidies, the reduction in the Territory allowance and the elimination of air fares across the public service or the elimination of air fares for new recruits. Those were options that were put to the TLC in June. At that stage, we had somewhere in excess of 2 weeks to reach a negotiated settlement prior to coming into this Assembly so that we could have something in place to commence on 1 July.

I put that paper to the TLC and asked it to talk to its members and to come back with other proposals if possible. After 2 weeks of my trying to get it back to the negotiating table, it came back to me with a list of options and saying that it would not discuss my paper. It told its members out at Gardens Oval that it would not discuss the government's paper but only discuss its own paper. That is what it attempted to do for 6½ hours on the night before we were to come into this Assembly.

It was not prepared to discuss any one of the issues that I had put forward as options, but only the \$21m that it said could be saved out of this piece of garbage. We have been able to prove that, in areas of management rather than staff conditions, we could save \$2.2m this year and \$7m in a full year. We were looking at that anyway as part of our overall proposals. We conceded that because we were looking for a settlement.

After 6½ hours of non-negotiation - and that was what it was - and after hours of abuse against officers of my department, I went away from that meeting with the intention of coming back the next night with the demand that we negotiate this paper. The first thing that happened on that second night was a vitriolic attack on one of my officers. I told the TLC that I was not there to listen to those sorts of attacks but to discuss this paper. I told it that, if it was not prepared to discuss it, I would put it to the House the next day. That brought about a line of abuse that I could not relate in this House. I do not think that there were more than 1 or 2 members who refrained from using abusive language all the way down into the street. The attacks that were made by the TLC on the government were nothing short of disgraceful because its representatives would at no time discuss the options that we put forward. They simply said: 'We will take the money away from the salaries of senior people but we are not going to touch conditions of service'. These are conditions of service which are far above conditions anywhere else in Australia. This government and this population of 170 000 support public servants with \$60m to \$80m worth of extra conditions. Nowhere else in Australia is that the case. If we compare 15 000 people in the private sector with 15 000 people in the public sector, the latter receive an extra \$60m to \$80m worth of conditions.

We have effectively lost \$240m from our budget over the last 3 years, including \$101m this year. Never before have we attempted to take away any condition of service or any money from the area which accounts for 33% of our budget expenditure. Staff salaries and conditions amount to \$500m or 33% of this Territory's budget. Never before have we attempted to take away any money from that area. This was our only chance to overcome an anomalous situation. After 8 weeks of negotiation, we have broken the back of those spiralling conditions. Never before have they been touched. Never before have we asked the people who absorb one-third of our budget to give up conditions such as Territory allowance and air fares that are not paid anywhere else in this country. Air fares are costing us \$10m a year and \$5m in fringe benefits tax. Should we continue with that?

Just as an aside, during negotiations with the TLC, its representatives had the hide to sit across the table from me and tell me that low-level public servants could not make up their own minds about the cashing up of air fares. They said those people cannot think for themselves and, if they were offered the opportunity to cash up air fares, they might take it without realising what would happen when they wanted to go on holidays. Then, they would suddenly realise they had no air fares. That is paternalism at its worst! What right have those people to sit across the table from me and tell me that public servants cannot make their own decisions?

That is the sort of negotiation we faced. It was ideological. There was no way we could discuss the 17½% loading that 15 000 public servants would have found the easiest thing to give up and that Bob Hawke has said could be traded off against the second tier. He has made that statement publicly. As the Chief Minister said earlier, when the federal Treasurer, Paul Keating, was asked about this government's actions in relation to its public service, he said: 'I believe the Northern Territory government is acting responsibly'. We are acting responsibly now, as we have done consistently from the start.

Later today, after 8 weeks of negotiation, I will be introducing an amended bill to this Assembly. It will do away with the Territory allowance once and for all. It has cost us \$23m every year to maintain that allowance. We will do away with that once and for all. By taking action to remove the air fare entitlement from new recruits, we will once and for all break the back of the anomaly that has been driving this Territory into the ground with spiralling staff costs. Every year, we pay \$500m in staff salaries and conditions, out of a \$1500m budget. Why in heaven's name should we not attempt to address that problem? That is what we have done and we have achieved it, not exactly as we intended or hoped on day 1 and not the way the TLC hoped on day 1, but by negotiation over 8 weeks. We have come up with a proposal that does away with those 2 very anomalous perks. It will take time, but 20% of our public service turns over in a year. At the end of 12 months, 20% of our public service will not have an air fare entitlement.

Everybody will be on a new level of Territory allowance. To be certain of that, we have traded the 4% second-tier wage increase. If anybody believes that that 4% was not going to flow on, he really does not understand the system or the way the federal government sees it. The federal government has already traded the 4% for supposed work practices which are not going to save it a penny and will cost it money because of the broad banding it has brought in. We have got away with it at absolutely no cost to the Territory government - no cost whatever. Everybody will take home the same pay packet as last week and will do so after 1 September. Mr Speaker, I fully support the Chief Minister's action. The Chief Minister did take charge of negotiations during this exercise. He had every right to do so. He had the ability to do so and he did it well.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr McCARTHY (Labour and Administrative Services)(by leave): Mr Speaker, during the heat of debate this morning, in commenting upon the Centrepont proposal that was handled by the former minister responsible, I made an incorrect statement. The agreement is, in fact, 10 plus 10 years and not 5 plus 5 years as I stated this morning.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, most of the opposition's points have been made quite eloquently in this debate. There is probably very little ground left to cover. The Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition have substantiated the need for the censure of the Chief Minister by this House. However, there are a couple of general comments that I would like to make about the attitude of members opposite when addressing matters of importance before this House.

The member for Fannie Bay has had a consistent record, I think I can say, over an extended period of treating any criticism of the government, of treating any exploration or any questioning of mismanagement of the Northern Territory's public moneys and public affairs, as a form of treason. If the government supports the view of the member for Fannie Bay, that to question incompetence and to question downright stupidity is treasonable, then I am afraid the Northern Territory is faced with a very bleak future. I do not believe for one second that the affairs of the Northern Territory have been handled competently during the majority of this year. I just do not believe it. Certainly, the culmination of that has been the cutting of public expenditure in the Northern Territory. Nobody on this side of the House would question the need to curtail government spending nor that the Premiers Conference eroded the expenditure capabilities of the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory certainly has been affected by the cuts made by the federal

government. What must be said is that the government has demonstrated almost unbelievable incompetence in the handling of those expenditure cuts and presenting them to the Northern Territory public and the Northern Territory Public Service.

We could have raised this as a censure motion against the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services. Unfortunately, he walked into the middle of it after the member for Port Darwin was unceremoniously sacked from the ministry because of some comments he made in this House. A new minister walked into the middle of it, a minister with extremely limited experience in industrial relations, a minister who, in all fairness, could not have been expected to understand much of what was happening in the industrial forum that he was involved in. Whilst the minister's incompetence cannot be accepted, at least it can be understood. What cannot be understood and what cannot possibly be accepted is that he held the position at all. He should never have been allowed to hold the position. That he was allowed to have any part in the conduct of an industrial process of such importance to the Northern Territory is the most extraordinary event in my time in this parliament. Whilst I can understand his incompetence, I cannot understand how he was allowed to hold the position. It demonstrates unbelievable mismanagement to have thrown the minister headfirst into a pool that he could not even stand up in, let alone swim in. For that, if nothing else, the Chief Minister deserves censure.

We have seen today what negotiation can achieve. We have seen what reasonableness, discussion and debate can do. We do not have mad scenes outside the Legislative Assembly today, involving people who at that time quite rightly felt extremely threatened and were in trepidation about their livelihood. The settlement has come about via a reasonable industrial process. That process was not undertaken in the first place solely because the Minister for Labor and Administrative Services did not have the first idea of what he was involved in. That is acceptable. I would not claim to be the font of all knowledge. Everybody has to learn. But when a demonstrably ignorant minister is thrown into perhaps the greatest industrial confrontation that was ever likely in the Northern Territory Public Service, the censure of this House is called for. It deserves the censure of this House if we are to maintain even a modicum of credibility in the public eye. In the last 6 months, and even more so over the last 6 weeks, the Northern Territory government has sunk in the eyes of the public of the Northern Territory. If it cannot command respect in the community, then what the hell does it expect to achieve in here? It will not achieve anything.

Mr Speaker, that is a demonstrable problem that this government faces. I must tell you that there was quite some debate in our caucus and, without divulging caucus secrets, I think I am free to say that there was a body of opinion that held the view that the Chief Minister should have been given an award for delivering, quite ably, the seat of the Northern Territory into the hands of the Labor Party. There were other factors involved, as the Leader of the Opposition said, but quite certainly a contributing factor to the Labor Party's success in the last federal election was the activities of this government over the last 6 weeks. I do not think any sane or reasonable person can question that. I would suggest to this House that the reason why the government took that action was that the good old Canberra-bashing stood at the back of it. It thought that, if it could create enough disharmony, bash a few unions over the head, bash Canberra long enough then, lo and behold, the Northern Territory would be delivered unto its hands. Mr Speaker, I would suggest to you that that is probably the greatest political blunder that has ever been made in the history, certainly of the Northern Territory,

but I suspect in the parliamentary process of the Northern Territory. First, the Chief Minister has let down the Northern Territory and, secondly, he has demonstrated to his colleagues that he does not deserve to be the Northern Territory's Chief Minister. If they are not smart enough to see that, then they are certainly going to reap the rewards of their ignorance.

I listened with some interest to the Minister for Labor and Administrative Services when he described the differentials between the public sector and the private sector in terms of wages and conditions. I cannot speak with a great deal of authority for many parts of the Northern Territory but I can speak with a reasonable degree of authority for the electorate of Nhulunbuy.

I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that it has been a sore bone of contention within the electorate of Nhulunbuy, particularly within the township of Nhulunbuy, that the private sector enjoys considerable benefits that the public sector does not. I would venture to say, and I think an examination of the statistics would prove me correct, that those circumstances would exist in the community of Alyangula on Groote Eylandt and in Jabiru. In fact, there are many communities in the Northern Territory where the public sector employees are certainly afforded far fewer benefits than private sector employees. Those are the cold facts of life. Some of those private sector benefits have been achieved via industrial muscle. There is no point in pulling punches: that is how they have been achieved. But there are also a considerable number of benefits, and the Chief Minister would know it because he was involved with the principal private employer in Nhulunbuy, which the employers recognise that they must extend to their employees in order to attract them to remote locations. That, too, is a fact of life. The Chief Minister can shove his head in the sand for as long as he likes, but he will not diminish that fact of life.

My big fear with these public service cuts is that they will have a dramatic effect on the ability of the public sector to employ suitable people to teach my constituents' children, to heal my constituents' children when they become ill and to police my constituents' homes. Mr Speaker, I have a real fear that this government will not be able to provide those services which my constituents, quite correctly, should be able to expect in any civilised society.

Mr Finch: What would you do?

Mr LEO: I would sack you, Fred. You would be the greatest money saver on earth.

Mr Speaker, the cuts to the public sector's salaries and conditions, as I feel will inevitably happen, in the long run will lead to the same problems that my electorate has been confronted with before. We cannot get teachers at the start of every year because nobody will come to the sticks. We cannot get nurses. Who wants to go to a remote location? Those things are facts of life.

The cuts to salaries and conditions of the public sector will lead to my constituents not being assured of services that any reasonable, civilised society extends to its citizens. I suspect, and the Leader of the Opposition pointed it out quite correctly, that many of the cuts to salaries and conditions are not realistically achievable. I suspect that, in the long term, those cuts to salaries and conditions will have to be reinstated simply to attract persons to an isolated part of Australia. I know everybody in wonderland has an inflated view of the size of Darwin. I know the Minister

for Transport and Works has an inflated view of the postage stamp that he calls an electorate. However, the facts of life are that Darwin is a small and remote community. The bulk of the Northern Territory is in precisely that position. The facts of life are that, if people are to come here, they will require incentive. These cuts to conditions and wages will not be sustainable in the long term and members opposite are deluding themselves if they believe they will be.

The censure motion is substantiated. The Chief Minister has pursued a worthless exercise with a demonstrable degree of incompetence. The Minister for Labour and Administrative Services has certainly demonstrated a remarkable degree of ignorance and, as I say, I do not particularly blame him for that. He has no real experience in the area of industrial relations. In short, the Chief Minister deserves to be censured by this House. The degree of credibility which the Northern Territory electorate attaches to this government was demonstrated quite amply in the recent federal election. However, if this House is to achieve any degree of credibility, it must censure the Chief Minister.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I would like to address the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition today in 3 parts because I believe the issues are more complex than just having a broad sweep at the Chief Minister and suggesting that he resign as a result of his activity over the last 8 weeks. The 3 parts concern the financial impacts of the government's public service proposals, the political ramifications and the industrial and legal ramifications.

The government's interference with the terms and conditions of its employees relates to the Commonwealth's interference with the Northern Territory's funding. That is not new. It has been going on for 3 years at least - ever since the CLP took the federal seat from the ALP. I think it is reasonable to assume that, while this government's politics are at variance with the federal government's politics, there will be continuing intrusions into the financial affairs of the Northern Territory. Anybody who believes that will not happen is not owning up to the realities of life. Mr Speaker, you can bet that there will be more cuts. You would know that and so would your colleagues. The Grants Commission is already conducting more reviews on the Territory's overfunding, and anybody who believes those will have a positive rather than a negative result has his head in the sand. That is why it has been very important in the last 2 or 3 years for us to try to protect ourselves from what has happened and what will continue to happen. That is why I have been so outspoken about the government's squandering of the cash reserves, the reserves we had tucked away in hollow logs to shore up our position in the face of Commonwealth funding cuts. Now, in one fell swoop, a \$100m cash reserve is no longer available to buttress the Northern Territory against Commonwealth intrusion. We have to make it some other way. We also have to balance our budget. While I hear everybody saying that the Northern Territory should have a balanced budget, there was a pretty neat sleight of hand the other day when the Treasurer ...

Mr Coulter interjecting.

Mr TUXWORTH: You can always tell when he is in trouble. He has to climb in and try to throw everybody off balance. Mr Speaker, he is not going to get at me today.

Mr Speaker, we must have a balanced budget. We do not fool anybody when we dip into our own superannuation fund and spend \$15m on 300 Housing

Commission homes in a depressed market - funds that belong to other people - to try to balance the Northern Territory's budget. You may fool the people of the Northern Territory but you do not fool people down south who see this sort of game as just plain shenanigans.

The other thing that is absolutely essential if we are to keep the Territory in a viable position is not to increase Territory taxes and charges. Whatever we may think about the right of this parliament to introduce taxes and charges, we just cannot expect that the people will pay them. I am saying that people out there do not have the capacity to pay any more. You can raise taxes all you like but the people do not have the money. They are getting to a point where they will do whatever they can to evade taxes or they will leave the Territory.

Mr Speaker, I will come back in a moment to the issue of playing games with the money and trying to balance the budget by using money from other people's resources. I would like to move on to the dispute that is the centre of today's discussion. The whole focus of the last 1-day sitting was to tell the Territory people that things would become tougher. We would have a bit more petrol tax and tourism tax, and public servants would lose \$21m worth of terms and conditions. It was explained that public service conditions were really vestiges of the past, that times had become tougher, that the government was pacesetting for the private sector and it could not keep it up any longer and there was really no other way than for the public service to make its sacrifice along with the rest of the community. I know many public servants who agree wholeheartedly that, in the course of time, these things will change. But, they certainly would not change the way the government proposed it.

The other thing was that the unions came forward pretty quickly and pointed out the injustice of the government's proposals and what it was trying to do. The Chief Minister admitted that on radio; I heard him myself. He said it was unfortunate and it was unreasonable, but that that was the way it was. Then the unions came forward with their own set of proposals and they were dismissed. It was pointed out that the savings were not realisable in 12 months, their figures were inflated etc. Mr Speaker, I do not doubt that that was the case, but there would have been some savings in the unions' list and whether they were real or not is another matter for another day.

But, after 8 weeks of dispute, and we have all been in them from time to time, the Chief Minister admitted within 24 hours of the House rising, the absolute injustice of the proposals that he proposed at the last sitting. Advertising campaigns have been carried out on radio and there have been adverts in the newspapers at \$1000 a page. These just have not stopped. We have heard threats of mass sackings if the government did not get what it wanted in respect of the \$21.5m, and in the manner it wanted. We heard that mass sackings would have to occur and people would have to go. There have been a range of meetings, secret meetings and ultimatums, with the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services sending telexes to people about what would happen if the government's position were not agreed to. The Chief Minister has pushed aside the negotiating minister publicly. He did it on radio, saying the minister was inexperienced and that that was a pity. Mr Speaker, you just cannot do that sort of thing to your ministers and, on top of it all, we got nowhere. The Territory community got nowhere in 8 weeks and, at the end of it, we have the most spectacular cave-in that this parliament has ever seen occur about anything. We, in the Northern Territory, have seen the government cave-in to unions that did not have to do a thing. They simply had to sit there and wait for the government to fall apart on the issue because the government never had a prayer from day 1.

Mr Speaker, before we go any further, I would like to address the legal aspects of some of these things because they are the crux of it all. We are talking about what is legally possible as distinct from what people would like to do, and those 2 issues are always a mile apart. Mr Speaker, along with other members in this House, you would recall that, in 1985, Senator Walsh took enormous amounts of money off the Territory, at very short notice, before the end of the financial year, and that it was extremely difficult to balance the books. In fact, it was so difficult at the time that we considered very seriously how we could look at some of the conditions that the public service had at that time that needed to be trimmed back. Air fares, drive-out time and all the other things were considered. The advice to the government at the time from the legal people was very clear: 'You have 2000 people, at least, and possibly 3000 left in the service from 1978 who have a letter from the Commonwealth to tell them that all their rights are entrenched. There is very little that you can do about those people unless you want to have a series of court cases'.

Mr Hatton: Wrong.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister says 'wrong'. It is not wrong because they have just got away with everything that they wanted.

You have a further 8000-odd people in the public service who are covered by awards: NTEC employees, nurses and a whole range of others. You cannot interfere with their terms and conditions. You can apply to the Arbitration Commission for a variation. You can pass all the acts you like in here and it will not change things one bit. Those people have rights which are protected. Whether we think they are excessive, unreasonable or unaffordable does not even enter into the equation. They are protected by the law. You have a further 5000-odd people in the service who do not have any protection and whose terms and conditions can be changed at the stroke of a pen by the Public Service Commissioner.

Mr Speaker, it would be quite possible for the government to change the conditions of the last group that I mentioned and then we would be back to having a service of haves and have-nots. For the benefit of people who were not here at self-government, one of the cornerstones on which the new Northern Territory Public Service was built in 1976, 1977 and 1978 was that all its employees would be treated equally. Mr Speaker, in those days, and you would remember this probably better than anybody, many of our public servants had conditions different from those of the clerical sector. We had the blue collar and the white collar workers. A great deal of effort, time and money was put into ensuring that most of the conditions of those employees were brought into line. They have been that way since and now we are going back. If you think you can turn the clock back just like that, it is not on because they all have protection and they will not give up their conditions

The legal advice that was tendered in 1985 would be no different today because nothing has changed today except that the hounding by the Commonwealth is worse and the difficulty of balancing the budget is greater. However, the legal position is the same. How do any of us expect to say to people in the service: 'All bets are off. You will have new terms and conditions because we cannot afford the existing ones'. What do you think would happen in the private sector, Mr Speaker, if employers went to work in the morning, got all the troops in and said: 'Look, we have had a bad year and you are all going to take \$2 an hour less'?

Mr Coulter: They do it.

Mr TUXWORTH: They do it. This is the mentality, Mr Speaker: it is easy. It is not easy because many people are protected by awards.

I will turn to the political aspects of this because it is the part that amuses the honourable members opposite most and I am quite happy to address it. The Chief Minister came home from Canberra and he had had quite a drubbing; no one would deny that. Things were going to be tougher than anybody had expected and the Commonwealth, in its usual way, had used pretty good footwork and justified what it would do by putting the Grants Commission's finding up as the reason for its decision. In an effort to whip up a bit of pre-election hysteria for the CLP, the Chief Minister decided that this was a good issue to beat the Commonwealth up with and that, if the government touched up the local troops a bit by giving them a taste of what other people were getting, then they would join forces with the CLP and vote against the nasty Commonwealth. Regrettably, that is a very hard position to maintain. There is an old Chinese saying that it has never happened until it has happened to you, and surely this is a fine example of that. People in the Territory thought it was terrible and they thought that everybody should help tighten their belts but, when it became their turn and they had to give up their pay and, in some cases, 15% of it, and their air fares that could be worth \$2000 to \$7000 depending on the size of their families, the time had not come.

The result of that activity and the fever that was supposed to be whipped up in favour of the Territory government, and that was not there, cost the Territory and the conservative side of politics the House of Representatives seat by a mile, and the ALP went within a hair's-breadth of picking up the second Senate seat. For the benefit of those people who like to think that the presence of the National Party was of nuisance value in the election, could I put to you, Mr Speaker, that if we had not been in the election, the Labor Party would probably have won the House of Representatives seat by 10% or 12% and probably would have pulled off the second Senate seat because it was pretty obvious to anybody in the counting house that people were revolting against the government. People were expressing their displeasure. There was no doubt that quite a few of them decided that they would give the Nationals a go and then vote second for the CLP and third for Labor. If the Nationals had not been in the race, the Labor Party would have scooped the pool. They know it and, unfortunately, many people on the other side don't.

Mr Speaker, I would like to touch on a couple of other things that I think are really bad for the Northern Territory. Events over the last 8 weeks have seen a movement of people into the Northern Territory Public Service unions at a rate nobody would have ever believed. People that you and I know, Mr Speaker, strong conservative voters in Northern Territory politics, have flocked into the unions for their own protection. Not that they have any love for them, but because they have to try to protect their own positions and they have joined the unions to do that. Whether you like to believe it or not, Mr Speaker, the Trades and Labor Council has a political base now that it has not had for the last 15 years. If you doubt my word on that, Mr Speaker, could I suggest to the government that any time it wants to try anything on the public service, just see what sort of reaction it gets from the Trades and Labor Council because the government will find it very hard to do anything with the public service in future, be it reasonable or not, with the power that the Trades and Labour Council has developed in the last 8 weeks.

Mr Finch: They have got you on side anyway now.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the Minister for Transport and Works says they have got me on side. What I am sticking up for is the rights of people. As far as I am concerned, all the entitlements of the public servants ought to be cashed up and given to them in money and, when our public servants have a cash payment for 4 or 5 weeks leave a year and work so many hours a week for the employer, then that will be fine by me and you can do away with all the other benefits in any form you like to call them. But, they belong to people and they are cash. It is as simple as that. You might not think it is cash, I might not think it is cash, but they do because it is theirs. Those are the facts of life.

Mr Speaker, I want to conclude my remarks by saying that, in terms of administering or influencing the public service, the government is now impotent. It will never get past the Trades and Labor Council. It will be interesting to see how these proposals will fare before the Arbitration Commission. It will be interesting to see what happens. The impact of it all is this: the government has lost a fortune with this back-down. Anybody who does not believe it does not know what is going on or does not want to believe it in order not to face up to it. The government has dragged the private sector behind it, boots and all. The public service will be used as the benchmark in the 4% second-tier increase, and the private sector will be dragged in as well. That is great for the private sector.

Much comment has been made this morning about the relationship between the government and the public service. There is no doubt, and the government knows this is the reason it backed down, that the public service does not work for the government any more. Public servants are working for anybody who is likely to get rid of the government, but not for the government, because they believe the government has been disloyal to them even though they are expected to be loyal to it. As of today, the Northern Territory Public Service has better terms and conditions than it had on 25 June when all this started, and that is not all: these are all enshrined in an agreement for 6 years. Great stuff, Mr Speaker!

I will conclude by referring to a couple of remarks made this morning by the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services. In full flight, he said that this was the first time ever in the Northern Territory that the government and the unions had sat down, negotiated and worked their way through difficult problems. I say to him that that is absolute nonsense. We had similar problems in the Department of Health during the early 1980s. We had to take 600 people out of the department in 9 months and reduce its budget by \$6 to \$8m. That was a very unpleasant and traumatic experience for everybody involved. The people who sat down and helped to facilitate those cutbacks were the same union leaders that the government has been working with for the last 8 weeks. They helped to facilitate the withdrawal of those people from the Health Department and to make the savings. It was done in a very positive manner and it was done in the hope that it would never have to be done again. It was also done in respect of NTEC when we changed from a coal-fired to a gas-fired power station. It was obvious that 200 or 300 people would not be needed. Officers sat down with the unions and worked out the formulas for overcoming the problem. They were exactly the same union people whom the government has been dealing with during the last 8 weeks.

The Chief Minister had a slice at me about my relationship with the public service over the years. I would be the first to say that I have had a round or two for a pound or two with the public service since 1974 over a wide range of issues. Some of them were justified and some of them proved to be unfortunate. Nevertheless, over those years, despite all the problems that I

may have encountered, I never managed to gather a mob of thousands in the main street. The Chief Minister managed that singlehandedly. I never held a torch to him. The biggest mob I ever got at the doorway was about 200 or 300 hippies who were there to see that the drug amendments of 1976 did not go through. I say to the Chief Minister that he has a bigger problem than any I ever dreamed of.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I guess the sad part about this debate is that we have really turned the tactic of using a censure motion in this Assembly into a joke. It is nothing more than a grievance debate. It has no substance. There have been no debating tactics or skills involved in it at all. Quite frankly, it now carries no weight at all. I would have thought that that would have been a shame for the opposition. I would have thought that it would have been a reasonable tactic for the opposition to employ but it is turning it into a sham and a joke. We forgave the Leader of the Opposition for his maiden censure motion. Since then, he has moved about 6 or 7 of them. The censure motion is no longer a useful tactic. The press gallery was empty before this riveting stuff began. His predecessor as Leader of the Opposition, now the Senator for the Northern Territory, had us riveted to our seats and waiting for the next disclosure to blow us out of the water. That has now gone.

Quite frankly, I looked forward to this as a challenge but, to rise in this debate to respond to some of the nonsense put forward by the opposition this morning and by the members for Nhulunbuy and Barkly this afternoon is ludicrous. What this side of the House is anxious to have demonstrated is National Party policy. That is the party that the member for Barkly now claims to represent. To see him here as a defender of the public sector is difficult for us to comprehend. I say to the National Party people that they will have to make a stand soon. The people of the Northern Territory want to know just what is the National Party's policy. How much is the district allowance at Charleville? How much is the air fare worth there? How do they go for their 6 weeks annual leave at Charleville? What are the Queensland sentiments? Joh's National Party representative has to stand in this parliament and tell us what his party believes in. We have not heard that so far; we have simply heard the ranting and raving of the member for Barkly on how he would fix the economy.

He cites the Chief Minister's example of getting rid of departmental heads and secretaries. I do not want to drag out all of the issues that have been generated over the years under the leadership of the member for Barkly. I will tell you why there were no demonstrations in relation to his public service amendments. They were pushed through in this Assembly at midnight. Nobody could have assembled then. Does he remember getting rid of people like Armstrong? Does anybody remember Mr Pope? He cannot sit here and tell us that we have problems in such areas, because he had them himself.

On 22 June this year, he suggested that we cut the ministry by 2 and the parliament by 6. In terms of economic management, that is nearly as good as the Leader of the Opposition's waterproof tea bag proposal. He was well supported by the member for Stuart who also came up with a list of proposals. I wrote them down and, after listening to him for 3 hours, the total was about \$2.8m. It was all nonsense and it was the best that he could do.

The member for Barkly says that public service benefits and conditions should be cashed up. That was the government's position at the start. On 15 July, he said on Territory Extra that generous government conditions are enshrined in law and were people's right. He said that the NT government must

continue to award extra conditions for public servants. Is that the philosophy and policy of the Northern Territory National Party? In the NT News of 15 July, he said: 'The move to withdraw public service entitlements has been made to save \$21.5m and to bring public service conditions more in line with the private sector. Both objectives are outside the grasp of government'. Is that what the National Party believes in? Will it not even attempt to bring some justice and equality into the Northern Territory?

I attended a Local Government Ministers' Conference in Perth recently. I asked whether Western Australians had ever had any awards for being isolated and whether they had ever had any air fare entitlements. The answer was no. Look at the way Western Australia has been able to develop and how its multimillionaires are now friends of the Prime Minister. They have been able to exploit the resources of that state, in contrast to the situation in the Northern Territory. They had no air fare entitlements or 6 weeks tropical leave yet we have the representative of the National Party defending those things here. That is his attitude and I can only assume that it reflects the policy of his party.

In the Sunday Territorian, the member for Barkly said that the government never had a prayer of achieving what it aimed to achieve because it had no legal basis to do the things that it was proposing. That never stopped him when he was making a few changes a while ago. Legal challenges came about after he tried to put certain measures through parliament. He went on to allege that the unions had sat on their hands and that they were in the box seat and could not lose. He said the government knew that and should be getting on to balance the books. I would like those statements enshrined in Hansard in anticipation of the time when the National Party issues its next 'we believe' statement. We can then compare that 'we believe' statement with some of its spokesman's comments.

The member for Barkly said that there were problems with the purchase of 300 houses by the superannuation fund. He got most of it wrong, but he was well supported by the Leader of the Opposition who also got it wrong. He said that the government obviously had concealed the transaction. It was in the explanations to the Appropriation Bill. This is supposed to be something that was concealed. It was part of a bill dealt with in this House last August. At the bottom of page 15, it says: 'However it is envisaged that the funds will be invested in existing government assets'. This is a reference to the employer's superannuation liability account.

The Leader of the Opposition, who is economically colour-blind and cannot tell red from black, went on to say that we would get 11% return on our money. In fact, we realised a 14.1% return, which was 1% above the Commonwealth bonds at that particular time. Does that worry him? No. He does not know the facts. He does not know the difference between the employer and the employee contribution. The money that was used here was the employer contribution. He said that any efficient organisation ought to be getting a much higher rate of interest than 11%. That, of course, was the mortgage rate on the 300 houses. He did not know what he was talking about, but that did not stop him. He just keeps on opening his mouth. I can tell the Leader of the Opposition that he is consistently wrong and he is wrong again in this matter. He says the government is not getting the maximum possible return for the money on these particular items and that that is of major concern.

