

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 14 August, 1973

Death of James Matthew Concannon, a former Minister—Questions without Notice—Governor's Speech: Address in Reply (Third Day's Debate)—Special Adjournment—Adjournment (Acoustics in Legislative Council Chamber).

The PRESIDENT took the chair at 4.30 p.m.

The Prayer was read.

DEATH OF THE HONOURABLE
JAMES MATTHEW CONCANNON,
A FORMER MINISTER OF
THE CROWN

The Hon. J. B. M. FULLER (Minister for Decentralisation and Development and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [4.31]: I move:

(1) That this House desires to express and to place on record its deep sense of the loss sustained to the State in the removal, by death, of the Honourable James Matthew Concannon, F.I.C.S., F.C.I. (Aust.), formerly Honorary Minister and Representative of the Government in this House.

(2) That this resolution be communicated to the widow and family of the deceased.

The Hon. James Matthew Concannon who, incidentally, was granted permission to retain the title of honourable for life in 1958, was a member of the old nominee House from 21st December, 1925, to 22nd April, 1934. He was elected to the reconstituted Legislative Council for a twelve-year period from 23rd April, 1934, and again for twelve years from 23rd April, 1946, but he did not seek re-election at the end of his term on 22nd April, 1958. The total term of service of our late colleague in the Legislative Council was thirty-two years four months, a very long period of service which has been exceeded by only two or three who have retired from this House recently. In the Lang Ministry he was an honorary Minister from 4th November, 1930, to 2nd April, 1931. He was a Vice-President of the Executive Council and representative of the Government in the Legislative Council from 3rd April, 1931, to 13th May, 1932.

One interesting aspect of the Hon. J. M. Concannon's service in this House is that he was appointed one of the commissioners

to open Parliament and to administer the oath to members in the 1934–1935 session, which was the first meeting of the Legislative Council after its reconstitution. On that occasion, of course, there was no President and the government of the day felt that in those circumstances it would be wise to appoint two commissioners. As there were no officers of the House, the two commissioners appointed were the leader of the Government and the leader of the Opposition, the Hon. H. E. Manning and the Hon. J. M. Concannon. The honourable member served for many years as a member of a number of committees of the House, particularly the library committee and on many committees on private bills and on charges of corruption in connection with the election of the Hon. E. E. Grayndler, in the session of 1936–37; and again in the session 1938–39–40 he served on the hospitals, honoraries, graduands and patients joint committee.

The Hon. James Matthew Concannon was born in Sydney on 10th November, 1890, and died on 4th August last. He was a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Australia. He would probably be well known to the older members on the other side of the Chamber because of his service in the trade-union movement. It is worth recording on this occasion that he was secretary of the Association of Railway Professional Officers of Australia, the New South Wales Public Service Professional Officers Association, the Metropolitan Board of Water Supply and Sewerage Employees Association, Salaried Division, the Hunter District Water Board Employees Association, Salaried Division, the Maritime Services Board Clerical and General Officers Association, Salaried Division, and the Federated Gas Employees Industrial Union, New South Wales Branch Salaried Division. It is obvious that he had a long record in the trade-union movement. His recreations have been given as surfing, reading and motoring.

I think it can well be said that we have lost someone who served this State with distinction in the Legislative Council over a long period, and was able at the same time to serve the trade-union movement of New

South Wales. Indeed, he took a wide interest in life generally. I know that honourable members will join with me in expressing our sadness at this time to his widow, who is present in the gallery, and to his three daughters, in the very sad loss that they have suffered. I speak not only on behalf of the Government particularly, but generally on behalf of all honourable members.

The Hon. H. J. McPHERSON (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.37]: I support the motion of condolence moved to the widow and family of the Hon. James Matthew Concannon. The Minister for Decentralisation and Development and Vice-President of the Executive Council has set out the history of Jim Concannon. He pointed out that our late colleague was one of the appointed members of the council prior to 1934 and that he remained on after that time for another 24 years by being elected for a further two terms. During the time that the Hon. Jim Concannon was the leader of the Government, Minister without portfolio and Vice-President of the Executive Council, there was only one Minister in this House. One can realize the arduous task any one Minister had in carrying out the duties of a leader of the Government in this Chamber in the turbulent days of the Lang ministry and the successors to the Lang ministry. The legislation then introduced ranks with controversial legislation of today. I refer particularly to the legislation that concerned the moratorium and child endowment. I voice these views in recognition of his worthwhile services to this House and to the State. It was no easy task in those days to be the leader of the Government or Vice-President of the Executive Council.