The member for Barkly and the member for Millner have joined hands in recent months and they have both got it wrong. I have press statements from

both of them. One is headed: 'Sale of mortgage a sneaky act'. This concerns something which was detailed in the appropriation papers that were delivered to them. 'NT budget balanced by sales'. That is not true. There is no effect on the budget at all but there is a headline - like the \$500 000 headline mentioned earlier.

The member for Stuart referred to \$6.5m in relation to the furlough payment. It is \$6.8m in fact. That is \$300 000 that he could have saved. He might like to check it on his pocket calculator. It was true that the Northern Territory did receive \$6.8m in 1986-87 as a one-off payment. This, of course, was used to provide government services in 1986-87. It follows that we do not have the \$6.8m in 1987-88. If government services are to be maintained, we have to find that amount elsewhere in the system. He got it wrong. The opposition will continue to get it wrong and, sooner or later, the people will wake up to the Leader of the Opposition's economic incompetence in terms of the untruths he tries to peddle to them. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition cannot even get the amount right, let alone understand what furlough is.

Mr Keating has been on Territory radio and has been quoted in the newspaper, as the Minister for Administrative Services has said, stating that this government has acted responsibly. I will not go into the details, but that is what he said. If the government of the Northern Territory is diminished in terms of its economic capacity, that has to be reflected in services in the Territory.

In the lead up to this election, a whole range of guest speakers from the federal parliament told us that we were all living beyond our means. In fact, in a paper entitled, 'Resource, Production and Trade in the 1980s: An Economic Bridge to the Future', Senator Gareth Evans said in Sydney on 19 June: 'Our income will not sustain our standard of living. We must therefore suffer, for the time being, some curtailment of the standard while we try to adjust to the new reality'. That was Senator Evans. That well-known friend of the Northern Territory, Peter Walsh, on the 23 April 1985 Four Corners program, as Labor spokesman on everything to do with the Northern Territory, described our public service as follows. This is from a federal minister, the Minister for Finance: 'Everingham, of course, presided over the most bloated and feather-bedded public service in Australia. That is a significant financial problem for the Territory'. None other than their party brethren, housed in Canberra, have described the Northern Territory Public Service as 'the most bloated and feather-bedded public service in Australia'.

Mr Ede: That was years ago.

Mr COULTER: He has not changed his views; I can tell you that right now. I spoke to him just recently and I can assure you he has not changed.

A little later, he said: 'One of the running sores which the Hawke government inherited from its predecessors was the Northern Territory funding arrangements. In the 4 years to 1983-84, Commonwealth payments to the Territory government grew at an annual rate of 7% ...

Mr Ede: This is old news.

Mr COULTER: He has not changed. He said that the 'growth rate was not sustainable in the long term'. In fact, he said: 'In 132 years, it will have devoured the entire GDP of Australia. Sooner or later it has to be stopped'. Of course, he had projected those figures a little bit further than 132 years.

With the population growth that we were experiencing in the Northern Territory, the whole of Australia would live in the Northern Territory and that would be true. Work it out. It is pretty simple arithmetic. Don't worry, I will do it for you. I do not want you to get it wrong.

On 28 February, in the Weekend Australian, Senator Walsh was quoted speaking in Perth to the Australian Society of Accountants. Earlier he told delegates that the need to restructure the economy brought with it the further requirement that living standards must be reduced. We are talking about March 1987 now, not so long ago. He said that, beyond some point, the situation will become essentially irretrievable. We must face the economic adjustments which are necessary. Senator Walsh said that Australians had to accept that their expectations of future living standards were no longer feasible. He stated that a very short time ago. In the NT News, on 28 February, he was quoted as saying that 'Australia's living standards must fall below that which the community has come to expect as reasonable'. This is the opposition's own financial guru, the Finance Minister, the man in whom Mr Hawke has so much confidence that he made no alterations to that portfolio responsibility.

The Treasurer thinks we are doing all right and I have demonstrated that the Labor Minister for Finance has said that we have the most bloated, feather-bedded public service in Australia. The Leader of the Opposition is on record as saying that the 'Hawke track record in relation to financial agreements and the Memorandum of Understanding is, in fact, impeccable', and that can be checked in Hansard. He said that on 29 February. I would like to read out some of this impeccable record for the benefit of honourable members even though I know the electorate is sick of hearing 'federal government', 'federal government', federal government', bash, bash, bash. I know that.

However, let's record the figures in Hansard so that we can all read them: in 1984-85, the reduction in tax-sharing grant for the so-called negative special grant was \$12.6m; the abrogation of a promise to accelerate the upgrading of the Stuart Highway - \$12m; in 1985-86, the reduction in the 1984-85 base for calculation of general revenue grant - \$15m; the same year, the NTEC subsidy revision - \$40m; and the abrogation once again of the promise to upgrade the Stuart Highway. In 1986-87, we saw the general purpose capital reduction of \$40m, the subsidy revision of \$20m, and the failure to provide 2% real growth under a Commonwealth act. That didn't worry him. In fact, that abrogation involved \$13m. There was a reduction in semi-government borrowings of \$10m, the general purpose capital reduction of \$44m and the negative special grant of \$14.4m - a total of \$233m - plus on-going housing reductions of \$10m giving a grand total of \$243m since he came to office.

The member for Stuart and the Leader of the Opposition have spoken about the \$35m for NTEC. It is true that the Commonwealth paid \$35m to the Northern Territory in 1986-87 as a capital grant for Channel Island. It is also true that this \$35m is part of the reduction of Commonwealth funding in 1987-88 over 1986-87. There is nothing particularly unusual about this except that the amount is larger than normal. Special purpose payments such as \$16m for Whites tailing dam and rehabilitation at Rum Jungle fluctuate up and down from time to time. There is nothing unusual about. Many are of a capital nature and as such are one-offs. This is another one of those payments. The essential point is that we took account of it before we went to the Premiers Conference. We did not have a problem with that.

The Leader of the Opposition and his deputy are the only members of the opposition here at the moment. The rest of their colleagues have deserted

them. In 1986-87, the NT received \$978m from the Commonwealth and was allowed to borrow \$75m. That was \$1053m that would only maintain the same real level of funding in 1987-88. The Territory needed that amount of money plus a sum for inflation in order to maintain our effort in real terms. At the Premiers Conference, we received \$957m from the Commonwealth and we will be allowed to borrow \$65m. That is \$1022m and is \$31m down in cash terms on 1986-87.

Instead of obtaining the \$100m-plus which we needed to maintain our 1986-87 effort, we got minus \$31m. I defy the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to quote these figures back to me and to change them around to suit himself. He cannot do it. We had a shortfall of \$31m below the level needed to maintain our real value in the 1986-87 receipts and borrowings. We had allowed for about \$30m reductions before going to the Premiers Conference. We now need to find the remaining \$100m. It is pretty simple.

Mr Ede: You have no credibility. No one is listening to you.

Mr COULTER: You are not listening because it makes sense.

We have heard the Sheraton arguments time and time again. We have taken all the opposition criticism. We are not getting out of them. They are investments in the future and we will get out of them when we can get out of them at a profit. We are not cutting and running because we are not that type of people. We have the courage of our convictions. We believe in the Northern Territory. As I have said before, if it comes down to 2 people living here, one of them will be Stanley Tipiloura and the other will be me.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, there are some ministers opposite who every time they open their mouth put their foot in it. Unfortunately, the Treasurer is one of those. In his own very loud manner, he has demonstrated one of the major concerns that we have had right throughout the last 8 weeks: we keep on getting different sets of figures to deal with. We have had from the Treasurer's own mouth a statement that, in fact, it is not \$101m. It is \$131m now and that is news to everybody.

Mr Coulter: You can make figures say exactly what you want.

Mr SMITH: That is what you have been trying to do.

Mr Speaker, it reminds me of his mini-budget address where I think he said that the figure was \$101m but, if we took the department's wish list into account, it could well be much higher. As we remarked at the time, that was a very interesting way indeed on which to base your future programs.

We have had the interesting admission from the Treasurer - and I thank him for it - that payments of \$35m for the Channel Island Power Station and \$6.8m for furlough were one-off payments. We finally dragged it out of him. We knew we would if we kept at it. The point is that you then need to disregard those in working out the proper allocation that you should have for the next financial year. If you work out your proper allocations disregarding those one-off payments, you obtain a figure, depending on how you work it out, which is \$30m-\$40m ...

Mr Coulter: What do you mean that it depends on how you work it out?

Mr SMITH: ... less than \$101m. I say 'depending on how you work it out' because there are 2 quite legitimate ways of working it out.

Mr Coulter: Right and wrong. You get it wrong and we get it right.

Mr SMITH: It would take me a couple of days to explain it to you.

Mr Speaker, the economic illiteracy of the man who is supposed to be balancing our books was revealed when he said furlough payments of \$6.8m have been spent on services. For the information of the Treasurer, the furlough payment is a long service leave payment that the Commonwealth made to the Northern Territory as a one-off payment to rid itself of its responsibilities for the long service leave entitlements of transferred Commonwealth public servants to the Northern Territory. They will be shocked and horrified when they find out that their furlough entitlement that should be earning interest on their behalf has been spent to provide services for the Northern Territory. That is what you said.

Mr Coulter: You have got it wrong again. You cannot get it right.

Mr SMITH: That is what you said. That just shows the economic illiteracy of the man opposite: he doesn't even know what the furlough entitlement is, what it was paid for and what it should be used for. But enough of the Treasurer, Mr Speaker, because he is not the subject of this debate. The subject of this debate is the Chief Minister and his failure, during the last 8 weeks which can quite safely and legitimately be described as probably the toughest 8 weeks that the Northern Territory has experienced since self-government, to provide leadership and his failure to put his stamp on the problems that have confronted us during that 8-week period.

In his response to this debate, we had the Chief Minister running the tired old line that it was all the fault of the federal government. The trouble is that the people of the Northern Territory will not wear that excuse at this time and in these circumstances. They demonstrated it again in the recent election results. They demonstrated it quite clearly by making their feelings very strongly known indeed. Not only did we have the mass meeting outside this building. Somebody indicated this morning - I think it was the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services - that there had been 2 mass meetings. In fact, there have been at least 4 mass meetings of between 3000 and 5000 public servants who were angry and upset at the attack on their conditions. They were the largest meetings of that kind in the Territory's history. The point of this debate is not that the government had to take action. Everybody accepts that the government had to take action. The point is that the government failed to act in a proper and appropriate manner and, particularly, the Chief Minister failed to act in a proper and appropriate manner.

I want to pick up a couple of comments that he made. He said, somewhat tiredly, that he had put in 36 hours work on negotiations in respect of the public service dispute since 7 July. That demonstrates one of the points that we want to make. In a dispute of such proportion, why did the Chief Minister wait until the dispute was in its fourth or fifth week before he intervened? If he had spent some of that time at an earlier stage of the negotiations perhaps he would have saved a great deal of agony, upset and anger amongst public servants in the Northern Territory. No, Mr Speaker, he was content to leave it to that amateur, who should be sitting on the backbench, that amateur who even this morning did his best to sabotage the negotiations and the agreed result by launching a very bitter personal attack on the trade union organisers. Even this morning, he was engaged in that activity.

Mr Ede: Trying to snatch defeat out of the jaws of victory.

Mr SMITH: Thank you! Trying to snatch defeat out of the jaws of victory. The Chief Minister left it for 5 weeks before he intervened in this dispute, when he could have, and should have, entered into it much earlier, taken over the running from the hapless Minister for Labour and Administrative Services and put some sense in it.

The contribution of the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services confirms all the stories that I have heard during the course of this dispute that there has been a large degree of conflict between the minister and the Chief Minister on how to handle it. How else can it be explained that, on the government's side, the honourable minister spoke immediately after the Chief Minister. He got up and knifed the principal participants from the trade-union side who had so recently reached agreement with the government on this issue? I have never heard a stranger argument, a stranger discussion, in all my life than I heard from that man there. There is the man who has been involved in 36 hours of discussion, although probably he was not invited to them all, but certainly a large number of hours of discussion and who, despite the bad words and the strong feelings that were experienced during them, managed to reach agreement with the trade union movement. Then, at the very last moment ...

Mr Perron: What did the TLC say about the government's negotiators this morning?

Mr SMITH: ... in this Assembly, where they do not have the right to reply, he gets up and gives them a serve.

Mr Perron: What did they say? Tell us what they said at this morning's meeting.

Mr SMITH: In response, Mr Speaker, can I provide an explanation of the behaviour of trade union officials in public forums? I must congratulate Rod Ellis who has largely had the public carriage of this debate. He has been a model of correctness who has resisted all attempts to personalise the dispute and who has put, as his main objective, the settlement of the dispute on fair and reasonable grounds. It is to his credit and the credit of the other trade union negotiators that such a successful outcome was reached. It is not to the credit of the honourable minister opposite that, after agreement has been reached, he still goes for the knife in a last minute attempt to undermine what has taken place.

Mr Speaker, that brings us to another part of the problem and another reason why we moved this motion of censure. Even when he took over on 7 July, the Chief Minister was unable to control that hopeless innocent opposite, that person who had no real interest in resolving the problem but wanted only to make some ideological point of his own. His ideological point was quite clear, Mr Speaker. He considers public servants to be 'fat cats' and, quite clearly, he wanted to get rid of some of their terms and conditions of employment, no matter what the price. I can understand why, in that circumstance, he and the Chief Minister failed to agree and had some heated discussion. But what I cannot understand and what I do not believe the people of the Northern Territory should tolerate is that the personal animosities between those 2 people, the personal disagreements between those 2 people that, at times, were taken into Cabinet, had the effect of slowing down the possibility of reaching agreement in these discussions. What should have been a 3- or 4-week exercise with competent government administrators turned out to be an 8-week exercise. What should have been a reasonably amicable exercise, with goodwill on both sides, turned out to be an exercise where the government

of the Northern Territory was on the verge of being brought to a standstill, and that is no exaggeration.

There is no doubt that, if this matter had not been resolved, the public servants of the Northern Territory would have been prepared to bring the government of the Northern Territory to a standstill. And, Mr Speaker, one would have had to have had a great deal of sympathy for them, if only for the reason that the job of negotiating and discussing these deals was made so much harder by the inability of the 2 prime government negotiators to agree, to adopt a common line and to adopt a consistent approach on the whole matter. It was interesting that, last week, when the Chief Minister was out of town or still asleep, the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services made the unilateral decision that it was all off. It was only as a result of the efforts of the Chief Minister, over a quiet beer at the show, I understand, that the discussions got moving again. What I am saying is that, if the Chief Minister had been on top of his job, he would not have allowed that situation to occur in the first place.

Another point made by the Chief Minister in his speech this morning was that, after 1 July, there was a cooling-off period. Mr Speaker, he and I have a completely different understanding of what a cooling-off period is. I cannot find my copy of the full-page advertisement now but, certainly, those full-page advertisements were running full steam during the period which the Chief Minister now describes as a 'cooling-off period'. Again, those full-page advertisements were inflammatory and made the job of discussing this matter on a rational basis that much harder. Of course, the Chief Minister also has problems with sums and basic addition. At one stage in this debate, he started a process of explaining where the \$101m came from. He said there was a \$56.1m general purpose cutback, \$14.4m negative special grant, a \$10m semi-government loan-raising cutback and a 29.9% capital program cutback. On a quick calculation, that amounts to \$109m.

Now we have 4 or 5 sets of figures that we can throw in the air and pluck them 1 by 1 according to what suits us. The Treasurer talks about \$130m and says that, if the departmental wish lists are allowed for, another \$30m or \$40m can be added to that. The Chief Minister talks about \$109m or \$110m. We also have the former official figure of \$101m. The government, in effect, has conceded \$5m on the question of leave loading. I have no doubt about that and I am sure that the Chief Minister, who is experienced in industrial relations, knows that the government will not achieve the savings it would like to achieve in respect of the removal of leave loading.

We again have 4 or 5 sets of figures. No wonder the people of the Northern Territory are confused. It is not surprising that they have sheeted home the blame in this matter to where it clearly lies: with the Chief Minister and the government. The people of the Northern Territory have been very patient with the Chief Minister. He came in promising a new broom, promising to sweep away the excesses of the previous government. He even promised to abolish credit card abuses. He withdrew all the credit cards, but that did not stop his ministers building up credit card debts of \$91 000 in 12 months. That is not a bad effort in terms of personal restraint when people in the lower echelons of the Northern Territory Public Service were being asked to make a sacrifice of 10% of their salaries. That is a wonderful example, and I would have to say that the public servant who leaked that information has performed a very real public service.

Mr Dale: So you do say that!

Mr SMITH: Yes I do, because that is a public service.

Mr Dale: You would do it too, would you Terry?

Mr SMITH: I would indeed. That sort of information deserves ..

Mr Coulter: You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Mr Ede: Why should he be ashamed?

Mr Leo: You are just a bunch of sharks and thieves.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his chair. The member for Nhulunbuy will withdraw that remark.

Mr Leo: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: All honourable members will cease interjections and the Leader of the Opposition will be heard in silence.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The events of the last 7 or 8 weeks mean that public servants will more thoroughly examine their obligations to the wider public in determining their actions in relation to this government. I put it on the record that public servants have an obligation to put before the public items of expenditure that they believe are inappropriate or instances where they believe funds have been wrongly spent. Quite clearly, the Public Accounts Committee shares that view. I support the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee in his invitation to public servants of the Northern Territory to identify problems. I lend my support to his call because it will lead to better government in the Northern Territory and it may finally put an end to the view of some government frontbenchers that the government bank account is simply an extension of their own bank accounts. That has been the view of members of this government, particularly certain members smirking away on the frontbench, ever since self-government. Public servants are saying that this must stop and, if ministers are not prepared to do it themselves, public servants will do it for them. I say that that is a proper role for public servants in the Northern Territory.

Mr Dale: Give us ...

Mr Leo: You parasite!

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, the basis of this debate is the failure of the Chief Minister ...

Mr PERRON: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for Nhulunbuy has made an unparliamentary remark and should be asked to withdraw it.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order.

Mr Leo: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, this censure motion has not been put lightly by the opposition. There has been some comment about the frequency of censure motions moved by the opposition in the last few months. The point is that, during the last few months, there have been a number of excesses undertaken by

this government and we in the opposition do not support them. The last 8 weeks have shown the incapacity of the Chief Minister and the government to administer the affairs of the Northern Territory in the interests of all Territorians. An industrial dispute has been prolonged unnecessarily by the Chief Minister's failure to take proper charge of it at the right time. The government's propositions concerning public servants' salaries and conditions were unreasonable in the extreme and would not have been put if the matter had been properly thought through. Now that they have been thought through, they are to be withdrawn.

We have had propositions put to parents of pre-school children, old age pensioners and nursing mothers which are also inappropriate for a caring and compassionate government. The people of the Northern Territory expect better. We demand better and we will get better government. We do not intend to sit idly by and let the government wreck the Northern Territory. Everybody has worked too hard to make the Territory a better place for that to happen. Unfortunately, the only way that can happen is through members opposite expediting what they are already planning, dump the Chief Minister now and get someone who can provide leadership to the people of the Northern Territory.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 9	Noes 16
Mr Bell	Mr Coulter
Mr Collins	Mr Dale
Mr Ede	Mr Dondas
Mr Lanhupuy	Mr Finch
Mr Leo	Mr Firmin
Mrs Padgham-Purich	Mr Hanrahan
Mr Smith	Mr Harris
Mr Tipiloura	Mr Hatton
Mr Tuxworth	Mr McCarthy
	Mr Manzie
	Mr Palmer
	Mr Perron
	Mr Poole
	Mr Reed
	Mr Setter
	Mr Vale

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday 18 August 1987 at 10 am or such other time and or date as may be set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak against this motion. I only recently found out what the existing procedure is. I will start by explaining why we are opposing the motion and not proposing an amendment. Standing order 31 relates to sitting days and it says: 'Unless otherwise ordered, the Assembly shall sit for the dispatch of business on each Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at 10 am'. The effect of our opposing the motion is that, if successful, we will be back here tomorrow. Unless there were another motion proposal tomorrow, we would then be here on Thursday.

I made a public call last week. It is interesting that the government has responded by leaving the August sittings in place ...

Mr Perron: We did not respond to you. They have never been cancelled.

Mr SMITH: ... and adding an extra week in September to allow us to discuss the federal budget.

From reading the NT News report, I thought that the Leader of the Government Business had responded quite directly to my comment because he commented that he hoped that it would stop me whingeing. I apologise to the Leader of Government Business if in fact he was not responding to me.

Mr Speaker, although that will go some way towards resolving the problems that we have had with the 1-day sittings, it by no means goes all the way. We have a number of problems with 1-day sittings. First, there is the cost. It costs a considerable sum of money to bring members in from outside Darwin for these sittings and to pay for their accommodation. In my view, we should be making better use of the money that is being spent this week.

Of course, Mr Speaker, we cannot debate nothing but there are certainly many issues on which we could profitably spend time on Wednesday and Thursday. Some of those issues may well not have the same relevance in 3 or 4 weeks time. In our view, it is only proper and appropriate that the sittings be extended this week to allow full and proper discussion on these particular matters. I will refer to some of them.

There have been a number of concerns in relation to the Skywest exercise. I would have thought that the Northern Territory government would have taken the opportunity provided by this sitting to provide a full explanation now that the whole matter is no longer sub judice. I would have thought that that full explanation at least would have outlined the reasons why the government so vigorously opposed the honouring of the contract to Skywest after it had been approved by the former Minister for Health and others. I would have thought that the government would have taken the opportunity to outline the costs involved in fighting that legal action. In the course of the debate, I would hope that the government would indicate, in respect of the residual court case with Air North, whether it has picked up Air North's legal expenses. Those are legitimate questions which relate to the use of taxpayers' money. Particularly in these very tight economic times, we should have had the opportunity to debate those matters. I would remind the Public Accounts Committee that this whole question was referred to it. Now that the matter is no longer sub judice, I trust that the Public Accounts Committee will put in place procedures for the examination of those particular issues.

Mr Speaker, another matter that I would like to pursue relates to the sale of properties at Gardens Hill. I understand that there are a number of new units there and that the Housing Commission is in the process of entering into an agreement to purchase about \$1m worth of units. If that is true, that is a very serious matter and it deserves the full consideration of this House. I do not have to remind the longer-serving members of this House about the controversy surrounding Gardens Hill whereby it was an under-the-lap deal to a developer. It was not put out to public tender and it was to be exclusive residential accommodation. There were drawings of 12-storey towers and penthouse-type accommodation.

What do we have? The first lot of units on that particular block were built specifically for the Housing Commission. A second lot of units were

built for private sale and a third lot of units have been completed recently. I would like the opportunity to pursue that matter this week. I understand that the units have been offered to the Housing Commission and it is in the process of purchasing them. That is another issue that we want to explore in the next 2 days of these sittings.

Mr Speaker, a third issue relates to the credit card frolics. There was a very clear statement by the Chief Minister when he took over that the so-called credit card extravagances of the previous administration would stop. In fact, he recalled credit cards from ministers and senior public servants, or at least he said he did. We have a situation where - and no one has denied it - on the basis of documents leaked to the NT News, \$91 000 appears to have been spent on credit card purchases in the last financial year. There have been some pretty impressive spenders. The Leader of the Government Business is way out in front. The member for Casuarina, on a monthly basis, probably has an even higher expenditure. I will make sure that the public servants of the Northern Territory know that Northern Territory government ministers go out to lunch, take their friends and acquaintances with them and then pay for it through their taxes.

Mr Coulter: What a laugh.

Mr SMITH: Each time the Treasurer opens his mouth, we find out a bit more about how he thinks the government bank account is his private bank account and how he goes about freely spending its money. I am sure that the public servants of the Northern Territory will be very impressed indeed that the money that they pay in tax is being spent by the Treasurer and his colleagues over lunch. That is a great admission and that is the reason why we want to talk about credit cards in here. No one can spend \$91 000 over lunch; there must be other areas where it is spent as well. I would like to know and the public of the Northern Territory would like to know whether those expenses are legitimate or not.

Of course, the Chief Minister says that the matter will be referred to the Auditor-General. The Auditor-General will not make that sort of judgment. He will make judgments only about whether the proper processes have been followed, and that is his role. It is this parliament and the people of the Northern Territory who will make judgments about whether that money has been spent properly, and it is this parliament's right to inspect the records on those American Express and other credit card purchases and find out what purchases have been made, and I give ...

Mr Hanrahan: Rubbish, absolute rubbish! Why don't you join the public service?

Mr SMITH: For the record, that was the Leader of Government Business, who said that the people of the Northern Territory do not have a right to know what he spent \$16 000 on during last financial year. Last year, he spent \$16 000 of taxpayers' money on credit card purchases and he is saying to the people of the Northern Territory that they don't have a right to know what the money was spent on. The people of the Northern Territory will be very interested indeed in that response. Thus the club of 1 extends to the club of 2, the government bank account being their private bank account and they can do what they like with it.

Mr Speaker, I tell you that that will no longer wash in the Northern Territory. As I said before, a lasting consequence of the public service dispute is that public servants will be much more aware of such things and, I

am sure, they will bring those matters to the attention of the people of the Northern Territory, and so they should if ministers, like the Leader of Government Business, are going to act in such an irresponsible manner as that.

Mr Hanrahan: There is nothing irresponsible about it at all.

Mr SMITH: I will have great pleasure in extracting this portion of Hansard and giving it wide circulation.

Mr Speaker, one of the other areas that we want to discuss in the next 2 days of the sittings is the government's decision to transfer \$15m out of the superannuation fund to the Consolidated Fund in exchange for 300 mortgages.

Mr Coulter: You have had the answer.

Mr SMITH: We received a bit of an answer from the Treasurer, but there are other questions that relate to the whole question of employees' superannuation in the Northern Territory. One of them is why, 6 or 9 months after the superannuation fund has been established, we still do not have a superannuation investment trust that the act provides for. Why don't we have a superannuation investment trust for the employees' funds in the superannuation fund, and how is that money being invested, by whom is that money being invested and under whose authority? That is a series of questions which we would like to pursue in the next 2 days.

Mr Speaker, another area that we want to pursue is the matter of employment of school leavers in the Northern Territory Public Service. There are contradictory signs about the number of school leavers employed in the Northern Territory Public Service. We all remember the statement made by the Chief Minister during the election campaign that there would be a sizeable number of school leavers employed in the public service - something like 250, from memory. But, on the evidence I have seen, a significantly lesser number of school leavers are currently employed in the Northern Territory Public Service. I want to pursue that matter in the next 2 days of these sittings.

Mr Perron: You might have an empty diary but others don't.

Mr SMITH: The member for Nhulunbuy wasn't listening but he could have added that to his list of gems from the member for Fannie Bay. Of course, the member for Fannie Bay has never had a proper appreciation of the role of parliament in the democratic process. If ever, heaven forbid, he made it to the position of Chief Minister, I am sure we would find that there would be fewer sitting days. He would probably try to outdo Joh Bjelke-Petersen and not have sitting days. It is interesting that, in the parliamentary constitutional committee, one of the recommendations that we had before us was that parliament should meet at least once a year. It was because of people like the member for Fannie Bay, and particularly because of the attitudes expressed by the member for Fannie Bay on a regular basis, that I have tried to tighten that up very stringently indeed because I know from the track record of the honourable member that that is the way that he would go. It is to his shame that he is prepared to advance an attitude like that and to say that his diary is full and he could not make an extra couple of days of sittings. I remind him that the sittings of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly are the most appropriate means of obtaining the proper information and debating the issues of concern to Territorians.

Mr Palmer: He wants to pay for his ALP conference.

Mr Perron: You want all your members to be here for the conference on the weekend at the expense of the taxpayer. Is that it?

Mr SMITH: I would think that people in glass houses should not throw stones.

Mr Speaker, there is one other very broad matter that we would have spent quite considerable time debating: cuts to education and health budgets. Although it did form part of the censure debate, the structure of the censure debate did not allow full exploration of those issues. There is widespread and genuine concern in the community over the cuts that have been in relation to both education and health.

Mr Manzie: Once people understand the truth, they will be okay, Terry.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, in response to that interjection from the Minister for Education, I would have thought that he might well have appreciated the opportunity to make a full and comprehensive statement to this Assembly about those cuts and about the document 'Directions for the Nineties'. I would have thought equally that the Minister for Health and Community Services would have appreciated the opportunity to make a full and public statement to this Assembly about the health cuts that he has put in place. But, no ...

Mr Dale: You don't like full and comprehensive answers from me.

Mr SMITH: Not in question time, we don't. Ministerial statements are the appropriate vehicle for full and comprehensive explanations. It is a lesson that, unfortunately, the minister opposite has yet to learn. It is part of his responsibilities to ensure that this Assembly and, through this Assembly, the people of the Northern Territory have a complete understanding of what is going on. The ministers could have explained the justification for these cuts in this Assembly. They could have done that in a very comprehensive form that is not available to them outside this House, but they are running scared.

I suspect that, when one considers the health and education cuts, the public reaction that there has been to them, and the pressure that must be on the government, particularly backbenchers of the government, that is the real reason why the government does not intend to sit on Wednesday and Thursday this week. The government is intent on hiding these cuts under the carpet and of not explaining to the people of the Northern Territory what these cuts are about and the reasons why they have been made. Mr Speaker, I cannot think of any other reason why the government would be reluctant to sit on Wednesday and Thursday of this week. I have outlined a large number of reasons why we should sit during this week and, even at this late stage, I would ask the government to reconsider its position.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, to be brief, I believe the thing that is at issue here is the absolute incompetence of members opposite, in particular the Leader of the Opposition who may or may not be able to count. Last year, this Legislative Assembly sat for 24 days. This year, we have scheduled 30 days, and the Leader of the Opposition has known that for quite a few months. He was notified yesterday that, as well as the 2 additional special sitting days, there are to be 3 extra days in September. These are necessary for good government, not to suit the Leader of the Opposition. That makes a total of 35 days that this Legislative Assembly may sit.

I am surprised at some of the issues that the Leader of the Opposition has raised. Let us be quite clear that nobody on this side of the House denies the Leader of the Opposition the right to raise whatever issues he decides to. In fact, if he was any good at it, he would be raising a few more issues. However, we are not here for the convenience of the Leader of the Opposition. We are here to ensure that good government occurs and that a legislative program proceeds in accordance with the schedule and the desire of the government of the day.

I want to raise one issue which really highlights the incompetence of the Leader of the Opposition and his preparedness to throw precedence to the wind. He would be well aware that the Skywest issue has been referred to the Public Accounts Committee, but he has said that he would like us to sit tomorrow to discuss that issue. The Leader of the Opposition knows that it was not even referred to the Public Accounts Committee until the legal issues had been settled before the courts. Is he suggesting that this Assembly should override the Public Accounts Committee and discuss the matter before receiving the committee's report? That simply is not on.

I have no problem with the Leader of the Opposition raising the other issues in the course of the sittings of this Assembly. He had the choice to raise some of these issues this morning. Let us face it, they would have been far more interesting and cogent than some of the ludicrous matters he raised in his efforts to pander to some people in the Trades and Labor Council in order to make himself look good before the ALP conference this week. I repeat that this government is not here for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition or members opposite. It is here to ensure that good government occurs and to carry out a legislative program.

Mr Smith: When are you going to start?

Mr HANRAHAN: I repeat that the Leader of the Opposition cannot even count. There are 35 days scheduled for sittings of this Assembly.

Mr Smith: I do not think I mentioned any number of days.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Speaker, he made the bland assumption, based on what presumption I do not know, that this government intended to cancel the August sittings. We never had any intention of cancelling the August sittings. We have a budget program in place that we intend to proceed with. We are scheduling an extra 3 days in case we are again cut off at the knees by the federal government and have to alter our budget. No doubt the Leader of the Opposition will have ample opportunity to discuss various issues on the sitting days scheduled in 3 weeks time. All I can say to him is that I thank him for the agenda.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 17

Noes 8

Mr Collins

Mr Coulter

Mr Dale

Mr Dondas

Mr Finch

Mr Firmin

Mr Hanrahan

Mr Harris

Mr Bell

Mr Ede

Mr Lanhupuy

Mr Leo

Mrs Padgham-Purich

Mr Smith

Mr Tipiloura

Mr Tuxworth

I am surprised at some of the issues that the Leader of the Opposition has raised. Let us be quite clear that nobody on this side of the House denies the Leader of the Opposition the right to raise whatever issues he decides to. In fact, if he was any good at it, he would be raising a few more issues. However, we are not here for the convenience of the Leader of the Opposition. We are here to ensure that good government occurs and that a legislative program proceeds in accordance with the schedule and the desire of the government of the day.

I want to raise one issue which really highlights the incompetence of the Leader of the Opposition and his preparedness to throw precedence to the wind. He would be well aware that the Skywest issue has been referred to the Public Accounts Committee, but he has said that he would like us to sit tomorrow to discuss that issue. The Leader of the Opposition knows that it was not even referred to the Public Accounts Committee until the legal issues had been settled before the courts. Is he suggesting that this Assembly should override the Public Accounts Committee and discuss the matter before receiving the committee's report? That simply is not on.

I have no problem with the Leader of the Opposition raising the other issues in the course of the sittings of this Assembly. He had the choice to raise some of these issues this morning. Let us face it, they would have been far more interesting and cogent than some of the ludicrous matters he raised in his efforts to pander to some people in the Trades and Labor Council in order to make himself look good before the ALP conference this week. I repeat that this government is not here for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition or members opposite. It is here to ensure that good government occurs and to carry out a legislative program.

Mr Smith: When are you going to start?

Mr HANRAHAN: I repeat that the Leader of the Opposition cannot even count. There are 35 days scheduled for sittings of this Assembly.

Mr Smith: I do not think I mentioned any number of days.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Speaker, he made the bland assumption, based on what presumption I do not know, that this government intended to cancel the August sittings. We never had any intention of cancelling the August sittings. We have a budget program in place that we intend to proceed with. We are scheduling an extra 3 days in case we are again cut off at the knees by the federal government and have to alter our budget. No doubt the Leader of the Opposition will have ample opportunity to discuss various issues on the sitting days scheduled in 3 weeks time. All I can say to him is that I thank him for the agenda.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 17

Noes 8

Mr Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Finch
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris

Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Smith
Mr Tipiloura
Mr Tuxworth

on private-sector employers. The benefits offered by the government to employees have long placed private employers at a distinct disadvantage in the employment marketplace. The bill now before the House will, with time, effectively do away with conditions of service not available to public servants in other parts of Australia. These unique employment conditions of the Northern Territory Public Service have had a major impact on the private sector.

Mr Speaker, I would now like to outline briefly the bill before the House. This bill applies to all existing employees of the government, including teachers, the police force and those working for statutory authorities. I might add that the bill will not affect the work value restructuring decisions for Territory nurses which are currently in the final phase of implementation. Clause 4(2) of the bill also carries an exemption provision enabling individuals or groups to be excluded from this application under special circumstances. Clause 6 provides a legislative base for amendments to be made to the public service terms and conditions bylaws, pursuant to the Public Service Act. Clause 7 carries a provision ensuring that its application shall not be construed so as to acquire property. The intention is that the act can be implemented to the fullest possible extent, up to the limit of the Territory's power. To the extent that an aspect of the act in relation to an employee's entitlement is beyond power, the other aspects that are within power will remain enforceable and not be affected by that failure. In other words, the offending effect is to be severable. Clause 8 amends section 40(5) and section 60(5) of the Public Service Act. These subsections deal with the entitlements of compulsory transferees. Those entitlements are now subject to the provisions of this bill as are those covered by the Teaching Service Act.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to the content of the agreement. The Northern Territory allowance will be reduced from its current levels of \$2237 for employees with dependants and \$1237 for those without dependants to new minimum levels of \$960 for those with dependants and nothing for those without dependants. The reductions in Territory allowance will occur in 2 stages, on 1 September this year and 1 July next year. Those dates were the dates set down by the Arbitration Commission for the earliest possible implementation of the 2 stages of the second tier. The reductions in Territory allowance will be offset by the implementation of the 4% second-tier national wage increase in 2 stages of 2% on 1 September 1987 and 2% on 1 July 1988. New employees will receive these minimum levels on commencement, regardless of salary. However, in keeping with the government's overall philosophy of not reducing the content of pay packets, no current employee will find himself worse off as a result. Through negotiations, the government has effectively reduced the payment of Territory allowance and assured that, with time, this allowance will constitute only a minimal component of the overall public service wages bill.

Agreement with the Trades and Labor Council has also resulted in a 6-month deferral of the first half of the 3% productivity superannuation increase proposed by the Arbitration Commission in 1986. To be clear, the government in no way concedes the superannuation issue. However, negotiations on superannuation will not commence until early next year and the implementation of any agreement reached through those negotiations will not take place before 1 July 1988.

As part of the deal with the unions, the government will also implement cost-cutting proposals made by the TLC task force. The TLC proposals concern improved efficiencies within the public service which eventually will lead to some reductions in staffing levels. I would also like to foreshadow that the

Northern Territory government will be approaching the Arbitration Commission in an effort to eliminate from public service awards the 17½% leave loading for non-shift workers. The government will also be taking administrative action to eliminate drive-out time on annual leave for new recruits.

The government will be taking similar administrative action in relation to air fares for new recruits from 1 August this year. In addition, the government will move to mop up air fares for new recruits in areas covered by awards. As members would realise, the provision of recreation air fares for employees and their dependants produces a major cost not only for the government but also for private sector employers forced to compete with the government in the employment marketplace. Not only have Territory employers had to contend with the spiralling cost of air fares but also the additional 49% impost on each fare caused by the fringe benefits tax. It was imperative that this hangover from the days of the Commonwealth administration of the Territory was done away with. The mind boggles at the likely impact of recreation air fares on the Territory public service wages bill in 25 or perhaps 50 years time were this action not taken now.

The agreement reached with the TLC, combined with the additional actions being taken by the government, has now provided an opportunity for Territory employers eventually to rid themselves of this crippling burden. The agreement reached with the TLC will provide significant long-term benefits for the Territory economy by eventually more closely aligning it with the various state economies around Australia in respect of wages bills. This must benefit the Territory.

Mr Speaker, as a further aside, I would like to say that I understand that I may have misquoted something in relation to the superannuation negotiations. The negotiations are to commence not later than 1 January 1988. That is the intent of the proposals.

Referring back to the negotiations that have taken place over the last 8 weeks or so, I would like to bring to light a document. This is the terms of reference set down for our negotiations and agreed to by the Trades and Labor Council in June of this year. I would like to read the terms of reference:

(A) A consultation process will be established to consider budget cuts in the public service areas - cuts which are to the value of \$21.5m in real dollar terms, achievable in the 1987-88 financial year and to be an ongoing level of reduction.

(B) The attached range of options put forward by the government will be considered and their dollar values will be those prepared by the Northern Territory Treasury. Other options may be put forward by the government and will be considered.

(C) The TLC may put forward other options for consideration together with attaching dollar values which in turn will be assessed and dollar valued by the Northern Territory Treasury. These options must be realistic and achievable dollar terms and able to produce immediate savings and be continuing, long-term savings.

(D) With the consultative process, the parties will establish priorities of their least preferred/most preferred standings in relation to the options under consideration.

(E) Where possible, agreements should be reached within the consultative process to identify a saving of \$21.5m for 1987-88 and \$21.5m in each subsequent financial year.

(F) Where second-tier increases are to be considered, they will be on the basis of no extra costs to government and the costs offsets to be over and above the \$21.5m.

(G) The consultative approach is to conclude no later than 24 June 1987 when, at that stage, the government will take on board all options considered, in particular those which have been agreed as preferred cuts. The government will then determine those cuts to be applied from 1 July 1987 or any date following.

(H) Where an option or options have been agreed as a cut and it is contained in an award or a determination, then the parties will seek a consent variation of that award or determination to give effect to the cuts.

Those were the terms of reference agreed by both parties back in early June and, in the early stages, totally abrogated by the TLC. Fortunately, it did come back and discuss some of those issues and we have been able to arrive at an agreement that will have long-lasting and important effects for the Northern Territory. Once and for all, we have overcome the conditions of service that have stood out and above conditions of service everywhere else in Australia. If anybody believes that we could have avoided paying the 4% second tier in the long run, considering the federal government has caved in on this issue and a number of other employers have caved in on the issue, then he certainly would be naive.

The facts are that we have a deal that, once and for all, will do away with the Territory allowance. The \$23m will now become something like \$4m a year that we will pay to a very limited number of public servants. We will do away with 20% of our air fares and that will be something that no other government has been able to achieve.

I think it was the member for Barkly who said this afternoon that I had said it was something that had never been done in the Territory before. I said it is something that has never been done in Australia before. Nowhere in Australia has a government been able to sit down with the unions and work out a deal that would take away conditions of service. We have achieved a reduction in conditions of service that will have ongoing benefits for the Northern Territory. Had we not gone down this line of conceding the second tier, I believe we would have not only had the second tier to contend with next year but also the Territory allowance in full to contend with. Both of them would have been there. Now we will have only the increases to the second tier which, in relation to most employees, will be within the next 12 to 18 months.

It is a good deal and I would expect that the opposition will not in any way oppose the bill given that it picks up the agreements of the TLC and the Territory government. There are a couple of areas that will go to arbitration and a couple of areas that we will be able to move on unilaterally. Those actions will occur in the very near future. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent the Stamp Duty Amendment Bill (Serial 52) and the Taxation (Administration) Amendment Bill (Serial 51) (a) being presented and read a first time together and 1 motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stages and the third readings of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

STAMP DUTY AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 52)
TAXATION (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 51)

Bills presented, by leave, and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, the purpose of these bills is to vary the basis on which tourism marketing duty is to be assessed from a fixed to an ad valorem duty. Tourism marketing duty was introduced at a fixed rate and required duty stamps to be placed on accommodation invoices. However, as a consequence of industry submissions and the government's desire to minimise compliance costs, it has been decided it is appropriate to change to the ad valorem duty for which the industry has indicated a preference.

An ad valorem duty of this nature recognises the variable capacity of individual accommodation houses to pay. Whilst the thrust and the purpose of the existing provisions remain unchanged, the bill requires changes to be made to the means of collecting the duty. These amendments introduce both the change to the rate of the duty as well as the appropriate administrative procedures, including the payment of the duty on a return basis.

In introducing payment by way of a monthly return, the bill also provides for the commissioner to approve the period for a return to be extended beyond 1 month in certain circumstances. The return incorporates a simple process of assessment requiring the accommodation house merely to identify the amount received for the relevant accommodation component of the periods of let during the return period and then applying the rate of 2.5% to that amount. This means that accommodation houses will collect the duty during the return period and then forward it to the commissioner with the return. The system is largely one of self-assessment and the return form will be in the nature of a summary of the amount set out in the relevant invoices issued during the return period.

Registration of accommodation houses will be required and this will proceed during the month of August. Provision has been made in the bill to minimise revenue loss which may occur through the use of schemes to avoid the duty. Additionally, accommodation houses will be required to keep a certain record which may be inspected from time to time. As a transitional concession, recognising that hardship may be suffered by some organisations during the introduction period, consideration will be given to waiving liability to pay the duty where an organisation can demonstrate, by evidence of existing contracts or other such means, an inability to collect the duty.

This concession is available only with respect to existing arrangements relating to the period up to 1 April 1988.

Mr Speaker, I believe that the changes I have outlined are appropriate and I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION

Alteration of Order of Business

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that orders of the day relating to the Public Employment (Modification of Terms and Conditions of Employment) Bill (Serial 53), the Stamp Duty Amendment Bill (Serial 52) and the Taxation (Administration) Amendment Bill (Serial 51) be called on forthwith in that order.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Alteration of Order of Business

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Stamp Duty Amendment Bill (Serial 52) and the Taxation (Administration) Amendment Bill (Serial 51) be called on forthwith.

Motion agreed to.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, we have a fundamental problem with urgency in relation to these bills. It is a point that has been demonstrated quite vividly in the press and throughout the industry in the Northern Territory. The government got it completely wrong last time. It made a complete mess of its attempts to introduce a bed tax. It put the most important industry in the Northern Territory at risk. It is now attempting to have a second crack at the same issue, a second bite of the cherry, without giving this House a reasonable amount of time to consider the legislation, to examine its provisions and discuss its implications. For example, we have noticed some changes in the length of periods people have to stay in lodgings in order to be considered as contributing to revenue under the revised legislation.

Even after the very brief time we have had in which to consider this legislation, we would have like to propose amendments. However, we are not being given time to frame amendments and put them in an attempt to ensure that the legislation is at least halfway reasonable. That is why we are opposing urgency on this legislation.

Motion negated.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Public Employment (Modification of Terms and Conditions of Employment) Bill (Serial 52) passing through all stages at this sitting.

Motion agreed to.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT (MODIFICATION OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS
OF EMPLOYMENT) BILL
(Serial 53)

Continued from page 1097.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports this legislation. As far as I am able to ascertain, and I do accept the good faith of the government, it reflects the negotiated settlement between the government and the various public service unions that was agreed to by the union membership this morning. I have a number of queries which I would like to put to the minister and I hope he can reply to them in his reply to the second reading.

I want to refer to clause 4 which relates to the application of the legislation. I am particularly concerned with subclause (2) which reads: 'The minister may, by notice in the Gazette, declare that a person, or members of a class of persons specified in the notice, is not a person or are not persons to whom this act applies'. I wonder if the minister would care to be more specific about the intended application of that subclause. What persons or classes of persons is it intended to apply to? I ask him whether part of the agreement between the government and the public service unions was that the changes to working conditions were to be applied universally. If that is the case, what is the necessity for subclause (2)? I would appreciate some clarification on that matter.

I also have some difficulty with the next clause. I appreciate its necessity but I have some difficulty about its intent and whether or not it is legally sustainable. My reading of clause 5 indicates that we can have conflicting legislation in the Northern Territory. It indicates that those contracts which have been entered into can be nullified via this piece of legislation. I will read the clause once again for other honourable members:

Notwithstanding any other law in force in the Territory, an instrument of the Legislative Assembly or administrative charter made under such a law, a contract or agreement (whether or not in writing) or an agreement or understanding (whether or not expressed), but subject to section 10, to the extent that it is within the legislative power of the Legislative Assembly so to provide and not inconsistent with an award or order made under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1904 of the Commonwealth, the terms and conditions of employment of a person to whom this act applies shall be construed subject to schedule 1 or a provision referred to in that schedule.

I accept that there may be some necessity to spell this matter out in legislation but I would like an assurance from the minister that there will not be endless litigation as a consequence of this clause. In a very convoluted way, the clause says that this bill will override existing legislation in terms of contracts. It makes very specific reference to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act but, in the case of contracts made between the government and its employees, this legislation can override existing contractual arrangements. That is my understanding of what the clause entails and what it enables the government to do, and I would like a reassurance from the minister that we will not get into a round of endless litigation. I suspect that there are persons, to whom this clause will apply, who will seek to exercise their right at law to test whether their existing contractual arrangements can be maintained.

As I have said, the opposition has no difficulty in accepting this legislation. It is another victory for sanity and there are not too many victories for sanity in the Northern Territory. This has provided one at long last. It has been a very tortuous process. I hope we will not be back withdrawing or amending it in the very near future, and I hope that the minister can provide me with some explanation in relation to the 2 matters that I have raised.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I did not have the opportunity to speak in the earlier debate concerning the censure of the Chief Minister for his handling of various matters, to which this legislation represents the culmination. I would like to take the opportunity, in this second-reading speech, of passing a few comments about the extraordinary events of the past couple of months. I do so as the member for MacDonnell.

I dare say that most members' electorates have more people than mine, but many people in MacDonnell will be affected by this legislation. I welcome the agreement, albeit limited, between the trade union movement and the government. I note from the minister's second-reading speech that there are some continuing concerns which will be the subject of further negotiation between the government and the trade union movement. The measured tones in which the minister delivered his second-reading speech sit rather oddly with the hysterical display that he managed to turn on this morning. I want to make a number of points in relation to that and the first relates to exactly where the Australian Labor Party stands in relation to references made to the events which occurred outside during the last sitting day of this Assembly. It was quite clear to me that the spirit of Harold Nelson is alive and well. For those honourable members who are unaware of the historical associations, let me just dwell on them for a few short minutes.

The fact of the matter is that 2 generations of Nelsons represented the Northern Territory and were endorsed by the Australian Labor Party to do so. The Australian Labor Party will be celebrating its centenary, I believe, in 1991. Of course, that centenary will represent 100 years of attempts by the Australian Labor Party to maintain and enhance the living standards of Australian workers.

Mr Collins: And they don't do too badly, do they?

Mr BELL: I pick up the interjection from the member for Sadadeen. No, it has not done too badly but it was the result of considerable hard work and I dare say that several prison sentences were involved in winning many of the advantages that working people enjoy in this country. It was precisely the efforts of members of this government that provided the clearest possible demonstration of the need for organised labour in a free society. It is with considerable pride that I stand here to represent the Australian Labor Party and to endorse its place in the trade union movement. I offer my congratulations, not only to the hard working trade union leaders who have put a great deal of time into what has culminated in this legislation, but also to the vast mass of Territorians whose resolve was so badly underestimated by the Chief Minister and by the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services.

In fact, I have had conflicting feelings over the previous 2 months about this matter. I suppose my basic concern was to take whatever action might have been necessary to ensure that living standards of Territorians were not reduced unreasonably. It was quite clear from the contributions from the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the member for Nhulunbuy that this Country Liberal Party government is prepared to

sacrifice unreasonably the living standards of Territorians in order to cover up its own mistakes. In the context of this debate, I do not propose to rehearse those mistakes; they have had a good airing today. The people who are out there know exactly what they are, and I doubt that they will forget.

The facts of the matter are that, in these last 2 months, the political geography of the Northern Territory has been redrawn. In the last 10 years or so, the Australian Labor Party has often been seen in the Northern Territory to be interested only in issues of concern to Aboriginal Territorians. You would know, Mr Deputy Speaker, that, in no way, do I resile from any of those concerns, but the effect of this attitude that has been adopted by the Country Liberal Party government is to convince the electorate of the Northern Territory that both the trade union movement and the Australian Labor Party in the Northern Territory are their natural allies. That is not just a vain speech on my part. It is not just empty, hot air; the figures are there to prove it. I remind the Chief Minister and the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services of the results on 11 July. I would also like to remind the member for Jingili of the contumely that he heaped on the head of the then Labor candidate, now the Labor member for the Northern Territory, Warren Snowdon. I presume that the member for Jingili will rise in this debate, or perhaps in the adjournment this evening, and get out his knife and fork and swallow a few of those words. I hope he enjoys the meal. I fear, however, that those very words may stick in his throat.

I turn to the so-called riot that managed to raise the ire of the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services. Mr Deputy Speaker, I seriously consider and I urge you to seriously consider the actions of government members, particularly those on the frontbench. I do not know how many times I have seen on television the cheerful visage of the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services encircled by the brawny but long arm of the law as he was being hustled into the Legislative Assembly. He decided to describe that as a riot but, having viewed that little clip at least 20 times, the broad grin on his face suggested that perhaps the concerns that he was trying to get across to us today were, in fact, what I believe they were, simply crocodile tears.

Mr Dale: Do you reckon it was fun, do you?

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate that the Minister for Health and Community Services was certainly under some pressure but let me say that I flatly deny that any member of a trade union, any trade union leader, or the Leader of the Opposition, as the minister suggested, was responsible for the difficulties experienced in that fracas. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am quite sure that you were as stunned as I was by the insistence ...

Mr Dale: Were you there?

Mr Coulter: No, he was not there.

Mr Dale: No, that is the day he had a public holiday. That's right; he went away.

Mr Smith: What about a bit of protection, Mr Deputy Speaker!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, when the clowns have calmed down, I might be able to continue making a sensible contribution to this debate. I want to

place on record this one point: if the minister was concerned about a riot, I suggest he examine his own actions and the provocation that was provided to those people, including by the Treasurer and the Chief Minister, in what were clearly difficult circumstances. They decided, off their own bat, to cut the living standards way beyond what could be reasonably regarded as a rational burden, even in these times, and they wonder why people become cranky.

Without commenting on any of the charges that have been laid because, of course, they are sub judice, I would like to mention in passing that it is my intention to examine carefully those sections of the Criminal Code that determine what is an unlawful assembly and, at least on my reading of that section of the code, how extraordinarily subjective is a test of what an unlawful assembly is.

I remind honourable members of that well-known piece of legislation, the Riot Act. Of course, the Riot Act is legal history. Perhaps I should call on the parliamentary draftsman, whose understanding of constitutional history will undoubtedly surpass my meagre understanding, but my recollection is that the Riot Act was first enacted some time between 1815 and 1820 with the riots surrounding a possibly parallel situation. Basically, there was not enough tucker around and that caused considerable concern. In order to cope with the assemblies that occurred and to control them, this legislation was enacted.

As the Minister for Health and Community Services would be well aware, this predated the formation of the police force in the early years of the industrial revolution. I believe it was a Prime Minister, Robert Peel, who introduced the Peelers in 1829, as the date sticks in my mind. This is the reason why I have digressed. Even in 1820, you had to read the Riot Act so that the poor beggars who were out there assembling at least knew they were breaking it. It seems that these days you can be charged with unlawful assembly under this dreadful Criminal Code, sections of which are quite abhorrent and this, I suggest, is one that deserves consideration. People can be involved in this unlawful assembly, that somebody decides is unlawful on the basis of no objective test whatsoever, and find themselves in court with absolutely no warning whatsoever. I think that digression was worth making in the context of the goings on over the last couple of months.

The other thing that, as a casual observer, I found interesting has been the tennis match that has occurred between the minister responsible for this legislation and the prize negotiator, the Chief Minister. One week, he has it; another week, he hands the hot potato back to his minister and then he takes it back again. It is quite extraordinary to me that the Chief Minister does not seem to have too much faith in the capacity of his minister to handle these issues. I suppose I can understand that, Mr Deputy Speaker, after the Country Liberal Party has been dealt such a body blow at the ballot box. I think mention may have been made a little earlier in the debate of the comments of the Chief Minister.

One of the best laughs I have had in the last month or two was them lining up side by side. Mr Deputy Speaker, during the Chief Minister's adjournment speech at the end of the June sittings, you will recall the fulsome accolade he gave to the late-lamented Paul Everingham, how Paul came to the Territory in 1966, how he made such-and-such a contribution and how, whenever he chose to come back, he would be a most welcome visitor. I look at that contribution in the adjournment debate and then I put that beside the NT News that appeared on Saturday 11 July, as I recall, where the recipient of that accolade, the same Paul Everingham said: 'Well, if I were Peter Paroulakis, I would be punching Steve Hatton in the head'. I trust that the Chief Minister has

passed on his feelings about this extraordinary example of hubris, this extraordinary lack of gratitude, demonstrated by the erstwhile member for the Northern Territory, and I trust he will pass on the humour that we feel in having put the 2 comments together.

In closing, I wish to stress these points. I make this contribution as a Labor member of this Assembly and I make it as a representative of a fair number of public servants. Legislation like this affects the livelihoods of so many Territorians. This legislation will affect 10% or 20% of my electorate. I would think that, for example, in the electorate of the member for Leanyer, the percentage of public servants would be nearer 60% or 70%. The same would be the case in the electorate of the member for Ludmilla and even the electorate of the somnolent member for Karama. I should hasten to add that, from the figures I saw in relation to Araluen, 50% of the electorate are employed on the public payroll. I would certainly expect the member for Araluen to express a view on this particular legislation. Likewise there are many public servants in the Chief Minister's electorate of Nightcliff. But I dare say that they have been sufficiently horrified by the comments that the Chief Minister and the Minister for Labor and Administrative Services have made on this and the extraordinary hash that they have made of it. He has had to wander around Nightcliff putting out bushfires for weeks. I am sure the member for Palmerston has the same problem. Even in up-market Fannie Bay, I can imagine the honourable member would have been concerned.

Mr Speaker, I have been receiving mail from people in central Australia who, unfortunately, do not have the privilege of being represented in this Assembly by members of the Australian Labor Party. But they have chosen to make representations to Labor members because, as I said when I started out in this particular debate, the government has changed the political geography of the Northern Territory and those people have seen that the Australian Labor Party is the party that defends their living standards.

I hear a laugh from a few people. I can take that, Mr Speaker. I repeat it: the people out there have seen that the Australian Labor Party defends their living standards and the result on 11 July proved it. Let me say that that will carry through, not just for 2 years or 3 years or until the next election; this is a fundamental change in voting habits in the Northern Territory. The Australian Labor Party is seen as the vehicle for the aspirations of Australian people to maintain decent living standards on an equitable basis for themselves and their children.

While I am on the matter of an equitable basis, there is one thing I want to pick up. I had intended concluding at this point, but there is one thing I want to pick up from the minister's second-reading speech. He said: 'The bill now before the House will, with time, effectively do away with the conditions of service not available to public servants in other parts of Australia. These unique employment conditions in the Northern Territory Public Service have had a major impact upon the private sector'. Mr Speaker, I will deliver another little history lesson. From the time of the overland telegraph in 1871 onwards, in the vanguard of economic development in northern Australia has been the public sector. That is the reason why those employment conditions are there. Time and time again, we have had Country Liberal Party ministers saying that we must have an equality of services around the country. When they go cap-in-hand to the Commonwealth government, which they do less and less these days, they simply stand and scream from a distance. However, they say that conditions in the Northern Territory must reflect Territory circumstances.

I would just like to put that argument, that is so frequently made, with that comment from the minister's second-reading speech. It does not sit too well. The fact of the matter is that, in northern Australia generally, unlike elsewhere in Australia, it has been the public sector, solely at times, which has provided employment. The conditions that it provided had to be followed by the private sector which came latterly. I trust that the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services understands. Take the economic history of central Australia. Mr Speaker, you will be well aware of this with your keen interest in the Ghan Preservation Society and things historical. You will appreciate the economic impetus provided by the overland telegraph and by that very Ghan railway line which I know is so dear to your heart. It is exactly those public sector initiatives that have been the engine - excuse the metaphor - for economic development in the north.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: I am giving you blokes a lesson. It is a shame we cannot get something in standing orders so that some of the government backbenchers do not have to sit exams on these pearls of wisdom that I cast before them.

Mr Palmer: Show me one public sector initiative.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, you talk about the Ghan Preservation Society. I ask if the member for Karama is aware of the Whitlam government initiative in relation to the all-weather railway line from Tarcoola to Alice Springs. I appreciate the member for Karama was not involved in public life when it was opened in 1980. Although he may not be so aware of it, Mr Speaker, you would be aware of the improvement in goods available because of the provision of that particular railway service.

To be quite evenhanded about this, let me just say that this government has been responsible for some of those public initiatives. I refer to things such as the TIO and picking up the ball on the TAB that the opposition originally put forward. There is also some of its investment in the tourist industry. Those are basically public sector and excellent socialist initiatives.

I appreciate there are concerns in the private sector in the Northern Territory about not being able to compete with the public sector conditions in some regards. All I say is that I do not believe that that automatically implies that public sector conditions should be reduced. I am not going to debate that at any length but what I am pointing out is that the implication in these 2 particular paragraphs of the honourable minister's comments to the House fly in the face of history. It indicates a total ignorance of the economic development of the Territory over time and he really needs to read a few history books in order to understand why there are problems with that particular section of his speech.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I reiterate that, as a member of the Australian Labor Party and as the member for MacDonnell with public sector employees in my electorate, I am delighted to see that there has been some effort at a negotiated settlement in this regard. I place on record that the Australian Labor Party will always stand for ensuring that the living standards of Territorians are maintained.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I rise to reply to the member for Nhulunbuy because he raised a couple of questions which I did propose to deal with. I am certain that those many Territorian pioneers involved in the

pastoral industry over the last 100 years and to which the member for MacDonnell's electorate is a major contributor and those pioneers in the mining industry, particularly the gold mining industry, which generated 90% of the Northern Territory's GDP for a century, would appreciate his advice that the public sector has been the engine of development of the Northern Territory for the last 100 years.

Mr Bell: If you want to give me an extension of time, I will talk about them too.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, no one denies that the public sector performs a vital and important role in the administration and development of the Northern Territory. Much of the work done within the public sector provides research and opportunities for private industries to take up developments. That has never been a matter of dispute.

I am not going to keep beating an old drum because it makes us weary having to keep saying it. I am perpetually amazed at members opposite who have the audacity to stand in this House and say that their party always stands to preserve the lifestyles and living standards of ordinary Territorians and have not, in 2 months, make one whimper about what their federal colleagues have done to the people of the Northern Territory.