The Minister has indicated that the Hon. J. M. Concannon's term expired in 1958 and that he did not seek re-election. This afternoon I have spoken to senior members of the Australian Labor Party who were friends of our late colleague. One of them has told me a humorous side to his not seeking re-election in 1958. At the time he was so busy in other positions that he held, as listed by the Minister, as union secretary and with his other work in the trade-union

movement, that he forgot to take out his membership ticket in the Australian Labor Party for 1958. When it came time for pre-selection he was not eligible to contest it.

Jim Concannon was a most respected representative of the trade-union movement in various spheres, including that of court advocate. His first contest for political honours was in the early twenties when he was one of a team of three Labor candidates for the seat of Ryde. The other two candidates were Mr Bob Gregg and Mr Stan Taylor, later to become Mr Justice Taylor, president of the Industrial Commission of this State. Not long after that election, in fact in 1925, Mr Concannon was appointed to this Chamber. He was a member of the Legislative Council for thirty-two years and four months and proved to be dedicated to his own personal principles, the principles of the party he represented and the welfare of the people of New South Wales. He fought for those principles and in the process demonstrated that he was an able debater. When Labor went out of office in the thirties Jim Concannon was elected Leader of the Opposition in this House and held that position until Labor again came to office in 1941. During those nine years of the Stevens and Mair-BruXner governments Mr Concannon demonstrated his tenacity, fighting ability and dedication to his principles by his actions as Leader of the Opposition, carrying out an arduous task with a minority of members in this House.

In 1941 when Labor returned to power the Hon. Reg Downing was elected Leader of the Government in this House. Jim Concannon continued to demonstrate his tenacity and above all his loyalty to the party and to the Parliament by always giving of his best. Bearing in mind that for nine years he had been Leader of the Opposition and, the party having come to government again, he might have expected to reap some of the fruits of that victory, his dedication to his principles were even more to the fore. I am assured that all members of this Chamber and of the Australian Labor Party at that time recognized and paid tribute to the loyalty of Jim Concannon during the remainder of his term in this Parliament. I join with the Minister in recognizing the

services given by the Hon. James Matthew Concannon to this Parliament and to the State. I hope that that recognition will in some way mitigate the sorrow that we know his widow and family feel at this time.

The Hon. O. M. FALKINER [4.42]: I join with the Minister and the Hon. H. J. McPherson in paying tribute to the late James Concannon. He was a member when I was first elected to this Chamber and I remember him as a most able debater and friendly man, highly respected by all honourable members. Any new member wanting advice on any subject did not hesitate to approach Jim Concannon for assistance. He was well liked and was listened to with rapt attention by members on both sides of the House. The Parliament suffered a sad loss when in 1958 he was not re-elected: it might well have benefited by his continuing to be a member. His passing is a great loss to this State and particularly to his family. Along with other honourable members, I offer my sympathy to his widow and family.

Members and officers of the House standing in their places,

Motion agreed to.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

BATHURST-ORANGE GROWTH CENTRE

The Hon. H. J. MCPHERSON: I ask the Minister for Decentralisation and Development whether last evening it was reported on the ABC television programme "This Day Tonight" that the Government's decision to acquire and develop all the land in the Bathurst-Orange growth centre has been varied, so that now a significant parcel of land in the area is to be set aside for acquisition and development by private developers. If this is so, will the Minister advise the House when this decision to set aside portion of the area for private development was made, and whether the Department of Decentralisation and Development recommended this change?

The Hon. J. B. M. FULLER: I did not have the opportunity to see the "This Day Tonight" programme, but the organizers of the programme contacted me on Thursday,

seeking to interview me. I altered my arrangements to make it possible for them to interview me in my office at ten past two on that day. At about that time they telephoned to say that they were unable to see me then and asked whether I would make another time available. I did that, by again altering my programme, and suggested that they should see me at ten to four, before the House sat last Thursday. They did not appear, and I have not seen them since. I am putting that in as a background. I did not even know that the programme would be on last night or any other night, and I do not know what was said. However, I can say this: with the Albury-Wodonga growth centre the Commonwealth is supplying the money for land acquisition, and the Victorian, New South Wales and Commonwealth governments have agreed that the land acquired there with this finance will, except in special circumstances, be let out on a leasehold basis. That is a term of the agreement between the Premiers and the Prime Minister in January of this year.

I come now to the Bathurst-Orange growth centre. The Commonwealth has said that it expects to be able to make some money available for land acquisition in that area. I do not know whether it will be made available, but I have been told that this is what they expect. We take it for granted that the Commonwealth would expect the land that is acquired within the Bathurst-Orange growth centre by Commonwealth money would also be let out on a leasehold basis. In the opinion of the State Government that does not prevent the State using its own finance within the proposed growth area or in any other development that takes place not using Commonwealth money, from allowing freehold development there. I think the honourable member will find that a somewhat similar situation will probably exist within the Albury-Wodonga area, because there will be developments still going on within the city of Albury and the city of Wodonga on what is at present freehold land. I imagine that this will take place concurrently within the general approval of the statutory authority.

I assure the honourable member that basically there has been no change of policy; it has been a matter of determining policy in the light of the Commonwealth's approach of supplying money for land acquisition. We are working that in with the basic philosophy of the Government of New South Wales that where possible freehold land should be allowed to be developed.

LEGAL AID

The Hon. EILEEN FURLEY: I ask the Vice-President of the Executive Council a question without notice. Is the Minister aware that many citizens do not always know of their rights to legal aid and advice? Will he take up with the Minister for Education the possibility of introducing into the higher school certificate course training in preliminary law, similar to that adopted by the Victorian department of education, thereby enabling citizens to be aware, from the beginning of tertiary level of education onwards, the way in which the law works for them personally?

The Hon. N. K. WRAN: A short course, but not much legal aid.

The Hon. J. B. M. FULLER: This is the sort of question that I should have thought the Leader of the Opposition, if he had thought of it, would have been the first to ask. I congratulate the Hon. Eileen Furley on coming up with such a positive suggestion for I think it is something that the Government could well look at. I shall certainly take up her suggestion with the Minister for Education. I think it could do a lot of good and be a worthy addition to the general training in the secondary school courses.

SYDNEY COVE REDEVELOPMENT

The Hon. EDNA S. ROPER: I ask the Leader of the Government in this House whether it is a fact that the area at Circular Quay between the Customs House and Goldfields House is under threat of reconstruction by developers. Is the Circular Quay area recognized as the birthplace of Australia? Will the Government, through

the State Planning Authority or by special legislation, take urgent action to conserve and emphasize the historic aspects of this world-famous maritime precinct?

The Hon. J. B. M. FULLER: I appreciate the honourable member's wish to preserve the Circular Quay-Sydney Cove area, and I believe that all honourable members realize that this is the site of the beginning of the development of this country. That is basically why the Government went about preparing a positive plan for The Rocks redevelopment scheme; this was done in an effort to preserve the historic buildings there, and at the same time to make it an attractive place under modern conditions. The matter raised by the honourable members is one for the State Planning Authority, and I shall refer it to the Minister for Local Government and Minister for Highways and ask him to discuss it with that authority.

DINGOES

The Hon. JAMES CAHILL: I address my question to the Vice-President of the Executive Council. Is it a fact that on frequent occasions I have invited the attention of the House to the increase in the dingo population? Is it a fact, too, that a month-long effort has resulted in the trapping of eight dingoes that have been killing grown sheep and weaner calves on a property in the Upper Rouchel area? Is it further a fact that three of the trapped dingoes were bitches carrying a total of twenty unborn pups? Is it a fact, also, that native dogs originally escaped from the Barrington Tops National Park and a nearby state forest? If these are facts, what compensation can be made or assistance given to the landowners affected?