There is no doubt that this particular dispute commenced quite clearly on proper tracks. As the minister outlined, there was an agreement reached between the Trades and Labor Council and the minister for a process of negotiations to determine where the conditions of employment would be adjusted, an agreement that there is a need to find \$21.5m and a process that the minister sought desperately to get under way but which he was unable to do because of the refusal at that stage of the trade union movement to participate in that negotiating process. There is no doubt that it knowingly created a situation that forced the Northern Territory government to take some pre-emptive steps to bring the matter to a head and get negotiations under way. It is true that none of us enjoyed walking into this Assembly to present that bill. We did not do it with glee.

We certainly did not walk across the street with glee. The member for MacDonnell was not here. If he looks closely at the videos, he will see that so-called smile on the face of the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services was a grimace as he was being strangled by his tie by a howling mob. That is what that so-called smile was. If he had spoken to or seen the minister afterwards, and the cuts and bruises that he obtained in walking across a public street of Darwin, he would understand why the honourable minister referred to the matter as a riot.

Following that period, there has been a process of very exhaustive negotiations and I stand here and pay tribute to the members of the Public Service Commissioner's Office, to the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services and his staff and to the Trades and Labor Council for their perseverance and dedication to a very complex and emotional task. Anybody who assumes that you can address these sorts of problems without trauma and emotion has no comprehension of the industrial relations environment.

We understood that there would be difficulties. I will repeat that it is unprecedented in my work history to be placed in a situation of having to do that. It was not something that I enjoyed doing. It is something that is contrary to the entire principles by which I have worked throughout my professional career in industrial relations but it was something that had to

be addressed. We did not dodge the issue; we dealt with it head on and we took our bumps and bruises, politically, psychologically and physically. What we have achieved is something that, along with many of the other initiatives that we have instituted, sets a foundation on which the Northern Territory can rebuild its tax base and emerge out of the financial crisis that has been thrust on it.

This negotiation is part of a very wide-ranging package of restructuring, development and focusing of government that we have undergone. Very significant restructuring has taken place in the Northern Territory, particularly in the last 6 months. That change can now move into settling down and getting under way and we will see a better, more efficient, more effective public service and a more focused government and a much clearer push into development without the requirement of spending government money to promote private industry development. Given the whingeing and whining of the Leader of the Opposition about any government money that has been spent on development, I am sure he will praise that sort of initiative. To make any change is hard, but to make the level of change that we have instituted has been quite painful and is still in many respects quite painful as many of the government departments are wrestling with bringing their systems together and focusing their attention on the very difficult tasks they have at hand with fewer and fewer resources and facilities available from the Commonwealth government - facilities which, if we were a state, we would be entitled to. In fact, I think we would be better off financially as a state.

These conditions represent basically an agreement between the parties. There are parts in there on which we do not agree, in particular in respect of the air fares for new recruits. We will proceed to arbitration with respect to the 17½% leave loading. Let me tell honourable members opposite that it is certainly not a lay-down misere that will win that 17½% dispute. It is true the trade unions are feeling fairly confident in so far as that particular dispute is concerned. I remind honourable members and others who have been involved that there have been times when people have felt very confident of their positions in respect of particular conditions at arbitration in the past. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that that case can be won. Mr Speaker, I can assure you that it will not be a dispute in which the parties will be running dead. It will be a dispute in which the issue of 17½% loading for non-shift workers will be properly tested. I remind honourable members the architect of the 17½% loading, Clyde Cameron, has said recently that, in his view, he made a mistake in imposing that on employers and he believes it is an unjustified account. I remind honourable members that the Prime Minister has indicated that probably it is not really justified but it is there and maybe it is a thing that could be negotiated in the context of a second tier. I understand the difficulties of the task but let us not make the automatic assumption that it is a lay-down misere that we will lose that case. I do not accept that position at all and members will know that I will take that case quite seriously.

In respect of the air fares provisions, we have protected the existing conditions of existing employees in this legislation. However, it is time that the Northern Territory recognised that it is moving out of the period in its history when those things were essential requirements of an undeveloped, rudimentary, pioneering community to which people were flown in and out for 1, 2 or 3-year contract periods before being returned to their homes. It is time that people started to recognise that the Northern Territory, and Darwin in particular, is moving towards being a well-serviced community. Allow me to say also that it should be noted that 85% of recruits into the Northern Territory public sector are recruited locally in the Northern Territory. Gone

are the days when most of the people were recruited interstate. Of course, there are specialist positions that are recruited interstate. We are moving closer and closer to the point where we will be self-sufficient in the education and training of our nursing work force and we are moving closer and closer to the position where we will be self-sufficient in the provision of teachers. This year, I think there was a necessity to recruit only about 100 teachers from interstate and they were in the secondary specialist areas. Apart from that, they came from within our own local educational system.

The Northern Territory is evolving and developing. An aspect of that is the fact that we need to move to the stage where incentives such as air fares are not, and should not, be regarded as essential. Living in Darwin now is not fundamentally different, vis-a-vis other parts of Australia, than living in Perth. If a family moves from Sydney to Perth, the employer is not automatically required to provide air fares to fly them back to Sydney. The provision of air fares should no longer be applicable to the permanent Northern Territory Public Service. Such conditions have their roots in provision for the mobile work forces of the Commonwealth Public Service whereby people were being moved from one location to another around Australia. That was a particularly important circumstance that led to the air fares being provided to people in the Northern Territory, along with other specific conditions.

The health arguments about leaving the tropics really founder on empirical evidence when one realises that in the order of 80% of public servants who take their annual leave air fares fly north into the tropical zone of South-east Asia. Mr Speaker, I do not think you should normally assume that it would be reasonable that the employer should be required to provide employees with international holidays every 2 years. Many of the arguments that justified the air fares originally do not stand up now.

We are moving towards phasing out that air fare provision as we normalise the conditions of employment in the Northern Territory Public Service as part of the evolutionary process of the Northern Territory, just as we moved in previous times in the development of our housing policies into the private ownership of housing and a multitude of other initiatives that have been put into place - some good, some difficult, all part of an adjustment process in the development and evolution of the Northern Territory.

More importantly, as the minister has spelt out, we are creating an environment where, in the future, as this process occurs involving the removal of such things as drive-out time and air fares, the relative cost of employing people in the Northern Territory public sector will be reduced. I might say also that it will put the Northern Territory government in a far stronger bargaining position when dealing with the Grants Commission relativities review. I must add that we have been subjected to quite serious comment and criticism from the Grants Commission in previous reviews because of its stated view that these conditions are no longer justified and therefore should not be considered as reasonable costs in determination of the funding for the Northern Territory.

There are many imperatives in this but, in the end result, the fundamental importance of this document is that the necessary savings have been achieved through a very long process of negotiation. When I have been asked what negotiating is all about, I have often said that it is trying to reach a point where the parties find it less costly to agree than they find it to disagree. I pay tribute to the Trades and Labor Council in its efforts in that regard because I think we have arrived at a document here that meets the fundamental

imperatives, provides the savings and provides the platform to achieve the longer-term needs of the Northern Territory. Without doubt, in years to come, it will be seen as an historic agreement. It is not a soft agreement by any means. I do not think either of the parties would regard it genuinely in that way. It is an historic agreement in the development of the Northern Territory and represents the bringing of the Northern Territory generally into line with the rest of Australia. This bill merely brings into effect those conditions and those agreements.

Mr Speaker, I make no apologies at all for making a 6-year agreement. I have said to the trade union movement that we are not on any witch-hunt to attack the public service or public service conditions and nor have we been. We will face up to our responsibilities and take the knocks, if necessary, in doing that. But, I am quite clearly stating that my government will not be moving to launch any further attack. That is why we have a 6-year agreement. The foundations are there for a fair and equitable evolutionary process to adjust public sector conditions. We will not be seeking to enter into these types of major adjustments of conditions of employment again.

That is not to say that we will not have arguments with the trade unions, as employers and unions do from time to time. However, they will not be in this particular context. I trust the trade unions and the government can - and I believe will - continue to work together in the ensuing months and years in our joint desire to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service, to identify wastage that can be removed from the system, and to streamline systems and administrative procedures as much as possible. We look forward to the opportunity of working with the trade unions and all sectors of the public service in that process from this point forward. The Minister for Labour and Administrative Services will be picking that ball up and making some significant contributions to the improved circumstances of the public service from that.

Mr Speaker, I make those comments merely to put into context where we come from and what the significance of these agreements is. I thank the opposition for its support for this legislation and I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I think one of the most valuable things that has come out of this particular exercise, if the government has the wit to realise it, is that you get much further by talking to people than by belting them over the head. There has been an interesting change in the attitude of the government through the course of this debate. As I mentioned in a previous debate, at the start of the exercise, the government refused to discuss with the unions the matter of cuts affecting the public service. We had the peculiar arrangement where the Treasurer was quite happy to address meetings of business people in Darwin and Alice Springs but flatly refused to meet with unions. It is to the credit of the Minister of Labour and Administrative Services that, in fact, he did arrange some meetings with unions, late as they were and held under tight timetable conditions. I hope that the government has learnt from this that unions and their leaders are responsible people. If they are treated responsibly, they will act responsibly. I agree with the Chief Minister that what has come out of this is a broad agreement that suits the needs of both sides and, hopefully, will provide the basis for ongoing discussions on a whole range of matters.

There has been considerable rhetoric about this particular legislation and the circumstances surrounding it today and I do not want to refer to that rhetoric in this speech. However, I have a couple of comments that I want to

make to the sponsor of the bill. My first comment relates to clause 4(2) which I have christened the 'fat cats' clause because, cynically, that clause provides an avenue for the minister, if he wishes, to exempt 'fat cats' within the public service from conditions of service that will apply to others. He has already been asked by the member for Nhulunbuy to provide examples of the circumstances under which the 'fat cats' clause may be exercised. My great concern about this legislation relates to the difficulties that may arise in attracting people to serve in the more isolated areas of the Northern Territory. I can accept that Darwin is not an isolated centre and it is very difficult to justify air fares for Darwin. I must say that I have never supported arbitrarily taking away conditions of service and I think that, after consultations with the unions, the government has come up with the best method of attacking that problem: by not providing air fares to people recruited locally.

However, I ask the government to consider that, next year, it will be sending teachers, nurses and other public servants to Alyangula. They will be almost the only people in that community who will not be receiving air fares. The teachers who have been in the service previously, along with the nurses, other public servants and everyone who works for Gemco, will be receiving air fares. The government will be saying to those people: 'Sorry, you are new recruits for the Northern Territory and we are not going to give you air fares'. That will leave those people in a pretty unfortunate and perhaps unpleasant position. Alyangula is the worst example that I can think of, but the same will apply to a lesser extent at Nhulunbuy and Jabiru.

I hope that, instead of using 4(2) as a 'fat cats' clause, after a bit of trial and error, it may well be the avenue through which the government recognises that there are still special circumstances in remote parts of the Northern Territory and that we do need special incentives to attract people to those areas. It could well use the discretion given under 4(2) to put in place special provisions to allow air fares for teachers, nurses, police and other public servants who serve the Northern Territory admirably in those small, isolated communities. I would suggest that it might be a useful exercise, even at this stage, for the government to look at the prospect of using 4(2) for that particular purpose in Alyangula next year. Otherwise, I predict that you will have an enormous amount of hostility and frustration from the teachers that you will have to recruit from outside the service to go to Alyangula next year. Let us not kid ourselves about it. You do have to go outside the Territory at present to recruit teachers even for quite attractive places like Alyangula. I would urge the government, when it comes to assessing how it will use clause 4(2), that it not use it as a 'fat cats' clause but to ensure that people in truly isolated conditions can take advantage of entitlements that they might not otherwise be entitled to.

As the member for Sadadeen indicated and as my colleagues who represent remoter areas in the Northern Territory appreciate, there is a wider problem. That wider problem concerns public servants who work in remote areas that are not mining towns. Consideration may well have to be given to the provision of terms and conditions of service appropriate to attract people to serve in those remote areas. It is not simply a question of attracting people to serve in remote areas; it is equally important to provide those people with sufficiently attractive conditions of service that they will stay there for a meaningful period of time so that people in the community obtain value from their period of service. There is no point, for example, being able to attract teachers to remote communities if they only stay 3 or 4 months before they find they cannot stand it and get out. We have to come up with a system which encourages teachers, nurses and police to make a commitment to those

remote communities for at least 2 years. I do not have the perfect answer but I know that it will be much more difficult if the government takes away peoples' entitlement to travel to a southern city. That will make it awfully difficult to attract people to those remote areas and keep them there. At present, there is a carrot.

If you send someone to Utopia or Docker River, he knows that, at the end of 2 years, he will have an air fare that will enable him to fly out of the community. That incentive is now to be removed. I accept that there is no need for that incentive any longer in Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek or Katherine. I accept that. It simply makes more difficult the already difficult job of getting those committed people to go to remote places. I hope that the government does not exclude the possibility of using subclause 4(2) as a means of addressing some of the problems involved in attracting and keeping staff in those remote areas.

One particular thing that I welcome in schedule 2 is the ability of those public servants lucky enough to have air fares to use them for travel within the Northern Territory. Under bylaw 10, they can claim a sum of money equivalent to an economy class air fare to Adelaide for travel within the Northern Territory whilst on leave. I think that is terrific. It is certainly something that I have been considering for a number of years and it is something that I have talked widely about recently. The Northern Territory is a very attractive place which is not often travelled in by people who live here. We are now offering our public servants an encouragement to travel within the Northern Territory and, as I have said, I think that is a terrific idea. Not only will it make people more aware of what the Territory has to offer, but it will keep the air fare itself and the other money Territorians spend on holidays within the Territory economy. That is very positive and it will have a very positive spin-off for our tourist industry.

Mr Hanrahan: I just hope they book them in advance.

Mr SMITH: That may well be part of the problem.

Mr Speaker, I am beginning to regret agreeing to urgency for this bill because it contains a number of matters which I have not had time to think through properly and I need some clarification from the minister. On page 6 of schedule 2, clauses 5 and 10 appear. I think I know the answer to my question but I would like it confirmed. Is there any requirement that an employee must travel for the complete period of leave of absence, which is defined on the previous page as 4 weeks? To put it more specifically, I believe you can take an air fare only if your leave of absence is 4 weeks or longer. In other words, if you have less than 4 weeks holiday entitlement, you cannot take an air fare in conjunction with it. I think I am right in reading it this way. My question is, if that is correct, can the employee only take the air fare entitlement if he spends the whole of that period of absence, or at least 3 weeks of it, outside his normal place of residence? It is a particularly important question if we are talking about freeing up the entitlement to travel within the Northern Territory. I think it is pretty difficult to say that a person can only take his air fare if he has 4 weeks leave or more, and he can only use the air fare if he uses all of that leave outside his normal place of residence. It is pretty hard to tell people who live in Darwin and who want to travel around the Territory that they must spend at least 3 weeks doing it. Most of them would probably feel that 2 to 3 weeks would be an adequate time away from home, particularly as most of them would be driving. If my reading is correct, I think we need a bit more flexibility there. I am not sure whether my reading is correct or not, but I

would like the minister to respond. I hope that the flexibility is there and that one does not have to spend all that leave away from home base in order to obtain the air fare.

I am also concerned about the clause headed 'Air Fares' in schedule 1. It says:

Except as provided by contract to a determination under the Public Service Act or the Teaching Service Act, there shall be no air fare entitlement or payment in lieu of an air fare entitlement for a person to whom this act applies recruited after the commencement of this schedule or in respect of a dependant of such a person.

Not only are there biannual air fares, there are also air fares enjoyed by public servants, including teachers and nurses, for service in remote areas. I have a particular fondness for those because I was partly responsible for getting those remote area air fares for teachers. Those remote area air fares allow people to travel from their remote areas into Darwin or Alice Springs 2 or 3 times a year.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: There are a couple of other words in there: 'provided by contract'.

Mr SMITH: Hang on. My question is: is it the government's intention to remove those air fares where they are not covered by contract or determination? Secondly, if that is the intention, are there any circumstances where they are not covered by contract or determination so that people serving in remote areas will lose those rights? I hope that the answer is no and that the government has no intention of removing remote area air fares. That would be disastrous and I hope that it has not been part of the negotiations. More importantly, I hope that the wording of this clause does not allow the removal of those sorts of rights.

I suspect that a closer reading of this bill and its schedules might provide us with other questions, if not problems, that need to be addressed. I would not be surprised if there are amendments to this legislation at a later sittings. Those are the only issues that I have been able to pick up in the limited time available and I would urge the minister, when he closes the debate, to address them.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I feel a little bit out of place in rising to speak in this debate. I believe in calling a spade a spade at the appropriate time but I have been under the impression that everything is sweetness and light between everybody this afternoon. The Chief Minister has been throwing bouquets to the unions who cannot respond because they are not in the Assembly. The Leader of the Opposition has been throwing bouquets back to the Chief Minister. When people agree with each other to such an extent, one always becomes rather suspicious. If one reads this legislation and the previous legislation, reads the newspaper and watches the television, it is clear, without putting too fine a point on it, that this legislation is the biggest climb-down that one is ever likely to see. I am not saying that I disagree with it. I agree with the legislation, but what a wimpish bill it is. It has caused more public comment, from public servants and others, than any other bill that I can recall.

As I said earlier, I do not disagree with the intent of the legislation, but I cannot agree with the way the negotiations have been conducted. I certainly did not agree with the timing. If I had been Mr Paroulakis, I would

have been tempted to do what it was suggested that he should do. I certainly believe that the implementation of this legislation will cause problems that people have only just started to address today. I am very sorry that we have had to debate this legislation under urgency.

The Chief Minister said that the government came to an agreement with the unions on this legislation and he liked talking with the unions and the unions liked talking with the government. Of course, the unions want to have negotiations with the government and I believe negotiation is the best way to settle an argument, especially if you nearly win your whole case. That is what I believe the unions have done, and good luck to them.

The minister who has carriage of this legislation was thrown in at the deep end. Nevertheless, he accepted the responsibilities of the minister's job and therefore one should not find excuses for him. The Chief Minister has said to us repeatedly that he has been negotiating with the unions for a number of years and he has had success. No doubt, he has some success over the years but success does not mean always letting the other side have its way. I do not believe that the Chief Minister has been the crash-hot negotiator that he would have us believe. It is true that, in his professional career, he has been engaged in many convoluted negotiations between unions and employers. If that makes a good negotiator, he is one because he has been engaged in those convoluted negotiations. If expressing a friendliness to the unions at the end of negotiations is a way of saying that he is a good negotiator, he is a good negotiator. To be perfectly honest, I have never heard any union representative - not that I have a great deal to do with them, but there are quite a few whom I speak to in the rural area - speak against him. That means that the unions like negotiating with him because he gives in to them all the time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not think that this piece of legislation that we have before us today does the government any credit. I believe it is a can of worms and the Northern Territory will be paying for it later. I would like to refer to the conditions of employment that will apply to new recruits and the conditions of employment which will continue to apply to current public servants.

We are talking about the Northern Territory allowance, drive-out time and other conditions where there will be a difference between the 2 categories. Mr Deputy Speaker, you cannot tell me that, with 2 public servants on the same level who are working next to each other, there will not be discord and disruption to their particular section of the public service because of these differences in employment conditions. If you or anybody else tries to tell me that, I will tell you, on the basis of my little knowledge of the public service, that you are wrong.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to clause 4. I would have liked to have a little bit more time to read it through and digest it. It gives the minister discretion to declare certain people exempt from provisions of this legislation. The Leader of the Opposition called it the 'fat cats' clause. I suppose that is putting it rather bluntly but the thought actually crossed my mind also. Some people call them 'tall poppies', some people call them 'fat cats' and some call them senior public servants.

I do not have any disagreement with people who have risen through the ranks of the public service to a senior position obtaining certain perks in that position. Every job has its perks and, if the senior public servant has an extra large office or a swimming pool or a certain type of furniture or

certain curtaining in his office, good luck to him. I do not begrudge him that; he has earned it. But, at the beginning of these negotiations, the Chief Minister was calling for restraint in spending by all members of the public service.

Even somebody of my conservative views - very arch conservative views in many ways - could see a certain unfairness in the Chief Minister's requests to the public service. Even I could see that it was the people on the lower ranks of pay who were being asked to give up the most. The Chief Minister could have hinted to the senior public servants, in a nice way of course, but pretty directly - again, he is not a very strong leader to do it - that it was up to them to give up some of their perks to bring them in line with what the more junior people in the public service were being asked to give up.

In a time of war, for example, when people are asked to give up certain conditions, the lead has to come from the top. The Chief Minister has given up \$5000 and ministers have given up \$3000 from their salaries. The Chief Minister has given \$6000 to the Nightcliff Pre-school and that is very commendable. However, taken in isolation, it looks to the people like a political gimmick. Perhaps I am doing the Chief Minister wrong by even suggesting it. The senior public servants should also have been asked or nudged very strongly to pay out of their own pockets for some of the nice things that they have with their office.

Clause 5 relates to terms and conditions of employment. It reads: 'Notwithstanding any other law in force in the Territory, an instrument of a legislative or administrative character made under such a law, a contract or agreement, whether or not in writing ...'. I can understand 'whether or not in writing, or an arrangement or understanding' but I cannot understand 'whether or not expressed'. How the dickens can you have an arrangement or understanding if it is not expressed? I do not know what we are talking about there and I would like the honourable minister to tell me. Are we talking about one of these 'nudge, nudge, wink, wink' agreements or are we talking about a 'nod and a wink' agreement because, if we are, I do not think legislation should deal with those rather vague agreements.

It goes on: 'Subject to section 10, to the extent that it is within the power of the Legislative Assembly so to provide and not inconsistent with an award or order made under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1904 of the Commonwealth'. To my way of thinking, that is conceding that, no matter what law we pass, it still has to be consistent with the Conciliation and Arbitration Act. That means that the Conciliation and Arbitration Act takes precedence. Why did we write this in the first place?

I can understand the spirit of the legislation and I am not against that spirit. However, I do not believe it will achieve what the minister intends. Certainly, it will not be to the honour and glory of the Chief Minister except as a continuation of his previous career and his dealings with the unions. The unions have been much more successful in their negotiations than the Chief Minister and the Minister for Labour and Industry. I believe that this dispute has strengthened the unions. It has increased their membership and it has put their backs up. This legislation will do more than anything else to make certain that, in any future negotiations with the unions, the government will be starting behind the 8-ball all because of this piece of legislation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I can speak frankly now. If I had still been in the Country Liberal Party, my remarks would have been made in the party room. When this legislation was first introduced before the federal election on

11 July, I said to a member of the government: 'You people must be silly to introduce a piece of legislation like this. Anyone with half an eye can see that it will not do you any good in the federal election'. I was told that it all had to be in place by 1 July. The legislation was not in place by 1 July.

The Chief Minister is a crash-hot negotiator who has been negotiating with unions for the last 20 years. All of you people on the other side are supposed to know a lot more than a little, old, independent lady over here. However, I was right and you were wrong. If I had been the CLP member standing for the House of Representatives or one of the 2 CLP Senate candidates and a piece of legislation like this had been introduced, I would not have stayed in the party. I would have told someone exactly what I thought about him. This was political homicide if ever I have seen it. By introducing the legislation, it more or less guaranteed that anybody that the CLP put up would not be elected. The feeling in the community was so strong not only against what the Chief Minister had introduced but also against the way the Chief Minister and the government went about the negotiations.

As a result of this, the Minister for Tourism, who is not in the House to hear my little pearl of wisdom, will be the next Leader of the Opposition. I do not know how true that is, but that rumour originated in Alice Springs and they must know a thing or two down there. That is because of this piece of legislation. I do not know whether the government has learnt a lesson from it but, for the sake of stability in government, I hope that it has because the Northern Territory cannot stand another election.

With those remarks, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will say, as I said at the beginning, I support the legislation but I believe I had to speak my mind very frankly on this matter.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to discuss the district allowance and particular conditions of service for people living in isolated communities. I acknowledge that, in any complex agreement, there are winners and losers, but I would have hoped that the agreements would have been worked out on the basis of knowledge of the facts. In his second-reading speech, the minister demonstrated that he is not in possession of the facts. He stated that district allowance was not something which existed in other states. He said that the bill effectively will do away with conditions of service not available to public servants in other parts of Australia.

I can describe that only as breathtaking ignorance and, if that was the type of knowledge and information which he took into these negotiations, it is no wonder that he made such an appalling mess of the negotiations. As we all know, in Western Australia, for example, outside the metropolitan area and some major cities in the south-east, right throughout Western Australia, district allowance applies. In Queensland, district allowance is common through the administrative divisions of the northern and western divisions. In fact, in South Australia, there is a special award which covers the provision of district allowance in the northern region. In New South Wales, in the western and the south-western divisions, there is district allowance. In many of those areas, they have air fares as well because those governments have acknowledged that they need some method of attracting people into those rural areas. They have acknowledged that the government has an obligation to govern the whole of the state, not just the major centres.

I can sympathise with an argument that says that Darwin may be attaining a size where district allowance is no longer appropriate, but I cannot agree that the same would apply for Kintore, Utopia and many other places like that

in my electorate and the electorates of some other honourable members. It displays a gross ignorance by the minister of his own electorate if he does not understand that, if the government wishes to attract public servants to places such as Port Keats, it will need to some sort of monetary incentive.

This government has missed a perfect opportunity to take district allowance and make it into something meaningful. It was becoming a meaningless sum of money. It was worked out on the basis of so much if you had dependants, so much if you did not, more for residence north of a certain parallel and less if you lived south of a certain parallel. In fact, it is quite strange that, in his speech, the minister referred only to amounts available in the northern part of the Northern Territory. Obviously, his ignorance knows no bounds and he does not understand that they are much lower in the southern area. By aggregating the total amount and working a point system for disadvantage to be applied to communities and towns across the Northern Territory, he could have worked out a method whereby to determine a scale which would have meant that the compensation that people received for living and working in those communities, for going to those communities and assisting in the development of the Northern Territory, would have been in some way commensurate with what they had to put up with in those communities.

Don't say it cannot be done because, in Western Australia, there is a locality scale which has been in operation for some years. The locality scale works with differential rates of district allowance which are based on a series of assessed factors. These take into account items such as the climate, the types of services available, schooling, electricity, water etc and these things are not universally available throughout the Northern Territory. Out in those rural areas, we do not yet have the holiday camps that the Treasurer would like to dream up in one of his more esoteric flights of fancy. It is rugged out there and the people are battling hard. They are trying to develop the Territory at the pointy end of the stick, and it is a bit rugged when people sit in here and take away the conditions of service which gave them some redress. The movement should have been in the opposite direction. It should have been to have given those people who suffer the worst living conditions a reasonable amount of money to compensate them for that. Unfortunately, that is not the end of it.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, air fares for the new recruits are to go. It is not only in Nhulunbuy and Alyangula that people will be without air fares. I am not quite sure how they will get away on holidays because we are told that the 17½% leave loading is also to disappear. Their salaries have been reduced in real terms because the percentage that is to be taken up in the 4% will be reflected in cuts in the district allowance.

The point of the matter is that, in many communities, people do not have any option but to go on leave. If a school teacher lives in a house in Darwin, it is all right for him to spend the school holidays there if he is a bit broke and cannot afford to go anywhere. Teachers at Utopia do not have the same option. Those teachers live in demountables which are supplied with electricity. The electricity, which is necessary to pump the water, is available from the school but it is not supplied during the holidays. If you are a teacher at Utopia and you want to stay there for the school holidays, you have to do so without electricity, refrigeration or water. What are your options? It is not a simple matter of driving into Alice Springs and booking into the Sheraton because, if you cannot afford to go on holidays, you cannot afford to book in anywhere at Alice Springs. Those people do not have houses there. The only option they had was to go south to stay with their parents, recharge their batteries maybe and get on with the job when they returned.

Those are the types of terms and conditions that are being wiped out for bush public servants.

That is the reason why, in my estimation, the government will find it necessary to turn around and climb down very substantially within a very short period of time unless it intends to persist with its current ideology of cutting back in the bush. If it decides that it will maintain the barest minimum standard out in the bush, it will have to provide incentives for people to go to live in those areas. People have already demonstrated their commitment. They demonstrate it day by day under the current system where they get far less in district allowance for living and working at a place like Nyirripi as against living and working at a place like Darwin - in fact, something like 50% of the amount.

Mr Perron: Whose fault is that? We did not set the district allowance.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the government has had control of that district allowance for quite some time. The way it has negotiated this deal, I am quite sure it could have negotiated the type of deal that I am talking about. But I do not think the government even made the attempt because its members are so ignorant. The honourable minister over there thought that it did not exist elsewhere in Australia, that the allowance was somehow a Northern Territory aberration and therefore it was okay to wipe it out, and somehow everybody would be paid the same as people in the rest of the country.

The allowance is to be reduced to \$960 for people with dependants and eliminated for people who do not have dependants. That will provide a disincentive for people to come to the Territory, particularly if they can obtain a job in the remote areas of Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia or New South Wales. Initially, people often make these decisions on an economic basis. After a certain period, they may fall in love with the Territory and decide to stay here but their initial decision was often based on economic considerations. If we are able to attract only those people who have been unable to obtain jobs in the rural areas of Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland, what effect will that have on the quality of public servants that we will have in these areas in future years.

Mr Speaker, that is my fundamental problem with this legislation. Overall, I have to commend the negotiators in that they have avoided what had the potential to be the most massive breakdown in the public service in the Northern Territory's history. As I said earlier today, it has already caused large areas of the public service basically to cease functioning. Let us hope that they get going again because, as Territorians, we cannot afford to have this situation continue for another 3 years until the next election when, as the member for Koolpinyah said, we will be in government and will be able to fix it up. But we cannot afford that many years. We need the public service operational. People in the community rely on high-quality services. They need the very best of police, the very best of teachers, the very best of nurses, and they deserve them. It is galling to me to see from the minister's speech that, very obviously, he made the decisions out of ignorance.

Mr Speaker, I support the legislation because, hopefully, it will get the public service moving again, but I foreshadow that the day will come very soon when we will be looking at amendments if we are to continue providing services to Territorians.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, one thing is certain. Out of all of this fiasco, the government should have learnt a lesson! I am sure it

has learnt a lesson. You can talk all you like about \$101m worth of cuts foisted upon us by the Hawke Labor government. The member for MacDonnell said Labor is the party that looks after the standard of living of people in Australia and it is just laughable when I think of that. The government has to learn that, it can talk about its \$101m in cuts, the macro-economic side of things, but that goes over the heads of the vast majority of people. However, when it starts talking about removing air fares, allowances and so forth, then that really does hit home. As the member for Barkly said this morning, quoting the old Chinese saying, 'it hasn't happened until it has happened to me'.