The Hon. J. B. M. FULLER: In the past I have referred to questions about dingoes in a rather more jocular fashion but this four-legged type is basically the responsibility of the dingo destruction board working through the pastures protection boards. These authorities work closely together. I shall certainly raise the question with the Minister for Lands, who has the basic responsibility of administering the dingo destruction board, to ascertain whether the

facts stated by the honourable member can be substantiated and whether anything can be done about compensation. I shall be surprised if anything can be done in that regard, as the legal gentlemen would come into this with all sorts of problems including the onus of proof. However, I shall take the question seriously and refer it to my colleague.

GROWTH CENTRE FINANCE

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: I address my question to the Minister for Decentralisation and Development. I ask whether the Albury-Wodonga development region is one that has been established substantially by Australian Government initiative and therefore must look primarily to the Australian Government for finance. Is it true that the Bathurst-Orange growth centre has been established by New South Wales Government initiative and therefore is it essentially one that must be financed by the New South Wales Government?

The Hon. J. B. M. FULLER: I do not know about initiative other than to say that on 3rd October, 1972, the New South Wales Government made a firm statement that it would be developing the Bathurst-Orange area as a pilot growth centre in New South Wales and, provided the Victorian and Commonwealth governments were willing to participate on a joint basis, it would be happy to proceed with Albury-Wodonga as well. It is true that the principal costs in relation to Albury-Wodonga have been accepted by the Commonwealth. Administrative costs will be divided among the three governments but land acquisition costs and a large part of the other finance necessary for the scheme will be the responsibility of the Commonwealth. However, it must be remembered that the States have accepted the responsibility for providing within the growth centres, even Albury-Wodonga, such basic services as health and education. For that reason the Commonwealth commitment may not be quite as large proportionately as some persons may imagine.

The Government of New South Wales has always said that even if the Commonwealth is not willing to contribute finance to the proposals in regard to Bathurst-Orange, New South Wales will go it alone with that area as its own growth centre. The Hon. L. D. Serisier may have heard recently that an allocation of \$1½ million has been made as a preliminary contribution by the State Government. He may have read also that it is the Government's intention to move the Central Mapping Authority and its employees into new buildings, with new housing, in Bathurst. This will be a considerable contribution by the Government. We quite happily accept the responsibility but we hope that the Commonwealth will see fit to make some money available for land acquisition. This would help considerably in the Bathurst-Orange area, which has some interest in trying to attract persons and industry from the metropolitan areas to the country.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS IN REPLY

THIRD DAY'S DEBATE

Debate resumed (from 9th August, *vide* page 54) on motion by the Hon. W. J. Holt:

That the following Address be adopted and presented by the Whole House to the Governor, in reply to the Speech which His Excellency had been pleased to make to both Houses of Parliament, viz.:

To His Excellency Sir ARTHUR RODEN CUTLER, upon whom has been conferred the decoration of the Victoria Cross, Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Knight of the Most Venerable Order of St John of Jerusalem, Governor of the State of New South Wales and its Dependencies, in the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY—

We, Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the Members of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, in Parliament assembled, desire to express our thanks for Your Excellency's Speech, and to assure you of our unfeigned attachment to Her Most Gracious Majesty's Throne and Person.

2. We beg to assure Your Excellency that our earnest consideration will be given to the measures to be submitted to us.

3. We join Your Excellency in the hope that, under the guidance of Divine Providence, our labours may be so directed as to advance the best interests of all sections of the community.

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN [5.6]: First I join with the mover and seconder of the motion in their affirmation of loyalty to Her Majesty and I trust that it will be a long time indeed before Australian governments depart from this great institution and custom. I congratulate the Hon. W. J. Holt on his maiden speech. I want to make special reference to a matter of keen interest to me—one with which I have been concerned for many years. Obviously the Hon. W. J. Holt is intensely interested also in the conservation problems of this country and I know that he would fully support the work that has gone on during the past twenty-five years or so in the Snowy Mountains area. It was there that I first learned the real value and opportunity available to Australia to preserve the country, at a time when by necessity much had to be done to disrupt the natural order of things. Men and machines may create havoc in the mountains and elsewhere but thanks to the interest of the authority, the men who came from down along the rivers and the government of the day something was done which proved to be remarkably successful. I know that the Hon. W. J. Holt will continue in this House to show an interest not only in these matters but indeed in all matters of grave concern to those of us in government.

At this stage I should like to welcome the new members of the House and at the risk of perhaps offending some honourable members I should like especially to welcome those who have recently come into this House with long experience in and background of local government. They are personal friends though they are sitting on the opposite side of the House. I believe that to be good. I refer to the Hon. Kathleen Anderson, the Hon. P. McMahon and the Hon. R. G. Melville. Each has contributed much already in various spheres to the State and the needs of local government.

I am looking forward, as I am sure all honourable members and the Government are, to the contributions that they will make in conjunction with other new members of the House.

The Hon. N. K. Wran said a number of things in his speech in this debate with which I could agree but I find myself in complete disagreement with some of his remarks. One matter on which I agree is his comment when he likened his own political party—the Australian Labor Party—to an umbrella. It reminds me of my golf umbrella, which leaks a lot. I have a decided respect for the Labor Party and for many of its members. As I said a few moments ago, many members of that party are personal friends of mine. However, I deplore attacks such as that made last Thursday night—violent personal attacks upon parties and individuals—actuated by bias and bigotry. I am completely at variance with that approach.

I want to declare quite frankly and strongly that I have no bias or bigotry against other political parties. I might not agree with their philosophies and I shall always be prepared to argue them in this House, but a person's colour, politics or creed to me matters not a jot. My respect for a man or a woman is based on the possession of human dignity. I record my firm conviction on these lines and say that I am completely at variance with the attitude displayed last Thursday by the Hon. N. K. Wran towards the political party to which I belong and to certain individual members of that party.

I understand that the present federal Government prefers to be known as the Australian Government. I propose to make a reference to that Government's attitude towards local government and, in particular, to legislation reconstituting the grants commission. One has to be careful not to confuse the grants commission—the Commonwealth grants commission as it was formerly called—with our own local government grants commission in New South Wales. The Australian Parliament's legislation is extremely important to local government but just how important it is we cannot know until we understand how it

will work and we see the results of its operation. Like many other people in this House I have always been a believer in local government and in the principle that the Commonwealth should participate in a major way with financial assistance for local government.

As I understand it, the grants commission will have the responsibility of considering applications and then of determining the level of assistance needed by regions and by individual councils within regions. The ultimate objective is to bring all parts of Australia up to a certain norm or minimum standard. I quoted that from the speech of the Minister. This raises a host of questions as yet unanswered. One question is—what is a minimum standard or norm? Can one set of standards be laid down for all areas throughout Australia? Quite apart from obvious geographic differences between Sydney, my own home area of Balranald, Gympie, Kalgoorlie or wherever one is, there are major differences between local-government authorities. This is because local government is operating to a different degree in the various States. In some States local-government units are extremely small by New South Wales standards. By contrast, the city of Brisbane is large by any standards. The types of services called for in an urban community are quite different from those needed in a country community where ease of transport and communication rank as the most important factors.

The next question that arises is—what is a region? In New South Wales the Government has wisely put an end to the administrative chaos that formerly existed, by which virtually every department of the State had different boundaries for administrative reasons. There is now some order and a logical administrative picture applies to the vast majority of departments and instrumentalities. Eventually it will apply to them all. What is good for State administration is not necessarily the ideal for determining financial assistance from the Australian Government and for making comparisons. I believe that I see an easy solution to the problem. The New South Wales local government grants commission, of which I have had the honour to be a

member since its inception, has been evaluating the relative needs of councils for more than four and a half years. It has developed a clear understanding of the widely differing problems of councils and the extent to which assistance is needed and can be justified. During that period members of the grants commission have visited 170 of the total of 223 shires and municipalities of this State. We have sat around the table with individual aldermen and with councils to discuss local problems in their areas and after that exercise I believe we have a real understanding of the problems of local government in this State. We have all the financial information available to the councils which we have collated and compared and over the period we have worked out an arrangement by which we believe a fair distribution of the funds given to us by the State Government can be made to the councils.