The thing that really hit home to the people in the Northern Territory electorate was when the actual cuts, unclear as they were at the time, played right into the hands of the unions and their cohorts in the Labor Party. They were able to use those cuts to produce a disastrous result for the Territory in the federal election. I believe the people acted in a pretty rational sort of fashion and there is a lesson there that I am sure the government will take on board. It will have to do a lot of work to redress that situation.

In speaking of the manner in which the government tried to effect these cuts that were forced on it by the Hawke government, let us not forget - as the people effectively did, unfortunately - that the government gave certain guidelines and asked the unions to determine their preference. The government went to the union movement. I believe that part of government policy is that people do not have to belong to a union. Certainly, I hope that is the case. There should be freedom of choice and unions should try to entice people through the quality of the efforts they put in on their members' behalf rather than have members delivered to them on the basis that either they join the union or they do not get a job.

A suggestion was put to me by a person in Alice Springs. Given that we have a small public service, the government could have written to all public servants outlining the options for the cuts rather than approach the unions. People could have indicated their choices to the government. The results could have been processed by a computer and the government could have followed the wishes of the people in terms of where they were most prepared to accept cuts. In that way, a more equitable balance could have been achieved. I believe that would have been a very useful way. It would have solved many of the problems. It would not have been necessary to go to the union leadership. It would have been far more democratic. Of course, hindsight is always a good teacher and I appreciate that. However, I believe that, if something like this happens in the future, the government should take that suggestion on board and consider it very seriously.

I do not have a copy of the minister's second-reading speech. I think it was somewhat remiss of the government, particularly as it was seeking urgency, not to ensure that copies of the second-reading speech were delivered to every member of the House. I understand that, in the future, each year there will be some negotiation regarding cuts people are prepared to accept. That may sound a little airy fairy, but I do not have a copy of what the minister said. I did not have a chance to write it down because it was very long. However, I would suggest that the minister take my suggestion, if it is appropriate, and that individual public servants be given a chance to have their say. I know that they would feel a great deal better about it if they had their chance to tell the government the areas in which they were most happy to receive cuts and those in which they were least happy to see cuts made.

I was astounded by the member for MacDonnell when he started talking about unions being necessary in a free society and that this was a demonstration of the unions being a sheer necessity and for the union movement to be tied in with the Labor Party. He was referring to the fellows in Canberra who introduced industrial relations legislation after the Hancock Inquiry. That particular bill has been better described as the 'Divine Right of Trade Unions Bill'. It is true that it was withdrawn, but I think that was simply a tactical withdrawal and I expect that the blighter will be back on the agenda now that Hawke is in there again. The 'Divine Right of Trade Unions Bill' is an apt name for it. Although the legislation would increase the penalties that can be imposed on the trade unions, it would be almost impossible for an employer with a legitimate grievance to get through the tortuous industrial relations network. A firm like Mudginberri would go broke in the process of trying. It was to be done in the name of democracy and the free society - pigs ribs, Mr Speaker. The Industrial Relations Bill! Just watch it come back. The election of 11 July will be remembered, I believe, as a disaster for Australia.

In our free society, we are to have the Moscow card alias the Australia card which will be back on the agenda. As Janine Haines said in a letter in today's NT News to a correspondent who wrote hoping the Democrats would block it, the double dissolution gives the Hawke government the right to have a joint sitting of both Houses. The government will have the numbers and the Democrats will not be in a position to block the so-called Australia card. I do not think anybody who is interested in a free society can really support such a piece of legislation because it will take away individual freedom and that is something which I am very concerned about. Janine Haines was writing in reply to somebody who had written to the NT News a few days previously. She said that the Democrats cannot stop it and the correspondent's only hope was civil disobedience. We might have seen some civil disobedience at the last 1-day sitting of this Assembly and people might say that that was not too good. The Hawke government might have the numbers to push it through but I believe it might find that the Australian people will be unwilling to accept it when they realise its implications.

In New South Wales, there is the Education Bill which will give the government control of private education.

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The remarks of the member have absolutely nothing to do with the bill before the House.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will confine his remarks more closely to the legislation.

Mr COLLINS: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will do so. I was just replying to claims by the member for MacDonnell that the Labor Party was the champion of the free society. I was demonstrating to him and other members of the Assembly that it is far from that.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to clause 10. For the record, this bill is being rushed through in a sense. We have not had a chance to study it. The union leadership is happy with the results and, when they are happy, I am always dubious like my colleague, the member for Koolpinyah. Even the Leader of the Opposition started to have a few doubts about whether he should have supported the urgency motion. In relation to clause 10, he raised the point that, in order to use an air fare, a public servant is supposed to spend 4 weeks out of the Territory. Clause 10 says that 4 weeks leave can be spent within the Northern Territory. That was the inference. This is not

supporting individual freedom. As far as I am concerned, if people want to cash up their air fares and stay in the Territory, stay at home and do the cement paths around their properties, then good luck to them. The government has talked about cashing up the benefits. I hope the government will support people who want to use their air fares in this particular way. Surely choice and individual freedom are important matters to be considered.

One of the great concerns in the southern region was the district allowance and the fact that we were being hit harder down there under the previous legislation. I have not been able to ascertain whether that has been sorted out to their satisfaction. Another point involved those people at the lower levels of the public service. I have had a number of letters from people asking how on earth they are supposed to live when they are to be hit with virtually the same sort of cut as people on much higher incomes. I note that the government has gone to an ad valorem method of attacking the bed tax, something which I said would be more acceptable when I spoke on that bill in the last 1-day sitting. I would suggest that a system by which the more highly-paid employees would pay more in monetary terms would be more equitable.

I am concerned about the bill and the fact that it will create 2 classes of public servants. We have heard about the extreme cases of people in the more isolated areas and that new recruits will be unhappy. I say that it is only human nature and very natural that there will be friction when those people who live right in the heart of Darwin or in Alice Springs are recruited to do the same job but recruited on the new basis. How can it be otherwise? I do not think that we have solved all the problems. We have created 2 classes of public servants: if you were in before, you get the benefits and, if you come in afterwards, you do not. Natural market forces will operate and it will definitely be harder to recruit people to the Northern Territory Public Service. It is a sad affair.

I feel saddened for democracy in many ways because we have a democratically-elected government which is hampered by so many pieces of legislation beyond its control. For example, the government has to approach the Arbitration Commission to try to remove the 17½% leave loading. We certainly are not in control of our own destiny but this government was voted in by the people on 7 March and it deserves the right to make the rules. When election time comes around, the people of the Territory again have the right to say how they feel about the way the government has behaved. It is, however, a sad day for democracy when the elected government cannot make decisions and then leave it to the people to decide later how well it has behaved without being hampered on every course by legislation from other parts of Australia.

I cannot say that I wholeheartedly support this bill because I have not had the chance to study it properly. I would be a fool to say that I had. It will not be a simple matter. I can well visualise the Anti-Discrimination Act being brought to bear in the case of the 2 classes of public servants. I am sure that avenue will be explored. We are not at the end of the tunnel. It seems as though things have quietened down and I think that that is good for the Territory. I hope that they will quieten down even more, but I believe that we will be looking at amendments to this legislation in the very near future.

Let us remember the reasons for this bill. The change of circumstances has been forced upon us by the economic situation in the country for which, as has been said time and time again, the federal government is responsible. The

Territory government has had to wear massive cuts and it has had a mighty big slap in the face from the people of the Territory who are only acting in their own interests. That is a pretty normal state of affairs. This government realises that people act out of self-interest but, if it always attunes its legislation to that self-interest, it will always be in trouble. I hope that things will settle down. I predict, however, that the legislation will be back before the House before long because, as other members have suggested, problems will emerge as people sit down and consider the full implications of the legislation.

Mr PERRON (Industries and Development): Mr Speaker, I rise in this debate to make some comments in relation to the bill and also in relation to some of the events which occurred during the course of the negotiations which have led to this legislation that is now before the House. I want to refer to the newspaper printed by the Trades and Labor Council. It was called the 'Northern Territory Blues' and it was printed fairly early in the dispute. It contained information that was intended to inform public servants primarily, but perhaps the general public as well, about some of the terrible things, as the Trades and Labor Council saw it, which were happening in the public service. I would like to touch on a few of those things because that newspaper contained a number of pretty serious allegations pertaining to the public service and how it is run. I will point out some of them.

Most of them were reported on a hotline which was established by the Trades and Labor Council so that public servants could report anything they saw as abuses and air them publicly. It is unfortunate that the Trades and Labor Council appears to have made little attempt to verify the allegations. Some of them are so blatant as to be ridiculous and wrong but others, no doubt, have some validity. I will touch on some of those. \$1.2m was allegedly paid for an unwanted computer which does not do the job as well as the machine that it replaced. As a minister, I ask myself the questions: 'Who made the decision to buy the machine and replace the one that was there before? Who drew up the specifications for the new machine on the basis that it would do the job more efficiently or cheaper than the existing machine? Who was involved in putting it out to tender, negotiating a sale and organising payment?' Of course, the answer is that public servants made those decisions. That is very important and I will come back to it in a minute.

Another item in the TLC newspaper said that 2 new boilers were installed at the Royal Darwin Hospital at the cost of \$500 000. The problem is that they allegedly replaced old boilers which worked perfectly and were sold for a mere \$40 000. Again, who made the decision to replace perfectly working boilers in the Royal Darwin Hospital? One presumes it was a public servant in a senior position or perhaps a committee of public servants in senior managerial positions. Another report says that \$30 000 was tacked on to the Transport and Works phone bill one year to get rid of extra money. I wonder who made that decision.

There is another report about the cost of pot plants in government offices being \$100 000 in Darwin alone. This one is a little bit out of my theme and perhaps I should not have introduced it but, when I read it, I thought it might be an example of government waste. \$100 000 for pot plants. Who were they for? If they are in government offices, I suppose they are primarily there to improve the working environment of public servants. I would have thought that that was an odd one for a public servant to raise as an example of waste. Perhaps the complainant's work area had no pot plants and some grievance was felt because of that.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

Mr SPEAKER: A quorum is not present. Ring the bells.

Bells rung.

Mr SPEAKER: A quorum is now present. The honourable minister.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, another allegation in the publication concerned 200 IBM computer terminals leased by the government and kept in store awaiting maintenance. Another item asks whether new staff really need new furniture. It says: 'If you want some good quality only slightly used furniture, just go to the government auctions'. We all know who decides whether new furniture is required or that old furniture has served out its useful life and needs to be sent out to the government auction. Public servants make those decisions and that is how it should be.

Another item asks whether the Department of Health and Community Services in Nhulunbuy spent \$158 000 on travel and travel allowance in 1 year alone. I do not know the answer to that. It may have. The question which arises is whether that is an unreasonable sum for Health and Community Services to have spent in Nhulunbuy. The item in the newspaper presents it as if it is an unacceptable misuse of public resources, the implication being that it is the government's fault, the government being comprised of a group of ministers and the Chief Minister.

Another allegation concerns operational costs for the Department of Community Development: 85 vehicles cost \$252 000 in one financial year. Another says that it costs \$500 000 each year to send Northern Territory firemen to Perth for training and argues that it would be cheaper to bring the instructors up here. I guess it would be cheaper to bring the instructors up here, but I doubt that they could bring all the training facilities and high-rise buildings that the firemen probably go to Perth to train on. I put that one down to ignorance rather than a genuine case of wastage of government funds.

Another item asks why newly-recruited teachers have to stay at the Sheraton for the orientation period and suggests that cheaper accommodation can be found. I am sure it could be, but who would make the decision to put teachers on orientation courses in Darwin in the Sheraton as distinct from any other accommodation? I am not sure. Perhaps the Sheraton offers an attractive rate to the government for this purpose. Perhaps it is just a convenient location or perhaps a public servant simply made a decision that teachers would like to stay at the Sheraton. Either way, the person making the decision for that use of government resources is clearly a public servant in a managerial position.

It is alleged that Health administrative staff take long lunches, receive subsidised meals and housing and sometimes even get free cars. Another concern is unnecessary upgrading of public service positions without increased responsibilities. I think this is called the classification creep. It is certainly something that needs looking into but, of course, the systems which apply in the public service and the application of those systems to individuals are all controlled by public servants.

A consultant was hired to produce a report that had already been carried out by public servants. I wonder who hired the consultant. It was probably another public servant. Goods have been ordered in advance of need. I am

sure they have been. I do not think, however, that would be the result of ministerial intervention in the public service.

I also want to refer to another document: the Trades and Labor Council's Task Force proposal that was put to the government during the course of the negotiations. Among the TLC's proposals to save what it saw as considerable sums of money were these few items: improved cash management; simplified accounts handling and payment; reductions in accommodation standards; reduction in the frequency of office cleaning; modification of purchasing procedures for stationery, office requisites and incidentals; and that current procedures are ad hoc, costly, staff-intensive and inimical to efficient use of personnel and materials. The Trades and Labor Council argued that acting in those areas would save \$3m in a year. Think of all the years during which we could have saved \$2m or \$3m which was being wasted because of systems and procedures designed for public servants, implemented by public servants and approved by public servants.

These procedures are 'ad hoc, costly, staff-intensive and contrary to the efficient use of personnel and materials'. The Trades and Labor Council says it will fix all this for the government if we trade off a bit of this and that. As a minister, I have always believed that the public service was supposed to administer its resources as efficiently as possible irrespective of the government of the day. I am not a student of history or a student of politics or a student of government and perhaps others could enlighten me on this subject. However, I always understood that the public service was there to provide diligent administration for the government of the day and to implement government policies even though, at times, it is inevitable that some of those policies must go against the grain of public servants who have to administer that policy. The system is that they will administer those policies religiously and will act at all times in an efficient manner irrespective of whether they like their political masters or not.

In the Northern Territory, we have given substantial powers to the public service deliberately. We have allowed public servants a wide discretionary power in many respects. No point would demonstrate that better than our recent move to raise to \$50 000 the limit which public servants can spend without having to go to tender. It takes courage for a politician to make a decision like that, having regard to the strife politicians can get into as a result of the expenditure of funds under their ultimate control. It takes courage to give that \$50 000 limit in the interests of efficiency. Bear in mind that the authority is not one that is exercised occasionally. It is an authority that can be exercised every day of the week by dozens and dozens of public servants. It is not a rare power that we entrust to a carefully selected and trusted person like the little fellow in Treasury who does the government's investment shuffling.

What we see in the newspaper and in the Trade and Labor Council's submission is not, I hope, an attitude that is reflected throughout the Northern Territory Public Service. Indeed, I do not believe it is an attitude which is reflected throughout the public service.

Mr Smith: Where do you think they got the information from?

Mr PERRON: I mean 'reflected' in the sense that most of the public service accepted that attitude. What we see is a number of individuals reflected in these items who, in some cases, do not understand how their own areas are administered or why. In other cases, I would put the allegations down to ignorance because I do not think that the complainants really knew what they were talking about.

In some other cases, which I have outlined this afternoon, the individuals in the public service responsible for decisions which result in blatant waste and inefficiency should be ashamed of themselves. Adequately remunerated middle or senior managers of the public service whose very reason for employment is to administer public resources responsibly and the Trades and Labor Council negotiators who advocate trade-offs which involve public servants doing the very job they are paid for should also be ashamed. I appreciate that, in the Westminster system, the parliamentary convention is that the minister is ultimately responsible. But, that fact does not absolve the people being paid by the taxpayer of their responsibilities. What this newspaper and this TLC document demonstrate to me, in respect of the aspect that I have spoken about this afternoon, is a level of irresponsibility which is most unfortunate. I hope the people who are responsible reflect very carefully on the attitude that they have adopted because it does not augur well at all for any government of the Northern Territory if such an attitude is perpetuated.

Mr FINCH (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, honourable members have dwelt for some time this evening on how we progressed to this point. I would like to talk for a short time about some of the lesser known factors that have been experienced by Territorians along that rocky road. An example today is that a very large number of school children were left standing by the kerb instead of proceeding to school. Fortunately, they were not standing there for an excessive amount of time but that was only the result of the good grace of responsible employees of the Department of Transport and Works and cooperation from private bus owners. What I am referring to is that bus drivers were prevented from carrying out the school runs as they normally have during most stop-work meetings this year. Believe it or not, there have been some 11 stop-work meetings of bus drivers in this calendar year. I suppose I have an inherent philosophical problem with stop-work meetings because I come from an industry in which, if you wanted to debate conditions, you would do it on your own time instead of interrupting the good operation of government and inconveniencing members of the public. It has absolutely no effect on those that you are obviously trying to influence.

This morning, it was not the Transport Workers Union that prevented its drivers from at least carrying out the school runs. It was the interference of the Trades and Labor Council which, quite obviously, is one of the most irresponsible organisations that one could ever expect to deal with. This reflects the real problem that my colleagues have had in resolving this matter in a civilised fashion. When you come to insisting that school kids are left standing at the kerb, it is the height of ignorance and arrogance. Why was it necessary for those drivers to attend the meeting anyway? Was it to prop up the numbers to try to make the picture look good in the press? It would seem to me that those drivers themselves were probably quite embarrassed about not being allowed to do the responsible thing as they have done 9 times out of the 11 this year. The only other time that they did not deliver children to school was earlier in the year when the Trades and Labor Council intervened.

I am sure that the parents of those school kids - and many of them are public servants - would be most interested in knowing who was responsible for endangering their kids by leaving them standing at the kerbside. Fortunately, we have an integrated bus system in place in Darwin now. That means we have a mix of private contract buses along with government core networks. That has enabled us in past disputes to be able to provide for school kids and, on occasions, for pensioners to get to town and to shops. I suppose it is ironic that there are about 5 or 6 routes that were able to be operated this morning by the private contractors, thus enabling some of the public servants to

attend their stop-work meeting arranged by the TLC. If that is not irony, I do not know what the term means. One can only wonder how far we could advance the bus system by further utilisation of the private contract system. Perhaps that is what the TLC is trying to provoke the government into. What we need is a reliable and economic public transport system and we will only get there by the full cooperation, as it seems now, of the intervening unions. The bus drivers themselves have earned a reputation for quality of service and I have commended them in the past on a personal level. They are guys with very good experience who serve the Territory and the travelling public in an admirable fashion. However, when they are prevented from getting on with the job and providing a reliable service that will enable and encourage patrons to use the system, it just does not come together economically and the government will be continually faced with the need to ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I have listened to the Minister for Transport and Works with a great deal of patience. I cannot see the relevance of anything that he has said so far to the bill before the Assembly.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order, but I ask the minister to relate his remarks to the bill more closely.

Mr FINCH: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. For the benefit of the member for Nhulunbuy, I will explain the relevance of my comments.

Mr Dale: He is an old bus driver, you know. He gets nasty if you knock them.

Mr FINCH: I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker. I did not appreciate your background and I was not reflecting on the ...

Mr Dale: I was talking about the member for Nhulunbuy.

Mr FINCH: My apologies, Mr Deputy Speaker. If bus drivers were allowed to get on with their job, we could offer an attractive system to the paying public and the government would not be faced with the need to cut back and find other means of propping up the much-dented Territory budget.

The pertinent point is that, in most civilised communities, people are able to sit down around the table and to assess the options rationally. The Northern Territory government had to find \$100m in savings. That is beyond doubt. The Territory government has opted to take 80% of that, directly and indirectly, from the private sector. That is extremely painful. The effect and impact of that has gone almost unnoticed by members opposite. I can assure them that, during the next 12 months, particularly in my portfolio area, we will have to find other means of injecting vigour into the construction industry. That will need to be done by private funds. \$80m has come out of the private sector. The government had opted to take only 20% or \$20m from the public sector. There were 2 options in doing that. We had to look at saving those funds by fairly and equitably reducing public service conditions or by reducing the number of people whom we employ. Those were the simple alternatives.

For quite obvious reasons, the government did not want to reduce public service numbers. We need people in the Territory. We need to be able to continue to maintain the level of service that Territorians have come to expect. Thus, the least distasteful of the 2 options was to seek, through agreement, a reduction in conditions. For goodness sake, that was not a great

deal to ask. In Lithgow recently, coalminers in the most militant union in New South Wales agreed to a \$250 a week reduction in wages as an alternative to losing jobs. Through their union, they were prepared voluntarily to give up \$250 a week so that their buddies would not lose their jobs. It was a simple economic fact of life.

Here, however, the TLC has not been able to reflect the views of its members. I talked to many people out on the street. Nobody likes to lose conditions or dollars, but people are realistic. The impact of reductions on conditions of service is almost negligible in this bill. The TLC could have reflected its members' realistic view that something had to be done. Instead, it dug in its heels, refused to discuss the matter, and dragged out the whole debate. It has not been the fault of the responsible minister who is an absolute gentleman, as I am sure all of my colleagues would agree. He would be only too delighted to receive, discuss and deliberate on any reasonable proposition put to him.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think this entire debate has gone on far too long. I found it quite ironic that the member for Stuart should waltz in here halfway through a debate. There is not one member of the opposition or the crossbenches in the House at present. The member for Stuart came waltzing in here, however, and called the Speaker's attention to the state of the House when it was only one member short of a quorum, a member who was temporarily sitting in the public gallery. There was no other member of the opposition present. As soon as a quorum was restored, which took about 5 seconds, the member for Stuart chose to withdraw from the Chamber, as is his normal habit. I find that almost contemptible and it reflects the opposition's attitude to this House. All day, it has wasted the time of members. We have called a meeting of the Legislative Assembly to transact serious business and, if the opposition's behaviour is not a waste of the taxpayers' money, I do not know what is.

The Minister for Industries and Development reflected on a newspaper, if you could call it that, that was distributed during the course of this dispute. Its contents reflected the TLC's offhanded attitude to the whole matter. It simply threw mud and, as we all know, when you throw mud some always sticks. It was the greatest example of non-investigative journalism that I have ever seen. The Minister for Industries and Development reflected on the origins of many of the paper's articles and items. I know I do not have much time left, but I want to reflect briefly on the quality and integrity of those items. Mention was made of a Transport and Works telephone bill of \$30 000 being pre-paid. The innuendo is that it was paid from this year's budget so that it would not be lost next year. It is a syndrome. Mr Deputy Speaker, I can tell you that, unfortunately, the great majority of the public believe that. They believe that that particular little item, along with many others, is correct.

One should not give that contemptible article the slightest bit of credibility by acknowledging it but, as it has been raised tonight in the Assembly, let me answer that comment about the \$30 000 telephone bill. The story is that the Department of Transport and Works paid in accordance with the account it received from Telecom. During the processing of that account, communication was received from Telecom that an incorrect meter reading had been reflected in the account and that involved a \$30 000 difference. Also, Telecom had omitted to include the cost of installation and transfer of a great number of telephones. I forget the exact figure but, if it did not equal the \$30 000, it was in excess of \$30 000. Discussion between the Department of Transport and Works' finance people and Telecom finance people

found an extremely sensible and civilised solution to that. The Department of Transport and Works quite correctly opted to pay the account as it was forwarded to it, knowing that it contained a meter reading error and knowing that it had a section covering the transfer of telephones missing. It was understood that that would all be caught up in the next account.

Mr Speaker, isn't that a sensible, logical, clear explanation of what was supposed to be an outrageous misappropriation of public money? If that is representative of the quality and accuracy of the comments in that TLC rag, then it is no wonder that it is held in contempt by the greater part of the community including, might I say, the great majority of public servants. In fact, I would even include a great number of the union representatives who are associated with the TLC.

What we need to say is that that was totally irresponsible, totally provocative and an indication, right from the start, of the unwillingness of the TLC to discuss rationally and logically the possible options that were open to government. I repeat again, if it had done so, it would have had the most fair-minded, most reasonable and most deliberative response from the Minister for Labour and Administrative Services. There is no way that the honourable minister would have been swayed in his integrity by one iota. He is that sort of man. I can say this for 10 minutes. As it happens, the honourable minister and myself share adjoining offices and I can vouch with great authority for his attitude to all of these matters. His absolute frustration in not being able to get the TLC to sit down and talk rationally was obvious, and I can only commend him for sticking to his guns and seeing the thing through.

Mr Speaker, I have reflected on the quality of this material. Much was made about many other allegations of waste of government funds. This government, more than any other, is intent on improving wherever possible the efficiency ...

Mr Leo: If they are smart, they will ignore you.

Mr FINCH: ... of government. Mr Speaker, I can assure the member for Nhulunbuy that the efficiency shown by my Department of Transport and Works, particularly, is reflected in his own electorate. I am quite sure that he would acknowledge getting value for money on some of those roads to outstations etc. They are a credit to the officers concerned.

Mr Leo: Certainly not a credit to you.

Mr FINCH: I would respond to the member for Nhulunbuy's comments only by saying that certainly they are not a discredit to me. At least, I am prepared to acknowledge value and competence when I see them and the great majority of members of that department share a view of pride in their work and an intention that the Territory taxpayer should get the best value for the dollar.

I mention, as a side issue, that currently the department is looking at ways of doing some of the construction, building and roadworks in an even more efficient manner. Officers are continually reviewing and assessing their modes of operation, down to the last detail, and that is a most responsible attitude that has always been inherent throughout the majority of the public service. When public servants identify areas that can be improved on, what is needed is for them to be able to pass them through the appropriate channels - not through some ridiculous TLC rag that has no

credibility - through the section head in their department or the secretary of the department. As I understand, most of the suggestions made in the Department of Transport and Works receive appropriate consideration and are implemented where they are valid.

Where people feel frustrated, as they do from time to time, I have found in the electorate of Leanyer, and I am amazed that it does not happen in Nhulunbuy, that members of the public service come direct to their local member to put their views. That is another effective way of ensuring that the taxpayer's dollar is used to the best advantage.

As I interpret the comments of members of the opposition, what they would prefer as an option is for politicians to start digging deep into departmental operations, get their hands dirty and do the job for them.

Mr Leo: Do the job they are paid to do.

Mr FINCH: Do the job for the public servants, is that what they are talking about?

It is not that long ago that we had calls of political interference when we were talking about politicians or government having influence over the heads of departments, at the level where it is most appropriate to have political interference if you like. We all have a role to play. The minister holds ultimate responsibility, but he has a department that has a structure and a hierarchy. He has a secretary who is responsible, and I emphasise 'responsible', for the daily running of the department, its functions and administration. That person is charged with, and paid appropriately for, managing those functions on behalf of government. It is obvious that, if things are not going right, government should retain the option of finding a new manager for that part of government business. But to suggest ...

Mr LEO: A point of order, Mr Speaker! For the second time, I rise to point out that I have not yet heard from the Minister for Transport and Works any comment on the bill before the House. I do not yet know whether or not he wants this House to pass this bill. I have not heard from the Minister for Transport and Works 1 word on this bill and I think he should address himself to the matter before the House.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order, but I would ask the minister to confine his remarks to the legislation before the House.

Mr FINCH: Mr Speaker, in the remaining few minutes, I will certainly confine my remarks to the bill.

I do not apologise for my remarks because what I have said relates to the government finding the appropriate level of funding reduction which, as I mentioned earlier, is only 20% of the total cuts that were needed to be found. We have found them, at great pain I should say, in a way that will have minimal effect on the day-to-day welfare of public servants. I think that is commendable. I reflected earlier that I thought that, to say the very least, the private sector ought to be complaining about the level of cuts that it is receiving. However, it can rest assured that this government, particularly the Department of Transport and Works, will continue to find innovative ways of continuing our capital works program.

I should mention that I will be attending a Transport Ministers conference in the next few days. I hope that there will be some constructive and

rational debate on projects such as the airports at Darwin and Alice Springs and the railway from Alice Springs to Darwin. If nothing else, I hope these projects will receive the opportunity from the federal government to proceed under private funding. I do not want to reflect again on responsibilities of the federal government in those 2 areas because it would be counterproductive. What I want to insist on is that I can accept no less than a fair go and the opportunity for the Northern Territory government to proceed on its developmental track with the assistance of private funding.

Mr Speaker, certainly I support the bill that is before us. It is a reasonable solution to a most difficult problem arrived at after great effort and pain by the responsible minister and the Chief Minister. In commending the bill, I can only re-emphasise that it could have been arrived at in a reasonable time with goodwill and cooperation. I believe that the TLC deliberately procrastinated in order to add to the political flak occurring at the time of the federal election. It was an electioneering delay that certainly had its effect. It is one that the TLC should take no joy in because the Northern Territory will have to suffer the negative side of an ALP representative in the House of Representatives for the next 3 years. The only possible joy on the horizon is that, if Bob Hawke holds true to form, he will not last 3 years. Mr Speaker, I support the bill.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the bill before the Assembly. I think that honourable members in this Assembly are fully aware of the situation that faces not only the Northern Territory but the whole of Australia. For many years, members of the Australian community have lived very well and have been paid very well. However, we have been failing to produce the required products for sale both locally and internationally that will support our level of expenditure. This has been held together for a number of years by governments borrowing to support the extra expenditure. We are all well aware that we now have a total debt of over \$100 000m. We know that, every month, as a country, we spend much more than we are earning. In some areas of the country, some trade unionists are also aware that we cannot keep on at this level of expenditure.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

Mr SPEAKER: A quorum is not present. Ring the bells.

Bells rung.

Mr SPEAKER: A quorum is now present. The honourable minister.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, in some areas of the country, people are starting to wake up to the problem we are facing. The cold hard facts are that there is only 1 way in which this situation can be turned around and that is by producing the level of goods that can maintain the expenditure which we make. If we cannot produce more goods, obviously the level of expenditure has to drop. As was said earlier, there is 1 union which has recognised this and it is a union that is considered probably to be 1 of the most militant in the country. I refer to the Miners Union. As the member for Leanyer stated, in New South Wales recently, we have seen members of that union in a particular area taking a cut of at least \$250 per week in order to maintain the jobs available to its members.

To contemplate the taking of a cut of \$250 is something that most Australians would run away from. As I have said, we have an example of people taking that step because they realise that they cannot continue to be paid

when the production that supports their salaries is insufficient to cover those salaries. Regardless of the rights and wrongs - and history will show where the blame is to be laid - the Australian community still has not had a look at the facts that are available to anyone who cares to look at them. Over the last 3 or 4 years, we have certainly gone down hill in terms of deficit budgeting.