The money involved is not nearly enough. In the past year we had \$6 million. The Premier and Treasurer has stated that this year local government in this State needs \$20 million. I would place the figure nearer \$30 million. This is the type of assistance to the general funds of councils that I believe is desperately needed by local government in this State. I am not talking about water supply or sewerage schemes, I am speaking of money which should be given in an untagged fashion for general funds. When I first joined the commission I was a strong protagonist for the concept that all moneys should be untagged. This view was accepted by the commission and I believe that it has been one of the greatest achievements of the local government grants commission. Let me emphasize that the money available is not nearly enough. I hope that the State Government will increase it substantially this year. I believe that the Australian Government would have been wiser had it taken advantage of the store of accumulated knowledge of our local governments grants commission. After all, when the commission was appointed four and a half years ago it learned that no similar institution was in existence anywhere in the world. It had to start from scratch. In retrospect I think this was not a bad thing. It

meant that we had to do a lot of exercises and give a lot of thought to the distribution of State finance fairly and equitably among a whole host of local-governing bodies. I do not pretend that the distribution has been completely fair but I think we have gone somewhere near the goal. In any event, variation can be made from time to time.

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: Did you not say that you were going to tell us about the Australian Government and local government?

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: That is what I have been discussing.

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: Not the New South Wales Government and local government?

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: If the Hon. L. D. Serisier had been listening he would have heard me say that the Australian Government could well take heed of what had been done already by the local government grants commission of this State. No doubt the Australian Government will face the same problems that we found four and a half years ago. While local government practices vary to some degree in the various States, essentially the same problems confront this arm of government.

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: When is the Hon. L. P. Connellan going to tell us about the Australian Government?

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: With 960 local-government bodies throughout Australia, or whatever the number is, the Australian Government will be faced with real problems in assessing the needs of one local area compared with another. The 64-dollar question is—with so many completely different bodies how are the real needs of each to be evaluated? If the Hon. L. D. Serisier and others wanted me to do so I could speak on this at greater length because we have done four and a half years of solid work on it.

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: I want the Hon. L. P. Connellan to do what he said he would do.

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: If those people in Canberra adopted my proposal they would not require an army of public servants to administer the scheme. The channels are there and they are equipped to proceed. This is a constructive proposition, not a destructive one. I am not churlish. I do not reject or oppose the Australian Government's interest in local government. On the contrary, I support it. It is a welcome step and I await the results with a great deal of interest. To give honourable members an idea of the problems associated with this matter may I quote from a letter sent by the Mildura shire to the Balranald shire on 10th August. It is headed: "The Grants Commission Act of 1973 and the formation of regional committees." It highlights the doubts in the minds of members of the community and in local government throughout Australia, and they are expressed in this way:

Your Council is, no doubt, familiar with the abovementioned legislation recently passed by the Federal Parliament. The main purpose of the Act, is to provide "special assistance" to the States, and Section 6 makes it quite clear that Local Government can participate in the financial assistance provided.

However, Sections 16, 17 and 18 appear to indicate that Municipalities would have to be grouped into "approved Regional organizations" before they would receive much recognition. Inquiries made through Federal members of Parliament and through Government Departments to date have not provided much information about the steps to be taken by Councils to form themselves into such organizations, and it has been suggested that there is no urgency about it.

On the other hand, advice received by this Council from State Ministerial level, is to the effect that Municipalities would be well advised to take steps to get together, with a view to the formation of at least an unofficial Regional organization.

Having regard to the declared policy of the Federal Government, and the bonds that unite Municipalities in the Murray Valley, my Council is of the opinion that a Region, embracing three States—New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria—is not beyond the bounds of possibility, and could even be preferable, as far as this Federal Government is concerned.

It is realized that, at this stage, there appears to be little of a definite nature that could be discussed. On the other hand, it is a matter of such extreme importance to Municipalities, that it is considered by my Council that we should get together to discuss it.

I have, therefore, by direction of the President and Councillors of the Shire of Mildura, to advise you that they would like to call a meeting of Councils from Swan Hill and Balranald in the east, to Walkerie in the west, to get together for the purpose of a full discussion of the Grants Commission Act, 1973.

It is proposed that the meeting be held in the President's Reception Room, Municipal Building, Fifteenth Street, Irymple, on Thursday, 13th September, 1973, commencing at 2.00 p.m.

It is suggested that each Council could be represented by two (2) members, together with an appropriate Officer, and this invitation goes forward to your Council, trusting that you will be able to be represented at the meeting . . . the more information and advice you can bring along, so much the better.