When the federal government took over in 1983, we had an actual budget deficit of \$4000m, not \$9000m or \$10 000m as is quite often claimed. The facts show that the figure was \$4000m and we know that that has been running at around \$10 000m annually since then. Obviously, this is the major cause of the problem. As I said earlier, our total debt is over \$100 000m and closer to \$120 000m. The interest payment on that every year is becoming horrendous. From the turn of the century, we have moved from being one of the richest countries in the world with a high standard of living to a country somewhere between twentieth or thirtieth on the list. Our debt is approaching the South American banana republic model that was so ably described by our federal Treasurer.

We must realise that all Australians will have to make sacrifices of some sort. The problem is that many people have not yet realised that that is something that has to be faced. In the Northern Territory, we are all well aware that we have \$100m less this year to be able to provide the services that we provided last year. As a result, there have been a number of areas where we have had to cut back in expenditure. I only have round figures and they will be off the top of my head.

The Department of Education will be required to operate with \$6.5m less than we would like to have. Since the federal election, we are starting to see the sort of cuts that all state governments have had to make. As the member for Sadadeen pointed out, the Victorian government has made a cut of \$60m in education. However, I will stick on the Northern Territory for the moment.

In the health area, we will have to make a cut of \$5m. In the housing and lands area, we are looking at \$20m less. In the capital works area, I believe the figure is about \$15m less. We are looking in other government departments for about \$30m that has to come out of all those systems. An area that was identified by the Treasurer was \$21m out of the public service. This is \$21m out of an area that has an expenditure of over \$400m. It does require a sacrifice of some sort. As I pointed out earlier, this is something that all Australians will have to face. We must make some sacrifices in respect of our income in the very near future otherwise our whole system will completely fall apart.

We had a situation which was brought about by an election and also by fear among individuals of horrific consequences which were painted by the Trades and Labor Council. We had a list of areas that could be cut and, amongst those, was a worst possible scenario which could be pulled together to show that people could lose up to \$30-\$40 a week. Obviously, one of the best scenarios is the one that we see before us today in this legislation in terms of the agreement which has been reached after 30-odd hours of consultation with the TLC. This scenario does not require the loss of any money from people's pay-packets and does retain the benefits of present employees in terms of air fares. But, it removes air fares for future employees and also it changes the district allowance and makes quite a significant impact on the Territory budget - around \$16m this year and \$22m-plus next year.

It is a pity that the facts were misconstrued and the worst-case scenario was sold to Territory public servants. It was sold very effectively. It is now obvious to most people in the community that it was done for the purpose of creating tremendous unrest during the lead-up to the federal election. I suppose the desired result has occurred as far as the TLC is concerned. I believe, however, that Territory public servants will look back and start thinking about what has occurred. I believe they will eventually realise that they were part of a quite well-orchestrated con trick and, as such, they will eventually feel quite aggrieved about what occurred. I also think they will be quite upset that they allowed feelings of greed - which everyone has - to be utilised to get their emotions running. However, that is water under the bridge.

All Australians are aware that there is a need to make cuts in the area of salaries or to increase production by working longer hours for the same amount of pay, producing a better product or producing products which are competitive in overseas markets. In that context, the Trade Development Zone will be of great benefit not only to Territorians but to all Australians. We have a number of industries in their infancy there and we are taking advantage of provisions in both our local taxing areas and in export incentives to ensure that we encourage industries which can produce in the Territory and sell overseas, thus creating both income for this country and employment for Territorians.

Most people cannot imagine the size of the cuts required to compensate for the \$100m reduction in funding. We have had a number of instances of that from the Leader of the Opposition who proposes waterproof tea bags, minimising the number of pencil sharpeners and that sort of rubbish as examples of possible cost savings. The magnitude of the sum involved can probably be understood by considering government museums and art galleries in the Northern Territory. As members of this House are aware, we have an excellent museum and art gallery at Bullocky Point. It provides marvellous service and is very popular. We have premises in Alice Springs and at the old Fannie Bay jail. Those facilities provide an excellent service and are well-patronised. Their total annual operational cost is \$5m. Closing that service totally would mean that the government would still have to find another \$95m.

Another example of the magnitude of the funds that the government must save would be the Department of Law. I see some members raising their eyebrows but, if we were to close the Department of Law completely, including all court operations, the operations of all our government solicitors and everything else, savings in a 12-month period would total around \$15m. Closing both the Department of Law and the museums and art galleries would result in savings of \$20m in a full year. We would still be required to find another \$80m.

The magnitude of the cuts certainly extends far beyond the waterproof tea bag concept and well beyond the home garaging of government vehicles. It extends far beyond people staying at work for an extra 5 minutes instead of leaving 5 minutes early and well beyond people taking only 1 hour for lunch instead of 1½ hours. We are looking at vast amounts of money and it will take a lot of hard work to get there. The amount of money this bill will save will make some contribution towards it. It will gradually eliminate competition between the private sector and the public sector and it will ensure that present employees of the Northern Territory government will not suffer any drop in their salary packages. It will allow us to move forward with a balanced budget which I believe is something which all members of this House would support.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour and Administrative Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all honourable members, particularly those on this side of the House, for their contributions. I was very appreciative of the comments of the Minister for Transport and Works who, I thought, was right on the ball. The opposition has stated that it supports this legislation. That is very pleasing to note, but it would have been rather unusual if it had opposed it, considering that its friends in the Trades and Labor Council are supportive. I suppose the opposition has been given fairly strict instructions by the TLC to support the legislation. Otherwise, it probably would not have done so.

Mr Smith: You really make it hard to like you. You really do. Here we are doing you a favour and you still kick us in the teeth.

Mr McCARTHY: I doubt very much that the opposition could have come to that conclusion on its own.

The member for Nhulunbuy raised a couple of questions that require some clarification. Other members, including the Leader of the Opposition, raised similar issues and expanded on them. He suggested that clause 4(2) might be a let-out for the 'fat cats'. It is not. It is there for a very specific reason. The legislation covers a very broad cross-section of people. In fact, it purports to cover everybody in the public service. It could be seen to be so wide that it may cover people it is not intended to cover. For instance, some legislation passed through this House covers people such as the employees of religious property trusts. We certainly do not intend this legislation to cover those people, but it may have covered them had we not put in that let-out clause.

The clause also gives us the opportunity to act in some cases where there may otherwise be unreasonable detriment to people. The Leader of the Opposition referred to possible problems in attracting specific specialist people to remote areas. The clause will enable the Northern Territory government to offer terms that may not be available to everybody within the public service. I do not want to suggest that we would offer air fares as a part of any proposal to attract people to the Northern Territory in future. This is because air fares have an actual cost which is 1.5 times that of the fare itself. We would be very reluctant to offer air fares to new recruits in the future because of the iniquitous tax that the federal government has imposed on all perks. It obviously regards air fares as perks because they are subject to fringe benefits tax. The clause allows us to offer a cash or equivalent condition to attract people whom we otherwise may not be able to attract.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we do not really have the problems in attracting people to the Northern Territory that members opposite and the TLC would like to believe. The member for Stuart's comments indicate to me that he has very little faith in what the Territory has to offer. According to the member for Stuart, the Territory is a terrible place to live and nobody would live here unless he had conditions of service that would enable him to get out for a holiday at his employer's expense. I can tell him that 80% of the Territory's population does not have those sorts of conditions. People working in the private sector do not have the high levels of Territory allowance, nor do they have air fares.

Mr Smith: They do not comprise 80% of the total work force in the Territory.

Mr McCARTHY: We have 75 000 people in our work force or thereabouts, and 15 000 are working in the public sector. Use your head and the sums will come out.

Mr Smith: What about the Commonwealth public servants? Have you forgotten them?

Mr McCARTHY: I will concede that they make up about another 5000.

Mr Smith: That is 20 000, nearly a third.

Mr McCARTHY: It would indicate that the Commonwealth public service here is rather bloated.

The member for Koolpinyah and the member for Stuart raised different concerns in relation to clause 5 which is fairly wide-ranging. Before I come to those, I want to pick up some comments from the other side of the House concerning relative inexperience in this field. I would have to admit that, 8 weeks ago, I was very inexperienced in industrial relations. I had never really dealt with industrial relations to any great extent. However, I must say that I have been through the school of hard knocks over the last 8 weeks and I mean that literally. I have picked up quite a lot in the area of industrial relations. One of the things that I have picked up is that conditions of service and a range of things in industrial relations do not have to be expressed. They can be implied. This clause has a broad-ranging ability to pick up those implied conditions of service and implied practices which might not otherwise have been picked up.

Clause 7 contains a provision ensuring that the act shall not be construed so as to acquire a property. The intention is that the act can be implemented to the fullest possible extent up to the limit of the Territory's power to the extent that, if an aspect of the act in relation to an employee's entitlement is beyond power, the other aspects that are within power will remain enforceable and not be affected by that failure. That makes it quite clear that we are not attempting to override federal legislation which we do not have the ability to override.

Clause (10) of bylaw 56 refers to the length of time away from the normal place of residence whilst on leave. I mention this in relation to the Leader of the Opposition's query with regard to the new provision that the government has inserted. It was not discussed with the TLC. We believe that public servants in the Northern Territory should have the ability to use their air fares for travel within the Territory. Here in the Northern Territory, we have some of the best holiday venues in Australia. People are travelling from all over the country to spend their holidays here. The previous regulation did not allow our employees to use their air fares to holiday in the Northern Territory. The new entitlement goes so far as to allow for package tours, including fly-drive or plane-accommodation tours within the Northern Territory. That should do wonders for our economy.

As the Chief Minister said earlier, 80% of people utilising air fare entitlements do not travel south. The TLC and the ALP argue that you need to get out of the Northern Territory's tropical climate and have a holiday with mum and dad down south or else you will go crackers. That is not borne out by the fact that 80% of people with air fare entitlements take their holidays overseas.

The Leader of the Opposition was also concerned about the remote area air fare entitlement that is in place for a number of people living in remote areas. From memory, those people receive intra-Territory air fares twice in years in which they have no interstate air fare entitlements and once in years in which they have an interstate air fare. The intra-state fares allow these people to get to Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek or Alice Springs. We have no intention of removing that remote area air fare entitlement and we have not made any attempt to do so. It is one of the special perks, if you like, that we are able ...

Mr Smith: It is not a perk. It is an essential.

Mr McCARTHY: It is a special perk that we are able to offer to employees who are asked to go out into remote areas. It will not be touched. The Leader of the Opposition has my guarantee on that. He need not worry about it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the air fare entitlement within the NT was definitely an initiative of the Northern Territory government and has nothing to do with any discussions with the TLC.

I was very pleased to note that the Leader of the Opposition agrees that air fares are hardly a warranted perk for people living in Darwin. I would like to say that this is also true of Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Gove.

Mr Smith: What about Batchelor?

Mr McCARTHY: We do not get them down there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and some other members made some other comments. I lost track of them after a while because there were so many inane comments. The member for Sadadeen is an exception. If members opposite would listen to him, they would learn something about things the federal government is trying to get away with, such as the Australia card. He has some quite sound things to say about the federal government's methods.

This morning, I mentioned that I would have like to have offered the cashing up of air fares for present public servants. One of the things that came through the Territory government's hotline, on which we had as many calls as did the TLC over the same period of time - in fact, over a lesser period - was that quite a number of people wanted the option to be able to cash up air fares. But the TLC flatly would not consider coming to an agreement if that option were there. One member of the negotiating team, whom I will not name, said that public servants on low income could not make that decision themselves because they might be short of money right now. They might need that money and so take the option to cash up their air fare and, when it came time for a holiday, they would not have their holiday air fare. I have heard a lot of tripe from people opposite about paternalism in the past, paternalism exercised towards all sorts of people, but that was the greatest example I have ever heard. I have never heard of paternalism to match that particular little gem.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it has been said that I refused to meet the unions and that the government refused to meet the unions. From the very first time that I knew the sum of money we ought to have been removing from conditions of employment in the public service, I called for a meeting with the TLC. We had that meeting and we put to the TLC representatives a range of options that

they could choose from that would not cause too great a hardship to their members. The very day after that was presented to them, it was taken to a meeting in Richardson Park where the then Secretary of the TLC made the statement to the people gathered at that meeting that the proposals that we had put forward for negotiation were not on. From that meeting and from meetings in every other centre, they sought a complete rejection of any of the proposals we had put forward. They said they would not consider any of the options put forward by the government. They would consider only the options they were putting forward. They would not accept any amendment from the government. In their very democratic way, they got from their members, by putting them under pressure, an ultimatum that they would not negotiate with us on any of our options but would get these savings from areas of management in government.

They have agreed to a different line with us. I saw on the front page of the paper today that one of the members of the TLC negotiating team had called the government's members 'lying troglodytes'. The fact that these people went off to a meeting after talking to us, and put the motion that they put forward, throws that name right back into their court, Mr Deputy Speaker. It belongs to them. Certainly it does not belong to any member of the government negotiating team.

The Leader of the Opposition indicated that it was too hard to take air fares away, and he would not do it because it was so difficult. The fact that we have been prepared to take that difficult decision is a great thing in my view.

The member for Koolpinyah suggested that senior public servants should give up more. Why should they be singled out to give up more than anybody else? Under the agreement that we have, they will get exactly the same reductions in Territory allowance. In fact, in some cases, their reductions in Territory allowance will be greater. They will receive the same amount, the maximum of 2% paid back into salaries. Nobody loses any money out of this deal. The Trades and Labor Council would have liked to tier the increases in salaries on the second tier by 1%, 2%, 3% and 4%, and throw out completely the salary relativities. That is a little bit of the ideology of the TLC. It would love to get at the salary relativities between the lower-paid and the higher-paid public servants and, I guess, anybody for that matter, provided it does not affect them personally.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have answered the query relating to clause 5(1) that the member of Koolpinyah also raised. In his usual way, the member for Stuart went off about a range of what he called district allowances in other parts of the country. Very limited and very small locality allowances are paid in some other places. We admit that, but they certainly do not exist for a whole public service as they did in the Northern Territory. The same honourable member went on to talk about the lack of understanding on my part, I think, and perhaps on the part of the government generally, in not referring to the 20th parallel in this legislation. I would point out to him that he does not know what he is talking about because the public service Territory allowance was not based on the 20th parallel. It was based always on whether the person had dependants or not. That is what it is still based on. For those people with dependants who were on \$2237 a year, that will be reduced by \$1277 to \$960. Those who were on \$1277 a year, those people without dependants, will have their district allowance reduced by \$1277 to zero. That points out to me and probably to everybody here just how much that honourable member knew about what he was saying.

Mr Smith: There is a northern rate and a southern rate.

Mr McCARTHY: In the private sector there is, but not in the public sector. Clearly, you don't know that either.

Mr Deputy Speaker, why should the Northern Territory government provide to every person in its employ the ability to fly out on a holiday? It is not offered anywhere else. As was mentioned earlier, I think by the Treasurer, what do the people in Charleville do or people in a whole range of very remote places in Australia do when they want to go on holidays? They hop in their car and they drive, as we could very well do in the Northern Territory because we have better roads than anybody else in this country. We have excellent roads because we have had the foresight to put money into roads over the years. But this year, because we have been cut and because nobody wants to bleed, we have had to take money from our roads program and our housing program and we are putting a great many people out of jobs because of that. There will be many fewer jobs in repairing roads and in building new ones because we do not have the money.

I have a great deal of faith in the Northern Territory and in what it can offer us. It offers a great deal. I have considerably more faith than the member for Stuart has. He believes that nobody would live in the Northern Territory unless he had conditions that were way and above those offered anywhere else. I came here without conditions and I have lived here for 25 years without enjoying those conditions for most of that period. I have enjoyed my time in the Northern Territory because this is the best place in Australia and it is where I want to be, where I want to stay and where I will stay.

The member for Sadadeen had a problem with the progression to base levels of the Territory allowance and wondered how that is to work. In fact, on 1 September everybody will receive a reduction in the Territory allowance of 2% and an increase in salary of 2%, the first 2% of the second tier. Again, on 1 July next year, it will reduce by another 2% and the second 2% of the second tier will go in. In effect, what that means is that people on high salaries will get to the floor of \$960 and zero. Nobody will go below that floor. Those people on the high levels of salary will get down to the new floor, perhaps even in the first bite. They will not go below it. They will get the increase when it comes in next year so as not to upset salary relativities and to keep salary relativities as they are to avoid catch-up claims later on. There will be a range of Territory allowance in between because those people on lower salaries will not reduce to the base Territory allowance level necessarily by the overall 4% reduction. They will have a Territory allowance that is slightly higher than \$960 and higher than zero and that will range upwards depending on what 2% off Territory allowance does to them. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pretty sure you understand what I am saying. There will be a range of district allowance down to the base levels of \$960 and zero.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I did not intend to talk for a full half hour, but I have rather enjoyed myself. Australia can no longer afford the remuneration standards which would be maintained by the ALP. The ALP over there would do what their inimitable leader in Canberra does: lie down and give and say that it is consensus. In his view, consensus is that you please everybody except the people who have to pay. He says that he will lie down on his back and pay the full 4%. That is what the ALP over there would do. They would just give up, give the money and not seek anything in return. We could no longer afford that.

The calls on our hotline indicated that people were prepared to take cuts. Very few people rang us and said we were off our rockers or that we were being too rough on them or anything like that. They said that they understood what we were doing, but they were not happy about it. Nobody is happy to lose money out of their Territory allowance or to have the potential of losing anything at all. It was not our intention ever to damage in any way people's conditions if that were in any way avoidable. We were in a position where we had to reach an agreement that would get us the money this year to allow us to carry on good government in the Northern Territory.

We have got that and it is to the credit of the TLC and to the credit of the Northern Territory government, which members opposite were not prepared to admit, that we have come to an agreement that will work. I was asked today by a member of the press how I would deal with union representatives in the future. Would I be able to talk to them? Would I have any problem with that? I said that I would not because I can talk to anybody and I can deal with anybody. I do not have to love them, and I certainly do not. But, I can work with them and I certainly will.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in closing, I would like to say how deeply I respect the Northern Territory Public Service. Out there in the Northern Territory Public Service, we have 15 000 people and, by far the greater majority, are loyal public servants. That does not mean that they vote for this government necessarily, but they are loyal public servants. There are a few who are not. By far the majority are totally loyal and that was brought home to me strongly during the 8 weeks of the negotiations by those people who were either working in my office or working in the Public Service Commissioner's Office and were given the task of helping us to reach an agreement with the Trades and Labor Council. I refer to the amount of effort and will that those people put into reaching an agreement, knowing all along that they were potentially damaging their own position. They were totally loyal to the job that they had to do. They were doing the job that public servants are supposed to do and that is carry out the will of the government in power. I have respect for every one of those people, and not only people in those 2 departments. We had people from Treasury and people from other departments supporting us in coming up with a deal and wearing a fair amount of abuse in the process. The dedication of those people was something that will make me forever recognise what a truly great group of people we have in our service in the Northern Territory. I commend the bill.

Motion agree to; bill read a second time.

Mr McCARTHY (Labour and Administrative Services)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Stamp Duty Amendment Bill (Serial 52) and the Taxation (Administration) Amendment Bill (Serial 51) passing through all stages at this sitting.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, although it is happy to cooperate where cooperation is necessary and desirable, the opposition is not prepared to support the urgency that the government requests in relation to this legislation. We have already had one bad experience in respect of this

legislation at the last 1-day sitting when the government in its wisdom - or lack thereof - insisted on pushing it through all stages.

At least 10 days to a fortnight ago, the government indicated that it had changed its mind on the basis on which the levy was to be imposed. But, it was not until lunchtime today that the government had its act together sufficiently to provide us with a copy of the proposed changes that it intended to make. We now find that the main reason we spent 4 hours discussing the previous motion was because the government has another set of amendments that it wants to put to us. The effect of this set of amendments is that the proposed piece of legislation in front of us will not commence until 31 March 1988 - 7 months away. There is no possible reason why we should grant urgency on this legislation. In the words of the Leader of Government Business himself, there will be at least 21 sitting days between now and the time that this legislation will take effect. There can be no possible reason for the government insisting on this bill passing through all stages tonight and we very vigorously oppose it.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I spoke earlier on the reason why we refuse to grant urgency in respect of this legislation. I gave what, at that stage, were some very good reasons for it: the fact that the government has already got it wrong once; the fact that we received this legislation only a matter of hours ago in this particular form; and the fact that we wished to put together our own amendment. At that stage, there was a reason for urgency to be denied and in fact the government agreed to withdraw its motion for urgency and went ahead with another piece of legislation. It is absolutely clear that, as of a couple of hours ago, the government did not know what it would do with this legislation. It did not know what form it would take. Over the last few months, it has subjected the tourist industry in the Northern Territory to the most incredible traumas as the industry has tried to come to grips with what this government is on about.

A few hours ago, we thought we had some clues about what was in the legislation from what we had seen in the newspapers. We now find that we did not because suddenly there is another amendment. As the Leader of the Opposition has said, there is absolutely no reason why the government should push the legislation through all stages tonight because it is not to commence until March next year. It is a very hard case to argue that we should allow legislation which will not commence until March next year to pass through all stages tonight. That is incredible, ridiculous and stupid. It leaves one aghast. It really is breathtaking.

We have been watching people opposite run around in circles all night as they delivered 1 draft and then another and as they attempted to get their act together. There is no reason whatsoever why the minister should not simply state: 'I lay before the House a set of amendments which we intend to put to you at the August sittings. We will debate it with the intention of its passage at that stage'. What would it cost the government if it did that? It has the numbers if it wants to get it through. We do not have the numbers to overturn it in August any more than we have the numbers to overturn it now. All that we will be doing will be to allow time for honourable members to do their duty and be able to look at the legislation and the amendments properly and to consult with people in the industry.

I am not saying now whether we will agree or disagree. I have not had a chance to be able to decide that. This is the clearest case that I have seen yet in this House in the 4 years that I have been here, Mr Speaker, where there is absolutely no reason why urgency should be sought. There is no

reason why it should be granted. Urgency has been requested where there is absolutely no reason for it. There is no reason why it should be granted and, as the Leader of the Opposition has said, we oppose it most vigorously.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise to ask the government about its rationale for putting through tonight something that will not come into effect for some months. There may be a good reason that has escaped everybody's notice but it would be handy to be able to go back to our electorates and explain to people why we had to ram something through tonight that will not come into effect until March. I would be grateful to hear the government's explanation.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I will make my contribution at this stage rather than giving a second-reading speech.

Mr Speaker, as you are well aware, I have an extensive rural electorate that extends from Aileron, some 130 km north of Alice Springs, down to the South Australian border, and then across from the Simpson Desert to Docker River. Mr Speaker, you would be well aware that the electorate of MacDonnell includes some of the finest tourist venues, not only in the Northern Territory and Australia but, dare I say ...

Mr Dondas: It is the finest in the world. Well done! We finally got it out of you.

Mr BELL: It is indeed and I do appreciate the coaching I am receiving from the member for Casuarina. The tourist venues in my electorate are some of the finest in the world. At all of those tourist venues from Watarrka to Uluru and Ormiston Gorge, there are hotels of various sizes which are in various stages of debt. I imagine that this particular legislation will be of crucial importance to them.

Like yourself and the Minister for Tourism, Mr Speaker, I am aware of the controversy surrounding this particular legislation. I make my contribution to this debate as a member representing an electorate which contains many establishments that will be subject to this legislation. I like to think that I am a conscientious local member. Other members may disagree, but I believe that a fundamental role of the local member is to take controversial legislation of this sort back to the electorate in order to obtain community views and reflect them in this House. Obviously, in an electorate like mine which covers thousands of square miles, such a process is rather more difficult than in an electorate like Flynn, where a reasonably energetic cyclist could visit every establishment which will be subject to this bill in a space of perhaps 1 hour if he was trying hard, or 2 hours if his fitness was not quite up to it.

I wholeheartedly endorse the concern of the member for Barkly. Although I do not want to get into a sordid competition, I imagine that the electorate of MacDonnell has more establishments which may be subject to this bill than does the electorate of Barkly. However, like the member for Barkly, I fail to see that there can be any possible reason for preventing duly elected members of this Assembly from seeking opinions from their constituents.

Mr Speaker, you will recall the debate earlier today in which the Chief Minister savagely calumniated me for failing to mention the tourist industry and the mining industry in my attempt to teach an economic history to the remedial students on the government benches. Just in case he or any of his colleagues is in any doubt about it, I wish to point out that I take the

interests of people involved in the tourist industry as seriously as those of anybody else or any other interest group whose members reside in my electorate. I bitterly resent the efforts of this government, which is staggering from one crisis to another, in making my job harder by ramming through this legislation in an unnecessarily hasty fashion. I do not believe there can be any justification for it, but I will sit here and listen with interest to the stumbling attempts of the honourable minister.

Mr HANRAHAN (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I hope I do not stumble and trip.

It needs to be clarified right at the outset that there are definite reasons why it was always necessary to pass an amendment to this legislation during today's sitting. Let me also make it clear, in response to the concerns of members opposite and on the crossbenches, that there have been extensive and lengthy consultations with the industry, almost on a daily basis, addressing the problems. I should at least thank members of the opposition for their support of the original legislation which contained many aspects that were unacceptable to the industry. As a result of the consultations that have taken place, this amendment schedule is before the House.

We also have a piece of legislation that has been passed previously and is due for signature by His Honour the Administrator prior to 1 August and we intend to move the change to a 2.5% levy in order to benefit the industry. It makes the levy more equitable. It is more favoured by the industry because of the ease of collection utilising electronic computing systems.

The member for Stuart says that he has only had this information today and he has not had a chance to draft any amendments. That is absolute rubbish. The amendment schedule before honourable members quite easily could have allowed the member for Stuart to draft an amendment that was applicable and it could have been debated right here and now.

Mr Ede: What absolute rubbish! We knew at 1 o'clock today.

Mr HANRAHAN: The government's main reason for moving that this legislation be passed this evening is because the process of registration has already commenced.

Mr Smith: Without your legislation.

Mr HANRAHAN: As a matter of record, the legislation in its present form still has a requirement for registration to take place, thank you very much. What we are dealing with is what will be passed tonight.

There are other aspects that will become clear when the Treasurer addresses the legislation. The opposition can ridicule the legislation. However, it effectively answers all of the concerns apart from the industry's in-principle opposition to it. It brings the form of return back to a one-line equation, a very simple exercise. Mr Speaker, you have seen the form and you are aware of what it contains.

The other amendment relates to the 14-day period which effectively defines 'short-term' and further clarifies the situation. It makes it easier for operators to check and crosscheck because 99.9% of the tourists visiting the Territory do not stay for 14 days. It is a matter of administration at the front desk for the operator.

In respect of the waiver, the amendments are still applicable in part. This amendment further seeks to make allowance for no liability to pay until 1 April 1988. It does not mean that we are moving away from the processes of registration or getting the statistics ready along with everything else to ensure a smooth operation from 1 April 1988. The amendment is designed purely and simply to allow for people who have contractual arrangements. We are proceeding to ensure that the industry is accommodated.

I believe that there is no question that the government has taken every step to consult with the industry. Only 10 minutes ago, I was speaking to representatives who were presenting a collective view to the government. I believe this legislation will go a long way towards answering all the queries and most of the concerns of the industry at large. It is an effective way of proceeding. It is a further sign of the government consulting with the industry and I certainly will be supporting every part of the legislation before this Assembly tonight.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15

Noes 8

Mr Coulter

Mr Dale

Mr Dondas

Mr Firmin

Mr Hanrahan

Mr Harris

Mr Hatton

Mr McCarthy

Mr Manzie

Mr Palmer

Mr Perron

Mr Poole

Mr Reed

Mr Setter

Mr Vale

Mr Bell

Mr Collins

Mr Ede

Mr Lanhupuy

Mrs Padgham-Purich

Mr Smith

Mr Tipiloura

Mr Tuxworth

Motion agreed to.

STAMP DUTY AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 52)

TAXATION (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 51)

Continued from page 1099.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I do not pretend to understand what this legislation is about and that is the reason we sought to adjourn the debate until at least August. I know that we spent 4 hours debating the previous bill and that the legislation itself, subject to the latest amendment, will not take effect until 31 March 1988. That is sufficient reason for the opposition to take the position that it will oppose whatever is before us tonight. We will oppose it simply on the basis that we have not had sufficient time to consider it.

It is a very black day indeed in the life of this parliament when the government abuses its power and privileges by putting forward, as a matter of urgency, a matter that is so blatantly and obviously not urgent. A measure

which is not due to come into effect until 31 March 1988 cannot be called urgent by any standard. In my time in this parliament, the opposition has cooperated willingly with the government where it has been able to demonstrate that urgency is needed to expedite legislation. We have cooperated willingly, Mr Speaker. We may need to reconsider that cooperation if the government intends to continue in tonight's vein.

We gave the Leader of Government Business the opportunity to justify seeking urgency and he responded with the worst performance I have ever heard from him in this House. He was not the Apex debating champion whose abilities we have come to respect. Nor was he the Leader of Government Business who has earned the opposition's respect for the courtesies that he shows it and for the scrupulousness with which he conducts business on behalf of the government. He has fallen far short of his normal standards in his carriage of this matter for the government tonight.

It was an indictment of the Treasurer, who actually moved the urgency motion, that he did not even have the guts or intestinal fortitude to get up and defend it instead of leaving that to the Leader of Government Business. It is not good enough. This parliament is a proud inheritor of the well-established traditions of the Westminster system. We have an obligation to present and future generations of Northern Territorians to ensure that those proud traditions are carried on. What do we see tonight? We see this government ignoring those traditions and chucking them out the window. We see this government throwing into great jeopardy the prospect of future cooperation with the opposition and, I dare say, the crossbenches, on matters of urgency in future. And what is the purpose of this? Why is urgency required in respect of legislation which will not take effect for 9 months? I invite members opposite to tell us why it is so important for this legislation to be passed tonight, when it will not take effect until 31 March 1988.

We heard the Leader of Government Business say that the Administrator's assent is not required until 1 August. On the advice of his Executive Council, he can just let it lie. The government's alternative was to repeal the existing piece of legislation. We would have been quite happy to support that. Instead, for reasons we do not know and that the normally fluent Leader of Government Business cannot articulate, we have been asked to support a pig in a poke. We have been asked to take this government on trust and support the matter of urgency that was put before us tonight.

Mr Speaker, as a result of today's deliberations, we are pretty low on trust on this side of the Assembly. We are certainly not going to take the government on trust on this particular motion. I indicate to the government that, if it persists in pushing this legislation through the House tonight, we will be pretty low on trust for a long time in terms of our negotiations and discussions with the government in respect of the smooth running of this parliament. That is because there is no doubt that this government has abused the trust that we have placed in it and has abused the privileges that this parliament gives to the government.

I would remind honourable members opposite of the concerns expressed by the member for MacDonnell. His electorate contains the second most popular tourist attraction in the whole of the Northern Territory.

Mr Hatton: It is the most popular.

Mr SMITH: Kakadu is now the most popular. His electorate contains some government-supported hotels which have been the subject of great controversy

in this House. At the other end of the scale, his electorate contains people with vision who have put their own money into small enterprises in small towns and communities. He is a conscientious and caring local member and he wants the opportunity to go out to his electorate to tell people about the changes the government wants to make to this piece of legislation, and to seek their opinion. That is what democracy is supposed to be all about. You talk to the people whom you represent, you seek their opinion, you come back in here and you express that opinion.

I accept, as do all members on this side of the House, that there are occasions when the government needs to put through an urgent piece of legislation. On every occasion when that occurs, the government has an obligation to persuade the members of this opposition that the normal process is not possible and to tell us why there is such a burning hurry to have the legislation passed. The government has not provided us with that explanation in this sitting. It has failed miserably to provide us with any explanation why a piece of legislation which is not to come into effect until 31 March 1988 has to be passed through all stages today, remembering that the original amendment schedule became available to me in my office at 1 pm and that, less than 1 hour ago, we had a revised amendment schedule put on our desks in this House.

It is not good enough. Remember, Mr Speaker, that, between now and 31 March next year when this legislation is meant to take effect, there will be 27 sitting days. Nevertheless, the government is intent on forcing it through all stages tonight. The government will stand condemned in the eyes of this parliament and in the eyes of the people of the Northern Territory if it persists with this stupid move. I urge members of the government, even at this late stage, to do the sensible thing and to adjourn the legislation until the next sittings.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, in the May mini-budget, the federal government cut out dole payments for people under the age of 18. It was a mini-budget, and it struck me as odd that the measure was not to come into force until 1 January 1988. That seemed ridiculous to me and I am afraid this amendment does not sound any better.

When we debated the legislation at the last sittings, I indicated that, as a result of talking to people in the industry in Alice Springs and Darwin, I believed that a percentage levy would be more acceptable to the industry than the \$2 levy. I am pleased the government has taken that on board.

I am delighted that this is not to come into effect until March next year. I consider that a better solution would be for the government to drop the idea of trying to raise \$2m from the industry and let the industry stand on its own feet and play a part in its own marketing. Members will recall that the government had earmarked \$14m for the tourist industry and that is quite a considerable sum. The Territory government has been a leader in the field of marketing tourism. It is a large and important industry.

With the federal cuts, the government wanted to expend \$12m from general revenue and to raise another \$2m from the industry itself. I pointed out some inequities. The cheaper accommodation places generally were not having a great deal of difficulty filling their rooms. These people saw that the money that they were forced to raise would go to support the big operators such as the Sheratons. Whether you like it or not, the resentment is there and the resentment is real.

If the government were to raise \$2m from this tax, how can it suddenly forgo \$1.5m? The government has adopted the percentage basis which is more acceptable. Maybe it is moving towards giving the industry a chance to see whether it can stand in part on its own feet and whether it will become privatised to a degree.

I am pleased with this delay. I have had considerable discussion with people in the industry over the last few weeks. I have been happy to discuss my views which have not changed. The people whom I have spoken to believe that they should take some cuts along with the rest of the Territory as a result of the cuts that have been foisted upon us. They believe that they should have their freedom to promote their businesses as they see fit. Maybe it is a backhanded way of doing it but perhaps the government will introduce another amendment in February next year to drop the so-called bed tax altogether.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, when the Treasurer rose tonight to move his motion in relation to this legislation, I was next to a faulty speaker. I came inside particularly to ask the minister why it was necessary for this bill to go through tonight, given that it will not come into effect until 1988. I guess it was the answer to that which concerns me most. I understood the minister to say that this legislation had to be passed tonight so that it could be incorporated in the act which the Administrator is due to sign quickly because departmental officers have already started registering people and putting into place the processes for administration of the legislation. If that is not what the minister said, I would be happy for him to indicate across the Chamber to me that it is not the case. He has not done that and therefore I assume that that is the position that we are in.

Mr Speaker, there are 2 problems with that. I raised earlier my concern that the government has a great deal of difficulty in dealing with what is legal and what it would like to do. Those are 2 very different things on most occasions and half the fracas we have spent today sorting out in another debate has been over the fact that the government could not tell the difference between what it wanted to do and what was legal. Here we are again in the same boat.

I would say to you that it is very improper for the administration of an act to be put in place before the Administrator has signed it. If there are officers of the department in the community harassing hoteliers, getting people to fill out forms and printing material on the basis that the act will be signed by the Administrator, then that pre-emption is tantamount to arrogance. It is bad form and it is bad protocol and the government should never be caught out at it. Regrettably, tonight it has been and I believe the Administrator is owed an apology.

Having said that, I think it is important to come back to the point that the Leader of the Opposition raised. Why is it necessary for this bill to go through tonight if it is not to come into effect until April next year? There is no logical reason that anybody could imagine why such an amendment has to be passed tonight.

No one has proffered one. Certainly, people on the other side do not want to think about it too hard because they are not jumping to their feet to defend it. There is no reason for it to go ahead. I would put one to you, Mr Speaker, that the government is under extreme pressure from the industry for this whole bill to be scrapped, and so it should be. I have advocated that from day 1, and I still stand by it. It is quite likely that, if this

amendment does not go through tonight, the pressure on the government will become so great in the next few months that it will have to scrap it because, of all the things that were proposed in the 25 June package, this and the petrol tax are the only survivors. The kindergarten tax has gone. The savings from the public service are gone. The tourist operators will be the ones carrying the bag for the 2.5% that used to be \$2 per night and might be something else in the future.

No reason has been given why this legislation should go through tonight. It is perfectly reasonable for it to sit there until August. If the tourist industry can mount opposition to prevent the government from passing the legislation at all, it ought to do it. I conclude by saying that I think it is a contempt for the office of the Administrator for the government to be putting into place administratively legislation that has not been before him for signature.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the legislation. There has been quite an amount of debate about the passage of this legislation through the House tonight. I would like to deal briefly with that at this stage. I remind honourable members that, at the last sittings - and with the support of the opposition - bills were passed dealing with what is colloquially known as the bed tax. In fact, it is a tourism marketing duty. The legislation passed through all stages and it has an operative date of 1 August 1987. There are imperatives on the Administrator in fact to sign the legislation prior to the operative date. The point has been raised tonight that there have been some informal administrative arrangements whereby applications for registration have been received by the government. Obviously, they could not take effect until such time as the legislation was signed and put into place.

These bills seeking to amend the Stamp Duty Act and the Taxation (Administration) Act will come into effect also from 1 August 1987. If the Administrator were to sign the proposed law that is currently before him for signature, that would have the effect of immediately imposing a \$2 per night tourism marketing levy on the industry. As a result of consultation with the industry, the intention is now to charge the levy on the basis of 2.5%. From debates this morning, I understand the opposition did not object in principle to the amendments that were proposed. The collection of moneys will not occur until April 1988. Suddenly, the opposition needs to consult with their constituents and wish to have the matter delayed.

The legislation coming into operation from 1 August will enable the processes of registration and the various procedures, including the process of notifying the many travel agents around the world who are booking tours to the Northern Territory. It is proposed that there will be an administrative arrangement, and it can be dealt with within the existing legislation, whereby processes can be put in train so that the marketing levy can be built into the packages. The date of 1 April was chosen in consultation with the industry to give time for implementation and to provide the opportunity for the industry to adjust the printing of its brochures which come into operation from 1 April next year. They are going into print now and through until November and December. That date will enable the industry to work through the detailed administrative arrangements necessary with respect to the collections and give the industry time to adjust any of its accounting procedures if necessary.

The postponement in the bill is only in respect of the actual collection of the money. It does not relate to the multitude of other matters that need to be dealt with in the build-up to that. It is quite appropriate, firstly,

that we do not proceed with a situation where the existing proposed law before the Administrator would be signed and come into effect from 1 August. Rather, the alternative arrangement should be put into place so that it can come into operation at the same time and provide that grace period to allow for registrations, notifications and steady implementation of the proposed adjustments.

As the Leader of Government Business has already said, there have been a number of other proposed amendments, again resulting from discussions and consultations with the industry, to better facilitate the administration of this legislation. When this bill becomes law, it will provide a clarity as to exactly what the situation is in so far as the industry is concerned, and will enable the industry and the government to proceed to put into place the administrative arrangements and allow the industry time to prepare its necessary brochures and send advice out to the travel agents and bureaus around the world. All that will enable the legislation to be brought into effect in a steady, rational manner.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, without a doubt this is one of the worst performances that I have seen from this government for many a long month. We have not seen anything except a display of arrogance. We heard a smart-arsed defence from the Leader of Government Business ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw that remark unreservedly.

Mr EDE: I withdraw that remark unreservedly, Mr Deputy Speaker.

We had no defence whatsoever from the Treasurer who requested the urgency. He offered no defence whatsoever as to why urgency was required. He did not participate in the debate after making his initial request. Obviously, he is playing some particular game of his own against the Leader of Government Business. I do not know the details of that and I do not wish to know what they are playing at. Obviously, they are playing their own games and it is the administration of this particular tax which will suffer. Worse than that, the tourist industry in the Northern Territory will suffer. Let us just have a look at the arguments that they have put forward.

First, I will refer to the Stamp Duty Amendment Bill. This amendment arrived with us at 1 pm today. It states that the principal act is to be amended by omitting section 21A. Section 21A contains the amendment that was effected at the last 1-day sitting. That reminds me that that was put through under urgency too.

Mr Coulter: And supported by you.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, we went along with it that time, but we are not going along with it this time because they got it wrong that time and, obviously, they had it wrong at 1 pm this afternoon and now we are expected to believe that they have finally got it right at 7 pm tonight. There is just no way in the world that will wash. There has been no chance whatsoever for this Assembly to do its duty by the tourist industry, by the people of the Northern Territory and by our own constituents.

The only intimation that we have been able to obtain to date is along the lines that, because the bill says that the amended act will come into operation on 1 August 1987, somehow that is a problem. We are not quite sure whether they are referring to this particular bill or the original amendment

that was put through on 25 June. We suspect it is the earlier one. While some administrative acts have gone ahead, there is a requirement on the Administrator who is about to sign it. For the benefit of honourable members opposite, I think I will have to quote from the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act of 1978 because, unfortunately, it is obvious that they have not read it.

Section 7, Assent to Propose Laws, subsection (2) says: 'Upon the presentation of a proposed law to the Administrator for assent, the Administrator shall, subject to this section, declare, in the case of a proposed law making provision only for or in relation to a matter specified under section 35 - that he assents to the proposed law or that he withholds assent to the proposed law'. In any other case, he can assent, he can withhold his assent or he can refer it to the Governor-General. It is obvious that, in this instance, all the government has to do is not proceed with this legislation and request the Administrator to withhold his assent from the other piece of legislation until such time as we can debate these pieces of legislation in the August sittings. It is all laid out. There is no problem with it. There may be a problem in that some reprinting may be required. The commencement date of 1 August 1987 will have to be changed. If the government wishes to amend that date at that time and if it wishes to go to the expense of reprinting the bill, we shall not cavil at it.

The issues that confront us today are far more important. What we have is an attempt by this government to railroad through a piece of legislation which has been amended several times. The government tried to rush it through this House on a previous occasion. It tried to rush the legislation through today and now it is attempting to rush through an amendment. Strangely enough, I have with me a press release by the Treasurer, Mr Barry Coulter, dated Tuesday 28 July. It says: 'The tourism marketing duty was unveiled in its new form today by the Treasurer, Mr Barry Coulter. The duty will be levied from 1 August on registered places of accommodation at a rate of 2.5%. It will apply to accommodation charges for guests for the first 14 days in the one establishment. After 14 days, the duty will not apply. Mr Coulter introduced the amendments in the Legislative Assembly following consultation with the tourist industry'. Is the Treasurer now withdrawing copies of this press release? 'Please, please, give me back my press release. I have just amended it!'

Mr Speaker, it is very difficult for us to take this government seriously when its own press releases cannot keep up with the amendments it is putting through the House. I feel sorry for the honourable minister's press secretary. The poor bloke is out there trying to keep his press releases in line with the amendments as they come before this House. It is an impossible task. It is farcical. This whole legislation, the whole concept of a bed tax, is reducing this particular government to a laughing stock. We do not support it any longer, Mr Speaker. We thought the philosophy might have been all right but the sponsor could not get it right. He had 3 goes and still he could not get it right. He is a nong. Only one course of action is available to the government at the moment and that is to withdraw gracefully.

Mr Hanrahan: For what reason?

Mr EDE: For what reason? For the perfect reason that you could not get it right the first time, you could not get it right the second time and you expect us to believe that, finally, you have got it right the third time.

Mr Hanrahan: You haven't read it and therefore you would not know - by your own admission.

Mr EDE: There were parliamentary draftsmen running backwards and forwards around the town putting together the second set of amendments that we have today. He expects us to believe that somehow we should have faith in the government despite the fact we have had 2 motions for urgency and amendment schedule 13 has replaced amendment schedule 12. The government pretends that everything is all right and we are expected to take it on face value.

Mr Speaker, we have pointed out how the minister could use the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act to overcome the problem of the Administrator having to give his assent. The government could then bring the legislation back in August, by which time we will have had a good look at this piece of legislation. The commencement date of 1 August can be amended. We will not complain about that.

The Chief Minister used the argument that somehow this fits in with international marketing! A month ago, the government intended to go ahead with this matter without any consideration to the international market or to any of the forward contracts or commitments that members of the industry might have entered into already. Suddenly, this has assumed such enormous importance that we have to rush it through so that everybody will have 5 months to get it right. It is absolutely incredible. It does not stand up to any examination whatsoever.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is only one course left open to me at this stage. I seek leave to move that debate be adjourned and to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave denied.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, if I called this legislation a complete balls-up you would probably ask me to withdraw, but you get my meaning. If Gilbert and Sullivan were alive today, they would find this a great subject for a light opera.

Mr Coulter: You have not read it either.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I have read it. I have read both schedules, I have read the amendment and I have read the previous bill. I was against the so-called bed tax when it was introduced earlier and I am still against this legislation.

Before I get on to the legislation itself, there are some matters that should again be stressed. The first is rather a serious matter which I am forced to bring to the attention of the Assembly. The Chief Minister referred to informal administrative arrangements that have already been put in place. I know this is not the first occasion on which informal administrative arrangements have been put in place before legislation has actually been passed. I did not say anything when such informal administrative arrangements were put in place before the Work Health Bill was even debated although it had been discussed in the CLP party room. I believe that, in relation to this legislation, implementing informal administrative arrangements is a complete contempt of the Assembly. It is a contempt of the Administrator's position by pre-empting any decision that this Assembly will take and any decision that the Administrator will take. I believe that, if the government pre-empted a parliamentary decision, the logical conclusion is that the position of every

member in this Assembly is ridiculous and useless. Some people might say there is a bit of truth in that but, nevertheless, we all represent the people of the Northern Territory and we all gather at certain times to make decisions. We know that the government has the numerical majority in the Assembly but, for it to arrogantly pre-empt its decisions and any decision made by the Administrator, is complete and utter contempt.

Mr Coulter: It is not true.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It is true and you know it.

Mr Coulter: You do not know what you are talking about.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: You will get your chance when I finish. I am talking now.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I was very interested to hear the Chief Minister's diverse explanations of why this legislation needs urgency. He talked about the time needed for tours to be booked. He talked at great length about his concern for the hoteliers. He talked about his concern for the tourist industry in general and the necessity of honouring contracts that were booked at a particular price. It is very odd that he did not express these concerns at all when the previous legislation was discussed. His concern has emerged pretty late and it does not ring true at all. The previous bills were introduced and passed with no consultation with the industry whatsoever.

If my memory serves me correctly, the Treasurer said that he had spoken to the secretary of the Hoteliers' Association at the Adelaide River Show. I went to a meeting at the casino conference room, together with many other interested people, and it was the view of everybody present, including myself, that there had been no consultation with the industry. I want to know why the government is so concerned about the industry now? I have to hand it to the Minister for Tourism. At least he tried to talk the industry around to his way of thinking after the legislation was passed. It is a pity this happened so late. The minister, the Treasurer or the Chief Minister should have done it before the legislation was passed in the first place.

The bill itself says that this legislation will come into operation on 1 August 1987. That is the date mentioned in the bills we passed at the last sittings which the Administrator has not assented to. I agree with the member for Stuart that it is within the Administrator's power to withhold assent. We seem to be talking about 2 pieces of legislation here and that makes it very difficult. There is a piece that we have passed and which has not been assented to and a piece that the government hopes will be passed and assented to on the same day. For the life of me, I cannot see why the date of 1 August 1987 cannot be changed. Any piece of legislation can be changed or rescinded. We have a sheet of amendments to previous legislation so why not amend the date when we intend to amend almost everything else?

To turn to the legislation itself, it has lessened the impact on the industry by a week. I again object to the use of 'in the opinion of the commissioner'. I see that as being in contradiction to the definition in the amendment to the previous legislation where 'short' is amended to 'accommodation of less than 14 days'. The commissioner's opinion is still required in the case of such accommodation. I do not know whether that implies that we think that the commissioner is the only person who can count to 14. Perhaps something else will come into consideration apart from the fact that short-term accommodation is only for 14 days. I believe that the

phrase 'in the opinion of the commissioner' lays this piece of legislation open to all sorts of interpretation, depending on the whim of the commissioner or what side of the bed he got out of that morning. Either it is short-term accommodation of less than 14 days or it is not. The opinion of the commissioner should not come into it.

I now come to proposed section 80E in the legislation before us. The heading is 'Returns and Payment'. This provides that not only do the hoteliers and caravan park owners have to supply the sum of the amount of the tourism marketing duty invoices, but they also have to compute the amount of tourism marketing duty disclosed as being payable in relation to the return, and supply such other information as the commissioner may require. That gives the commissioner very sweeping powers. He can ask for any information that he requires. If the hotelier or caravan park owner does not supply him with that information, he is liable to the penalties which are stated at the end of that proposed section. It does not say 'any other relevant information'. It simply says 'such other information as the commissioner may require'. He can ask to see books which are not related to the accommodation business at all. He can ask to see anything at all in a hotel or caravan park. In fact, he can ask for any information he wants and, according to this legislation, proprietors must cooperate or pay a penalty.

I am only sorry that I do not have a hotel or caravan park because, if the commissioner asked me for information unrelated to my business, I would tell him where to go and I hope a few other people would do the same. This legislation does away with individual privacy and I object to that most strongly. I am not a civil libertarian as such, but I believe in the privacy of the individual and this legislation involves prying into people's private matters because it does not specify that it has to be relevant to the industry.

The Treasurer says that the levy will be 2.5%. I wish he would tell me where the bill mentions 2.5%. I have seen it mentioned in the media.

Mr Coulter: It is mentioned in the bill to amend the Stamp Duty Act.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I have several pieces of paper here.

Mr Coulter: Perhaps it will be simpler if I pass you this copy.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Thank you. I did not receive this, Mr Speaker. I can see the 2.5% mentioned or is it a speck of cockroach dirt?

That is one up for the Treasurer but only because I did not have the piece of paper on my desk. There has been such a proliferation of papers on this legislation that a person does not know where to look. The Minister for Conservation could get in on the act too with all the trees that have been cut down to provide this paper. With those remarks, I reiterate my objection to this legislation.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a few comments in relation to these 2 bills and to add my voice to the opposition's displeasure at the hasty fashion in which the government is attempting to ram this legislation through the Assembly this evening. I draw the attention of honourable members to the fact that it is now 9.10 pm. We have all been here since 10 am this morning and I do not imagine that it will be a particularly early night. I reiterate the comments made by the opposition earlier this evening in respect of a special adjournment motion. Issues of concern to

Territorians should be given more consideration than this government gives in its haste to rubber stamp legislation and to treat this Assembly with the sort of contempt that is scarcely desirable.

As I mentioned earlier, I seek to make a worthwhile contribution on bills such as these. I seek to get the word around to people in my electorate in an effort to ensure that I reflect their views. For example, I draw the attention of honourable members to a statement yesterday from the Deputy Chief Minister in relation to Kings Creek Station which is an accommodation facility in my electorate that will undoubtedly be affected by this legislation. It will in fact be a matter of some concern to Mr Conway and Mr Lander and to their families. Because it has obviously been drawn to the attention of the Deputy Chief Minister, I seek the leave of the House to incorporate in Hansard this media statement in relation to Kings Creek Station.

Leave denied.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, the content of this particular media statement in relation to Kings Creek Station is a matter of some absurdity. Obviously, I can make my point without it necessarily being incorporated in Hansard. However, I will reserve my comments about that perhaps for the adjournment debate where it may be more apposite in relation to some of the other matters that are raised in that statement, particularly with respect to negotiations between the government, Kings Creek Station and the Central Land Council and some of the more vicious aspects of that particular statement.

I simply draw the attention of honourable members to it in the context of this debate because it is a graphic illustration of the far-flung nature of my electorate and the importance of garnering views from such people about legislation of this sort which obviously is highly contentious. Many people in the tourist industry have been concerned about it. I was unaware that this was to be pushed through in this way, particularly since its form and application have been changed in such a way.

There is a clear indication of the sort of stumbling attitude that the government has adopted on this subject and I know that reference is already being made to it. The press release of today's date by the Treasurer says: 'The duty will be levied from 1 August on registered places of accommodation at a rate of 2.5%'. At this stage, rumour has it that that has been pushed forward to 31 March. I seek the leave of the Assembly to incorporate this in Hansard because it is such a clear example of the sort of difficulties and inappropriateness of proceeding in this way with this particular bill.

Leave granted.

PRESS RELEASE BY THE TREASURER, MR BARRY COULTER - Tuesday 28 July 1987

The tourism marketing duty was unveiled in its new form today by the Treasurer, Mr Barry Coulter.

The duty will be levied from 1 August on registered places of accommodation at a rate of 2.5%.

It will apply to accommodation charges for guests for the first 14 days in the one establishment.

After 14 days, the duty will not apply.

Mr Coulter introduced the amendments in the Legislative Assembly following consultation with the tourism industry.

He said the amendment took into account submissions from the industry and allowed for simple and straightforward procedures to collect the duty.

'The government has moved to change the duty so that it applies as equitably as possible across the tourism industry, and so that it will be clearly understood', Mr Coulter said.

'The duty will be implemented through two simple forms - one for registration of an accommodation house, and the other for collection of the duty'.

'The forms have been designed for maximum clarity and minimum bureaucracy'.

The Treasurer said changes to the basis on which the tourism marketing duty is to be assessed - from a fixed to an ad valorem duty - had been foreshadowed.

A new element was the 14 day rule to distinguish between short and long term guests.

Mr Coulter said liability to pay the duty could be waived in cases where an operator could demonstrate an inability to collect because of existing contracts.

However, this concession would only be available until 1 April 1988.

A further amendment allows, at the discretion of the Commissioner of Taxes, for the lodgment of returns for periods greater than one month.

This means small operators in remote localities and certain caravan park operators may only be required to lodge 6-monthly or annual returns.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I appreciate that the government has had considerable political problems with the tourist industry with this particular legislation. However, as a member of this Assembly who, contrary to the Chief Minister's belief, does seek to reflect the views of all the interest groups in my electorate, I take bitter exception to this piece of legislation being gunned through Assembly in this way.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contribution to this debate, particularly the member for Sadadeen who quite rightly pointed out that this legislation accommodates most of the concerns that he had at an earlier stage. He was supportive of the 2.5% levy compared with the flat \$2 stamp duty.

Whilst the opposition supported the legislation as it previously stood, I understand from officers of the Department of Treasury, it does not have too many objections to the 2.5% levy compared to the \$2. I believe that has been expressed. I guess that the member for Koolpinyah is also content with the 2.5% levy which is in more keeping with her philosophy. I take it that the

amendment to the Stamp Duty Act has the full support of this Assembly. I assume the opposition does not wish to change its mind on this.

Mr Smith: We do.

Mr COULTER: They are now changing their minds. I was told today that they had no problem with the 2.5% levy. I am now told that they have changed their minds. Mr Speaker, you see it is not just this side of the Assembly that can be accused of changing its mind.

My press release illustrates one of the problems with providing information to the opposition. When we provide early information on legislation, it is used against us from time to time. Amendment 13.2 provides that there will be no liability to pay the duty until 1 April 1988. It recognises the difficulties associated with those organisations which have pre-existing contractual obligations. We have had an extreme amount of difficulty with the operators in relation to their forward contractual arrangements. To have this legislation in operation by 1 August will allow us to go through the procedures to have the registrations in place and to ensure that people who have contractual obligations will not be required to pay until April next year. I am told that April is a significant time in the tourist industry when new brochures are issued and pricing structures are changed. That is the reason why the 1 April date is there. To delay this legislation yet another month would be to delay those negotiations with the industry yet again. We believe that it is important for us to have the operators registered to overcome some of the problems pointed out by the member for Koolpinyah. To leave it for another 3 or 4 months is simply not on.

Amendment 13.4 is a consequential change to the date for which an invoice must be made out and also makes it clear that there is no requirement to collect the duty before 1 April. I have received registrations from a number of boarding houses and hotels which have already supplied information seeking registration to meet the commitments under this legislation. There is a need to do that to allow for the implementation of the liability to pay the duty to start on 1 April. No doubt, many discussions will be entered into during that period and some technical issues may need to be examined by the Commissioner of Taxes. For example, the definition relating to the 14-day period may be considered.

This has resulted from a process of consultation with the industry and from this government being flexible enough to accommodate the concerns of industry. The legislation needs to be set in place to enable us to meet the needs of the operators and the industry. The consultation has taken place and the setting in place of this legislation will ensure that the industry will be prepared for when the duty is to take effect.

The member for Stuart was offered a briefing. I told the honourable member that officers were available if he would care to take the time to have it explained to him. It is interesting to note that the Leader of the Opposition received a briefing, yet the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, forgetting his job and struggling to his feet in the first instance, decided to take the forerunning on this and then refused a briefing that was offered to him by the minister. That is how concerned he is about this legislation. He was not even interested enough to spare the time for a briefing so he would understand what the legislation is about. Nevertheless, he is prepared to stand in this Assembly and give us the impression that he knows what he is talking about and that this should not proceed.

I will give him the opportunity to tell me if agrees with the 2.5% levy as compared with the \$2 duty which he supported previously. Does he prefer that as an alternative or not? Or does he prefer what he approved and supported at the last sitting? That would be an interesting question for him to answer and I guess we will have the opportunity to hear from him on that in due course.

Mr Ede: When?

Mr COULTER: Mr Speaker, there will be plenty of opportunities for him to expound on his knowledge and what he believes during the passage of this legislation.

What we have here is simply an amendment to the Stamp Duty Act which, this morning, was okay according to the Leader of the Opposition. There were no problems at that time. This afternoon, he changed his mind and indicated that he had a problem with it. The member for Sadadeen said he agrees with the 2.5%. The member for Koolpinyah said it is okay. As I said, I thought that it was the opinion of the opposition that the 2.5% levy was a goer. We need this legislation to be set in place so that registrations can be undertaken from 1 August in preparation for the implementation of the levy in April next year. There are some concerns in industry about how they will meet existing contractual obligations. They need time to put their house in order and this legislation will enable just that. It allows time for registration and for the notification of overseas and interstate people that these are the rules in the Northern Territory. There will be no excuses. The awareness program will be carried out, implementation can be smooth and the liability for the duty will come into effect in April next year.

Mr Speaker, I am at a loss to understand members of the opposition and why they would be in any worse predicament than they were this morning when they agreed to this. We are now giving greater time for implementation, bearing in mind that the registration will occur first and then the liability to collect will occur in the new year. All of a sudden, we have heard from the opposition that it is a nonsense. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition refused a briefing because he believes that he knows it all. We have given a briefing to the Leader of the Opposition. We have tried to provide them with as much information as we possibly can, but to no avail because we are told now that, whilst they fully supported the previous legislation and the principle of the bed tax, they have changed their minds. How much faith can one have in the opposition which ridicules this side of the Assembly and says that we do not know where we are going? The opposition had no objection to this before lunchtime today.

We have put into this legislation something which the industry is most desirous to have and which makes the matter even clearer. It gives us lead time to bring this duty into force and yet members opposite can't do it. I really cannot understand their logic at all, but I am forever amazed at the way in which they handle themselves. This afternoon, we have seen yet another example of the inconsistency, lack of forward planning and lack of understanding for the industry which they claim so strongly to represent. It is simply a nonsense. This is a very simple amendment. It gives a lead time and will allow the legislation to come into operation very smoothly. I am disappointed at the 180° turn that the members of the opposition have chosen to make on legislation that they had no problem supporting only a few weeks ago. We were even told it was ALP policy and the right way to go. They said in the Assembly that they would not oppose this type of taxation. This morning, the very morning that this legislation is to go through, we were told there were no problems. This afternoon, there was a complete turnabout.

Mr Ede: Who said that?

Mr COULTER: I will not name names. I might say that up to the third reading there will probably be ample opportunity for me to name people.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 16

Noes 7

Mr Collins
Mr Coulter
Mr Dale
Mr Dondas
Mr Firmin
Mr Hanrahan
Mr Harris
Mr Hatton
Mr McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter
Mr Vale

Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Smith
Mr Tipiloura
Mr Tuxworth

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

In committee:

Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 52):

Bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 51):

Clauses 1 to 4 agreed to.

Clause 5:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 13.1.

This amendment will omit from paragraph (a) of the proposed definition of 'accommodation house' in paragraph (1)(a) the words 'short term' and insert in their stead 'accommodation for the periods of less than 14 days'.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, I would like to ask the honourable minister why the discretion or the opinion of the commissioner is necessary when 'short term' is quite clearly defined as accommodation for periods of less than 14 days. Are other matters going to be taken into consideration?

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, honourable members will be aware that the term 'short term' gave some concern to honourable members, in particular the member for Barkly. The member for Koolpinyah also raised some problems with the definition of 'short term'. In consultation with the industry, we have conducted some statistical research that has indicated to us that it is very easy to distinguish between short-term residents and people who are using accommodation for longer periods on a semi-permanent or permanent basis,

whether it be in flat or guest-house accommodation. Remember that the intention of this legislation is to ensure that revenue raised is returned to the industry in order to continue a marketing effort which will ensure that more tourists come to the Territory. We do not believe that there will be tourists in accommodation for periods in excess of the 14-day period.

We have given the Commissioner of Taxes discretion to act in cases where owners of facilities may be providing tourist accommodation without seeking registration. Where the commission believes this may be happening, as in the case of holiday units which have a high turnover, he is able to conduct inquiries and to ensure that such facilities are registered. The penalties for not registering or for making false declarations are set out in the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Chairman, the minister contradicted himself quite blatantly in speaking about holiday units which have a quick turnover. If they have a quick turnover of occupants, obviously they offer short-term accommodation of less than 14 days so why do they need to be registered?

Mr COULTER: The opinion of the commissioner relates to whether the accommodation is usually let for the period, not how long the period is. The commissioner can determine whether or not they are usually - and I stress the word 'usually' - let for that period.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clause 7:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 13.2. The amendment omits from proposed section 80D(1) 'an accommodation unit' and inserts in its stead 'an accommodation unit after 31 March 1986'.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 13.3. The amendment omits from proposed section 80D(3)(b) 'period of 7 days' and inserts in its stead 'period of 14 days'.

Mr TUXWORTH: I ask the Treasurer why he wants to do this.

Mr COULTER: There are several reasons. One is the human effort required to deduct receipts from people that had been there for 7 days. Some operators told us that their cash registers were not capable of being programmed to include the 7-day component. It was simply another complication and we tried to get rid of it after the industry approached us. The 14-day period makes it much simpler because it would be very unusual for a tourist to spend 14 days in an accommodation unit. It was thought that that would be more satisfactory and would eliminate the complications entailed by the 7-day period.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 13.4. The amendment omits from proposed section 80(E)(1) 'each month' and inserts in its stead 'the month of April 1988 and each subsequent month'.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 13.5. This amendment omits paragraph (a) from proposed section 80(E)(1).

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, agreed to.

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

Bills reported; reports adopted.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a third time.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, we have tonight seen what I believe will be only the first step in a fairly long and bitter debate. We have seen parliamentary democracy and its conventions, developed over hundreds of years, being trampled upon by the Treasurer who continues to demonstrate his contempt for the parliamentary process and for the industry that will have to bear the brunt of this tax. He would not allow members on this side of the Assembly sufficient time to examine this legislation.

Mr Coulter: You did not want to.

Mr EDE: That is absolute rubbish and I am glad that I have the chance to rebut it. As the Treasurer knows, when he asked me if I wanted a briefing, I told him I could not have a briefing because I was speaking next on the legislation which was before me. I already had the notes that he had supplied to the Leader of the Opposition. The legislation he was talking about was not the piece of legislation we just passed. It had been amended since and therefore a briefing at that stage would have been farcical and a waste of my time.

Mr Speaker, as I said earlier, we had hoped to be able to participate more thoroughly in this debate. We wanted to move an amendment which would have provided that, if the amount to be deducted per night was \$1 or less, it would not be deducted. That would have had the effect of ...

Mr Coulter: Why didn't you do it?

Mr EDE: The Treasurer is wiping out his own argument. If he wanted to look at our amendment, he should not have used urgency to push the legislation through. I have pointed that out 3 times tonight and the Treasurer still does not listen. We should not have urgency for these sorts of measures because people need time to consider them carefully and propose amendments. We would do that in an attempt to get legislation which would be for the good of the tourist industry in the Northern Territory and for the good of the Northern Territory.

Instead, all we have had are farcical statements. The government said not long ago that this piece of legislation, along with the fuel tax, had to be raced through quickly because we needed the whole year to raise the tax to try to balance the budget. We now find that it will not be implemented until March next year. Thus, the whole budget consideration of it was not correct. We can forget that part of the argument just as we already have had to forget it in relation to various matters concerning education. In other debates we

have had today, we have found that the figures that the Treasurer gives are rubbery.

Mr Coulter: You say that every year.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I am proved right every time. It is boring dealing with the Treasurer who is so absolutely and consistently wrong. He has not got one right yet.

Mr Speaker, there are other points that needed to be raised with regard to this legislation. There is a very real argument as to whether ...

Mr SPEAKER: I remind the honourable member that he is not permitted to repeat arguments previously used in this debate. The honourable member is able to debate the bill as it came out of committee.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, as it came out of committee, there are still some doubts about whether the tax is in the nature of a stamp duty. It is quite different from a normal stamp duty. If it is not a stamp duty, what is it? Is it a tax on income? If it is a tax on income, it is quite beyond the power of the Northern Territory government to levy it. These are issues which will have to be raised now by the industry itself. It will have to go to the incredible expense of taking it to court. If this legislation had not been rushed through, we would have been able to obtain legal opinion on it. The government does not worry about that. It is so used to spending hundreds of thousands of dollars of government funds on its little trips to the High Court. It is not particularly worried about legal challenges to its legislation. It is unfortunate because it is putting in very substantial jeopardy the development of the tourist industry in the Northern Territory.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind the honourable member that the Stamp Duty Bill was not amended in committee. He is raising arguments which should have been put forward in the second-reading debate.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I believe that there will be many opportunities later to debate this legislation because there is no doubt in my mind that other amendments will be coming thick and fast as the government finds that it is impossible to implement it.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the changes made in committee dramatically altered the way that the opposition looks at the legislation and that is the reason why we have changed our position. We have now spent most of the day correcting the mistakes of the original legislation. The argument put to us originally was that this bill was an essential revenue-raising measure to help the government recoup \$101m taken off it by the dreadful federal government which, unfortunately for the people opposite, the majority of the people of the Northern Territory seem to support. That was the argument and that is why we supported it. We supported urgency at the last sitting because it was a revenue-raising measure that this government told us was essential for it to balance its budget and it had to be put into effect from 1 August.

What do we find as a result of the committee stage tonight? It has slipped from being an urgent revenue-raising bill to be implemented on 1 August to a revenue-raising bill that will be implemented on 31 March or 1 April 1988. I would ask the government to consider the logic of that. If it is not essential to the revenue-raising activities of the government and if it is not essential for it to introduce this levy to balance its budget, why

on earth is it annoying and frustrating the whole of the tourist industry by introducing the levy at all?

I would like to know the answer to that. Secondly, I would like to know, given that the implementation date has been changed to 31 March and that has destroyed the prime reason for the legislation, why the government is so intent on pushing it through tonight in one sitting. I have stressed the opposition's view that there is no logical or rational basis for it. It is a contempt of the parliament that it has been done. Having expressed in the strongest possible means our opposition to this, the opposition is left with no resort but to walk out and boycott further debate and a vote on this particular matter.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I will not canvass the issues just raised because they have been gone over several times by different speakers and they are all pretty valid. I would like to make a final comment in relation to this legislation. It does not have anything like support from the industry. It still hotly contests it. Regrettably, Mr Speaker, I have to say to you that there are people in my electorate who are quite openly and defiantly saying that they will go to jail before they will pay it. I regret to say that I think that they are probably serious in what they say. I think the best thing that could happen now that the industry has 8 or 9 months to get itself together is that it can pressurise the government to have the legislation withdrawn for the benefit of the tourist industry in the Northern Territory. It is unreasonable and iniquitous legislation.

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I missed out on an opportunity to give the message to the government from a strong CLP supporter who opposed me at the last election. The message is that people do not like 1-day sittings. I think that has made the point on his behalf. It is a grassroots message and I think the government needs to listen to such messages.

In the last Weekend Australian, there was an article headed 'Schools Failing Industry - Button'. The article was written by one Lim Sae Boon. He wrote: 'Senator Button criticised the education system for being inflexible and inadequate and warned that the poor school retention rate was creating a school shortage'. It is a fact that there is a school shortage in Australia. However, I would take issue with the senator's suggestion that the system is inflexible. In my book, the dead opposite is the problem.

These days, there are so many courses available to students in schools. I heard at a public meeting in my electorate that Year 11 and 12 students have something like 84 different courses from which they can choose. The problem is the way in which students react to this wide range of choice. On the surface, it sounds marvellous. School councils, teachers and even the Department of Education officers can be heard saying that the wide range of choice is the most marvellous thing going.

It does not take very long for the students - and the brighter the student, the quicker this occurs - to get the message on the grapevine which subjects are easy, which teachers do not demand much work and which teachers

set little or no homework. It is pretty natural at that age for a young person to try to maximise his free time. It makes it doubly hard for the brighter student to choose something which is academically difficult, something which demands consistent homework and consistent effort, when he sees his mates not doing very much homework and having a good social life. It puts pressure on that student to change. Again, that is one of the problems. With this great range of choice, the student does not study a subject in depth for long enough. He studies something for 6 months, finds it a bit hard and thinks some of the other fellows are having a better time than he is. The other fellows seem to be able to enjoy their social life whilst some students are stuck at doing homework. There is an insidious pressure on them to drop out of that particularly demanding subject and choose something easier so they can enjoy a better social life.

Because they have not studied anything in depth, at the end of their time at school students often are precluded from going on to study more academically demanding subjects, in particular at university - if they get there at all. I think the students react with their feet: they bail out of school because deep down, maybe subconsciously, they realise that they are not really getting anywhere. Maybe they understand, although generally too late, that, instead of helping them to establish a career, to improve their employment prospects and to be able to take on the world, as it were, the wide range of choices available to them narrowed their prospects instead of widening them. Those who did not do maths 1 and 2, who opted to study maths 1S, would have a more limited range of university courses available to them. I know a little about this general area though it may not mean a great deal to some honourable members.

I believe that, when students had far fewer choices in their secondary education, when they had to study a subject in depth for 3 or 4 years rather than have the opportunity to chop and change after 6 months, they learned how to learn. I think that was one of the most important advantages that the education system of the 1960s had. Students learned how to learn, by studying 6 to 8 subjects at some depth. Then they were in a position to branch out from what many would say was a narrow basis and were able to cover a very wide range of tertiary subjects.

Senator Button is interested in industry. He is concerned that Australia is falling behind. He blames our education system which he says is too inflexible. I believe Senator Button is very wrong. The trouble is that it is too flexible and it offers too many soft options that the brightest of our students can choose. It is a darn sight easier to study hard when you know that every other student in your school has to do the same thing and that you are all in the same boat. But, when only a few are game enough to tackle those hard academic subjects, which do demand a great effort, then the pressure is on students to slide off and take the easy ones. Instead of opening up the world as your oyster, you will close the world off.

In the Territory, we are guilty of offering a huge range of choices to our students. We are guilty, I believe, of thinking that that is a marvellous thing to do for them. It is extremely costly. We are aware of the small number of students. We have such a huge range of courses and offer academically demanding subjects such as languages. The record in secondary schools in the Territory shows that the number of students studying languages these days is falling. Most of us appreciate that it is fairly important that we have members of our community who are competent in other languages but not as many students are studying them nowadays. Why? Because a language is an academic subject that is demanding and the kids find easier options. When I

was a teacher languages were not my area of expertise, but certainly subjects like maths, physics and chemistry were. They may seem narrow but I say to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that, unless this country becomes like Japan and our students have a system whereby they have to swat and work hard, we will fall further and further behind.

Rather than costing more money, I believe that, by narrowing the range of choice whilst still ensuring a reasonable range, and by ensuring that students study subjects in depth, the students will master those subjects. This smorgasboard education, as it is being called, of 6 months of this and 6 months of that, does not really give a mastery of anything. There are so many subjects and, unless students study a subject for 2 or 3 years, they do not really get a grasp of it or develop competence in it. As Senator Button says, why aren't we training engineers? Why aren't students opting for engineering? It is because it involves hard subjects and requires heavy work and effort put in during secondary education. The students are not doing that because they have such a wide range of choice. It is fairly natural that a student will choose the subjects which do not demand that discipline and which give him more free time. In the Territory, we should be looking at our education system to see whether we are doing our students a favour or not by having such a wide range of choice. I do not believe that it benefits them one bit.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I intend to speak in the adjournment debate tonight about my recent participation in a conference in Ujung Pandang in Indonesia but, before I do so, I would like to take up some comments made by the member for MacDonnell earlier on, when jokingly he implied that I would probably be changing my mind about comments I had made regarding the ALP candidate in the last federal election, Mr Snowdon.

You recall that, on 4 June, Mr Deputy Speaker, I made some comments regarding Mr Snowdon and they were not very flattering at all. Earlier in the day, the member for MacDonnell suggested that I might now like to withdraw those remarks and he gloated because, apparently, Mr Snowdon is to be the federal member for the Northern Territory. I would like to tell the member for MacDonnell that I have no intention of withdrawing any of those remarks at all. In fact, I would be very happy to confirm them tonight because nothing that has occurred in the last several weeks has changed any of those opinions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on that occasion, I said that Mr Snowdon was a member of the Marxist loony left of the Labor Party. I believe that is still very true. I also said he was a left-wing activist. Nothing that has happened has changed my mind about that. Also I accused him of participating in demonstrations against the American facility at Pine Gap.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I would remind the member for Jingili that Mr Snowdon is now a member of the federal House of Representatives. I draw the honourable member's attention to standing order 62 which says that a member may not reflect upon a member in another parliament.

Mr SETTER: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I was not aware that his election had been confirmed. I thank you for pointing that out. I am now referring to the member for the Northern Territory, Mr Warren Snowdon.

Mr Collins: You can't reflect on that. He is non-reflective.

Mr SETTER: He is non-reflective. Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for the Northern Territory, Mr Warren Snowdon is non-reflective.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Mr Snowdon has been elected. Whilst he may not have taken his seat in the federal parliament, he is still considered to be the elected representative of the Northern Territory.

Mr SETTER: I seek a point of clarification, Mr Deputy Speaker. Are you suggesting that I am unable to comment in this House on Mr Snowdon?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am suggesting that you may not reflect upon his character.

Mr SETTER: Let me just say, Mr Deputy Speaker, that I will not be withdrawing any of the remarks that I made previously.

I was also interested to note that Senator Bob Collins said that, in the federal House, Mr Snowdon will follow the party line. I know that Mr Snowdon is a member of the left wing of the Labor Party and I am aware also that Mr Gerry Hand, now the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, is also a member of the left wing of the Labor Party. Certainly, I cannot see Mr Snowdon changing his particular philosophy. I am quite convinced that it will not be very long before Mr Snowdon diverges from the right-wing line of the Hawke Labor government and pursues his own left-wing line. I repeat that I do not withdraw any of the remarks that I made on 4 June.

Let me turn now to my attendance at the Convention of the Indonesian Cultural and Educational Institute, known as the ICEI, which was recently held in the city of Ujung Pandang in the province of South Sulawesi in Indonesia. The institute was formed a couple of years ago in Melbourne and its main membership is drawn from academics both in Australia and in Indonesia. It has been working during that period to develop and foster educational and cultural ties and relationships between our 2 countries. Within the limited resources available to it, I believe that it has achieved a considerable amount during that period.

The convention venue was the Hasanuddin University in Ujung Pandang. It was the old Dutch port of Macassar on the island of Celebes which the Indonesians now call Sulawesi. Because you were a teacher of some repute, I am quite sure, Mr Deputy Speaker, that you would be aware that Macassar was a major trading port in the East Indies for hundreds of years.

The convention was comprised of government officials, academics, people from private enterprise and a number of educators from various institutes of learning in both countries. I am pleased to say that there was quite a large delegation from the Northern Territory. Of our 13 participants, only 2 were attending in an official capacity: myself, representing the Minister for Education and Ms Julienne Hill from the Department of Education. The other people who attended were teachers and current or past participants in the Northern Territory Indonesian exchange program. We had a very strong delegation and we were extremely well received. The business content of the convention covered a whole range of matters, from cultural issues to economic issues. For that very reason, it was extremely important that we be well-represented. It was not only educational matters that were being discussed but the whole range of relationships between our 2 countries.

The Northern Territory presented 4 papers and these were very interesting and extremely well received. The major paper was presented by Peter Spillet who is a historian of some note here. He has been residing off and on in Ujung Pandang and working at the museum there during the last 2 years. He has done a tremendous amount of research and identified the relationship and

genealogy of folk in Ujung Pandang and in Aboriginal communities in north-eastern Arnhem Land. He has indeed proved that people from Ujung Pandang have relations amongst the tribal people in north-eastern Arnhem Land and vice versa. His current project has been accepted as a bicentennial project, jointly funded by the Australian and the Northern Territory governments. Each government is putting in \$50 000, and that \$100 000 will be spent on constructing a traditional Indonesian fishing prahu in Ujung Pandang.

The keel of that vessel will be laid within the next month. It will be constructed during the latter part of this year and will depart from South Sulawesi in November or December this year. It will journey down with the monsoon, to arrive in east Arnhem Land in January or February. You cannot set dates for these things because it depends on when the wind turns and how fast it blows. It will indeed be a long, slow journey. The vessel is being constructed by traditional methods. There will be no fancy electric power tools or metal screws. Wooden nails or wooden pegs will be used and the caulking will be done by mixing bark with native glues, plugging the cracks and so on. It is quite an undertaking. Peter Spillett and a fellow who is going to make a film of this particular expedition will be travelling all the way down. The prahu will eventually sail back from eastern Arnhem Land, along the coast, probably arriving here in Darwin around mid-year. It will find its home at the Northern Territory museum at Bullocky Point where it will be sited for all of us to see in the future.

Another paper was presented by Mr Michael Cooke who is a teacher at Batchelor College. Mr Cooke spent a couple of years at Milingimbi and, while he was there, he also identified the relationship between the Macassans and the Arnhem Land Aboriginals. He did this by noting particular words within the Aboriginal language which are also used by the Macassans. He did considerable research and last year took a group of young students from Batchelor College, people from Arnhem Land, over to Ujung Pandang. They were able to trace and meet their relatives over there and it is all recorded in a paper.

Dr Alan Walker is a linguist who has been researching Aboriginal languages at Yirrkala in eastern Arnhem Land. He has been able to prove that many words in the languages of eastern Arnhem Land are in fact Macassan or Bugis, which is another area of South Sulawesi. It is quite fascinating. He presented a very interesting paper on that subject.

The last speaker was Steve Rogers who is an exchange teacher currently in Ambon. He spoke on the education exchange program that we have now been operating for about 14 years. It is an excellent program and last year it was expanded from Bali, where we have been operating for the previous 12 years, to include Ambon, Lombok and Kupang. We currently have 2 students in Lombok and Ambon and 1 teacher in Kupang, Lombok and Ambon. It is a very successful program and I am quite sure that it will continue to expand as the years go by.

There were numerous other papers presented. These included one by Mr Jonathon Parapak, who is the president of Indosat in Indonesia and also the chairman of an organisation called Ikama which is the association of the Indonesian alumni of Australian education institutions whose aim is to develop educational and economic relationships between Australia and Indonesia.

Another paper was delivered by Mr Wayan Bendhi, a lecturer at the Institute of Education and Training for the hotel and tourism industry in Indonesia. His job is to run a hospitality training school in Denpasar, Bali,

and to train staff for all of the hotels and motels and accommodation houses throughout that area. He said that, within the next 5 years, they would require an extra 30 000 people to work in those hotels and motels. That illustrates how the tourism and hospitality industry is growing in Indonesia. There is a great opportunity for the Northern Territory to offer educational facilities and perhaps develop an exchange program with people who are working in that industry.

I would like to quickly close by saying there is an enormous opportunity for the Northern Territory to capitalise on its proximity to Indonesia. We are the only part of Australia that actually touches Indonesia. We have potential to develop educational exchange, trade, cultural exchange and sporting activities. I would also like to announce that the Northern Territory has accepted the opportunity to host the next convention here in Darwin in 1989.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I would like to say something about the draft Darwin Rural Strategy Plan. It has been before the people in the rural area for some weeks now and the final date for objections is in August. It has been presented to the people of the rural area by the planners in the Planning Branch of the Department of Lands and Housing. This plan has taken many years to develop. A lot of work has gone into it and I do not deny that for a moment. However, many of the options being floated by the planners are causing a great deal of concern in the community. They are causing me concern and they are causing Litchfield Shire officers considerable concern.

We all know what happens when public servants float options. Even if those options seem a bit way out, people think that they could not be seriously thinking of implementing those options. If you are naive, simple and a bit dumb, you do not do anything about it. However, out in the rural area, we have learnt our lesson the hard way. When any public servant floats an option that we do not like, we object immediately. We have objected to this plan and we intend to object officially at some time in the future.

The planners have put forward a number of options and I might say they have not made it easy for the general public to hear about the plans that they have put forward. They have given us free, gratis and for nothing, a very nice map. It shows a number of features. It has taken a lot of work to present this map and it is worth keeping. On the back of the map, there is a summary of the extensive papers which accompany the map. It costs \$10 to obtain a copy of these papers, and that is considerable sum to pay for something which should be given to people free. It is very important that people know what the public servants intend to impose on them.

Anyway, the word has got around and everybody knows what is what. Mr Deputy Speaker, I will tell you exactly what the options are. The first and most important one relates to water management. The planners are putting forward the option of metering bores for all commercial properties, asking for voluntary metering of domestic bores, the licensing of bores and the payment of a fee of around \$2000 for the use of water from your bore. They say this only applies to Water Management Area 1, but we all know that that is the thin edge of the wedge. If it is to relate to Water Management Area 1 this week, next week it will relate to the entire rural area.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to raise something which is very relevant to this subject of licensing bores. If the government insists on licensing bores, it will be licensing the water which everybody considers is there for

the taking. It is not free but it is there. Perhaps we might install a windmill and then I can see the government licensing windmills because we use the wind. One could develop this argument even further.

It should be more widely known that all Darwin people pay only 50% of the cost of reticulation of water to their house or their flat. The people in the rural area pay 100% of the cost of taking water from the earth into their tanks. They pay for the bore which these days costs between \$6000-\$7000 to sink and equip. They pay for the power to pump water. Don't let anybody tell you that running a bore is cheap. I have just paid our last electricity bill. We like to have a nice garden and we have the sprinklers going but it is not cheap to run bores.

The next matter that the planners want us to consider is an increase in the number of recreation areas in the rural area. They very kindly said that the Litchfield Shire and the Conservation Commission can pay for them. I do not know whether anybody has told the Conservation Commission but nobody has told the Litchfield Shire officially that it will pay for these recreation areas for the Darwin people. I have something to tell the planners. I do not think the Litchfield Shire will pay for them; I do not know about the Conservation Commission. If the Litchfield Shire was forced to pay for these recreation areas, our rates would rise.

Mr Perron: Pay to buy or to run them?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Pay to run them.

Mr Perron: You will get them for free.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: We do not want them. They are for the townies and the townies can pay for them. We have enough recreation areas on our blocks. We do not use these recreation areas like the townies do. We do not use Howard Springs nearly as much as the Darwin people do. We go there occasionally but not as much. The same would be the case with these recreation areas.

Another option is that the cost of fire service will be put on the shoulders of the Litchfield Shire. Once again, our rates would rise. They had a you-beaut idea that every new subdivider would have to put in a firebreak. One might say that would help check bushfires. However, anybody with half a brain can see where it would end up. If the developer puts a firebreak around his subdivision and sells all his blocks, who owns the firebreak? The developer will not because he has sold all his land. He would be mad if he kept the firebreak under his control. He would give it to the government and the government would give it to the Litchfield Shire. I would expect the firebreak would be about half a chain wide around the subdivision. If it is not cleared, that firebreak itself would become a cause for serious concern in the fire season. If the Litchfield Shire has the responsibility of looking after those firebreaks, that will cost money and again our rates would rise. I am pretty sure the Litchfield Shire would not take it on.

Another suggested option is closer subdivision of RL1 areas. These are areas of 5 acres. I am talking about Howard Springs and Humpty Doo. The planners are suggesting closer subdivision to something like the area of town blocks. I have another thought for the planners: they have Buckley's chance of putting this though without serious opposition.

Mr Perron: What about people who want to live down there on a quarter acre?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: If they want to live on a quarter acre block, they can stay in town. That is what everybody says. They destroy the very thing that attracts them by going and living on their quarter acre block. We live there now and our rights are paramount to anybody coming in the future. There are certain restrictions on land use down there.

Mr Palmer: What about the police and teachers?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: There are no police down there. We cannot get the police to live down there. The teachers were put on blocks at Howard Springs and I consider that the government at the time subdivided land completely against its own laws and had to rectify it at a later date.

The planners are considering 18 road closures in the rural area. The planners are considering closing all our dumps and requiring us to take our rubbish to Leanyer dump. Any sensible person would realise that people will not travel from Darwin River to take their rubbish to Leanyer dump. People will tip their rubbish wherever they think nobody will see it. We will have a hell of a mess in the rural area.

I come now to one of the most important objections to this whole Darwin River Strategy Plan. I refer to its implementation. The Rural Planning Authority has 7 members - 4 locals and 3 core members. Of those 4 locals, 2 members are on the Litchfield Shire Council and I am 99.999% sure that those 2 people - no names mentioned but you know whom I mean - will vote the way the people wish. They represent the people and are answerable to the people, but I cannot say the same for the other 2 local members and I cannot say the same for the 3 core members. Those 5 people are not answerable to anybody. They may vote with the 2 local people from the Litchfield Shire Council who are on the Planning Authority but they may not. In that situation, it will be 2 against 5 and, despite the people's wishes having been expressed very forcefully, it may be carried by the 2 people.

Mr Perron: What about the wishes of the people who don't live down there?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: The people who don't live down there are not considered. They can comment on Darwin's plan or Katherine's plan.

Mr Perron: What if some of them might want to live down there?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, a greater anomaly is that presented by the fact that the Darwin Planning Authority still controls part of the rural area. The Darwin Planning Authority still controls Berrimah. I have raised this matter repeatedly. There is an anomaly in the legislation referring to this. That means that the Darwin Planning Authority controls part of the rural area and the Darwin people are willing to have a say in this Darwin Rural Area Strategy Plan. I have yet to hear anything more ludicrous. The worst of it is that people who do not live in the rural area stand a chance of being able to control our future, and that is completely unfair.

A short while ago, we saw objections raised by a certain group of people, namely the public servants. I do not condone violent demonstrations, riots or whatever those incidents may be called. But, if the people do not get what they want and if these restrictions are not disposed of, I can tell the government that it ain't seen nothing yet. If the people in the rural area

get their backs up, there will be resistance to the government in many more ways. I would mention that this is a Country Liberal Party government which, until the last election, held the seat of Koolpinyah. If, at some time in the distant future, it hopes to have a successful political candidate in the rural area, this strategy plan has to be considered with the primary factor in mind that the people's wishes have to be considered first, foremost and completely, not what the planners think we should have. The people's wishes must come first.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

- Darwin Rural Strategy Plan, attitude of rural residents 1164
- Education system, comments by Senator Button 1159
- Indonesian Cultural and Educational Institute, convention 1162
- Message from CLP supporter 1159
- Snowdon, Warren, comments by member for Jingili 1161
- Territory education system, flexibility 1160

BILLS

- Public Employment (Modification of Terms and Conditions of Employment)
(Serial 53) 1094, 1100
- Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 52) 1098, 1141
- Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 51) 1098, 1141

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN 1051

MOTIONS

- Alteration of order of business 1099
- Censure of the Chief Minister 1052
- Special adjournment 1088
- Suspension of standing orders 1137

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr McCarthy 1071

PETITION

Educational services in Nhulunbuy 1051

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT 1088

BELL N.R.

BILLS

Public Employment (Modification of Terms and Conditions of Employment)
(Serial 53) 1101
Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 52) 1150
Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 51) 1150

MOTION

Suspension of standing orders 1139

COLLINS D.W.

ADJOURNMENT

Education system, comments by Senator Button 1159
Message from CLP supporter 1159
Territory education system, flexibility 1160

BILLS

Public Employment (Modification of Terms and Conditions of Employment)
(Serial 53) 1117
Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 52) 1143
Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 51) 1143

COULTER B.F.

BILLS

Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 52) 1098, 1152
Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 51) 1098, 1152, 1155

MOTIONS

Censure of the Chief Minister 1079
Suspension of standing orders 1137

EDE B.R.

BILLS

Public Employment (Modification of Terms and Conditions of Employment)
(Serial 53) 1115
Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 52) 1146, 1157
Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 51) 1146, 1157

MOTIONS

Alteration of order of business 1099
Censure of the Chief Minister 1064
Suspension of standing orders 1138

FINCH F.A.

BILL

Public Employment (Modification of Terms and Conditions of Employment)
(Serial 53) 1124

HANRAHAN R.A.

MOTIONS

Special adjournment 1092
Suspension of standing orders 1140

HATTON S.P.

BILLS

Public Employment (Modification of Terms and Conditions of Employment)
(Serial 53) 1105
Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 52) 1145
Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 51) 1145

MOTION

Censure of the Chief Minister 1057

LEO D.M.

BILL

Public Employment (Modification of Terms and Conditions of Employment)
(Serial 53) 1100

MOTION

Censure of the Chief Minister 1071

PETITION

Educational services in Nhulunbuy 1051

McCARTHY T.R.

BILL

Public Employment (Modification of Terms and Conditions of Employment)
(Serial 53) 1094, 1132

MOTION

Censure of the Chief Minister 1067

PERSONAL EXPLANATION 1071

MANZIE D.W.

BILL

Public Employment (Modification of Terms and Conditions of Employment)
(Serial 53) 1129

PADGHAM-PURICH C.N.

ADJOURNMENT

Darwin Rural Strategy Plan, attitude of rural residents 1164

BILLS

Public Employment (Modification of Terms and Conditions of Employment)
(Serial 53) 1112
Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 52) 1148
Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 51) 1148, 1155

PERRON M.B.

BILL

Public Employment (Modification of Terms and Conditions of Employment)
(Serial 53) 1121

SETTER R.A.

ADJOURNMENT

Indonesian Cultural and Educational Institute, convention 1162
Snowdon, Warren, comments by member for Jingili 1161

SMITH T.E.

BILLS

Public Employment (Modification of Terms and Conditions of Employment)
(Serial 53) 1109
Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 52) 1141, 1158
Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 51) 1141, 1158

MOTIONS

Censure of the Chief Minister 1052, 1083
Special adjournment 1088
Suspension of standing orders 1137

TUXWORTH I.L.

BILLS

Stamp Duty Amendment (Serial 52) 1144, 1159
Taxation (Administration) Amendment (Serial 51) 1144, 1159

MOTIONS

Censure of the Chief Minister 1074
Suspension of standing orders 1139

VALE R.W.S.

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN 1051