We are aware of the fact that at least one other similar meeting has already been held elsewhere, and whilst they came to no definite conclusions, they did form themselves into an organization that might be given the opportunity to present a case in due course to the Federal Government. If we can come to a similar understanding in this area, we will at least have indicated our interest in the matter and it could well be to the advantage of the Councils concerned.

If possible, we would appreciate prior advice of the names of the Councillors and Officer who would be representing your Council at the meeting, so that suitable arrangements can be made.

If your representatives require accommodation, you could let us know, and we will be pleased to arrange same.

That letter is signed by the secretary of the Shire of Mildura. About a week ago the Balranald shire had a visit from the federal member who represents that area and is also the Minister for Immigration in the Commonwealth Government. He advised Balranald council that it should get together with various local-government bodies, form a group and go direct to Canberra for assistance. However, I understand—I make it clear that this is what I have been told—that another federal Minister—the Minister for Urban and Regional Development—has been advising that these matters should be dealt with through the States. I understand further that this Minister has said that the States should decide upon regions. I am pointing out that there appears to be much confusion which stems from all kinds of sources, including advice given by other States to

their constituent councils and advice from a federal Minister to a member of the Balranald shire council which appears to be quite contradictory to advice given to other States by another Minister. I trust that soon this matter will be clarified. Confusion in relation to future development is not in the interest of the people of the State.

I should now like to refer to another difficult area of local government and a matter that will not be resolved easily—the dismissal of councils. I am aware that immediately prior to the sacking of any council the situation that has developed is most troublesome to the Minister responsible. However, the circumstances that follow the dismissal of a council are most distressing for those citizens of the area who have been elected to the council to serve the community. Suddenly they find themselves out of office. In the great majority of cases they face no charges and have had no opportunity to plead their case before the dismissal decision was taken. As I understand the position, they have no right of appeal. A better system must be devised. The Minister or the Government has ultimate power in these matters and justice for innocent people must be maintained. Obviously innocent people are involved in all cases but, if I may put it this way, under the existing system they are crucified along with the guilty. I accept the fact that the Minister would not make the decision to dismiss a council on the advice of his departmental officers unless guilty parties were involved. I urge the Minister and the Government to reapproach this whole matter in conjunction with local-government bodies in an endeavour to find a more just and equitable procedure.

The subject of tariffs is an area in which I have some sympathy and some agreement with the Australian Government. The recent decision relating to tariff levels provoked much discussion and argument, even in my own party. For a long time I have held strong views on this subject. I still retain those views. I believe that a reduction or an adjustment to our tariff system was warranted. However, I think the alteration could have been handled in a more rational way than by a 25 per cent reduction across the

board, affecting high, medium and low tariffs. I shall quote from an article relating to the tariff system in Australia written by Mr Corden of the Australian National University. Perhaps this article is somewhat out of date but I believe it is relative to the circumstances surrounding our tariff system. Some of the points made by Mr Corden were:

At the beginning of the 1960's about 650,000 workers were dependent to some extent on tariff protection for their jobs. This represented about 60% of total factory employment, or about 15% of the total work force. About $\frac{2}{3}$ is accounted for by the industries producing plant, equipment and machinery, motor vehicles, electrical apparatus, chemicals, clothing, textile and paper.

The structure of the tariff is 'awe-inspiring in its complexity'—the schedule consists of a list of about 3,000 items.

In historical terms, most of the growth in tariffs occurred between the First and Second World Wars. From 1936, "the protective element in the tariff has remained fairly steady, with possibly some decrease".

The "average" tariff is difficult to assess but it was probably about 30% in 1959/60. (The Tariff Board in its 1969/70 report estimated the gross subsidy equivalent of all tariffs available at \$3,300 million).

The Prime Minister excluded *revenue* tariffs from the Government decisions. In 1959/60, they accounted for 3% of all imports but 31% of customs revenue (tobacco, cigarettes, liquor, petroleum products).

In terms of impact on the commonly used indicator of inflation, the Consumer Price Index, the effect of the tariff cuts will be small. In the June quarter of 1973, 42% of the index was contributed by "food" alone, while housing is also a major component of the index.

In addition, about 60 per cent of imports come in duty-free. About 30 per cent of imports pay *ad valorem* duties, but about one-half of these imports incur a low duty—12½ per cent or less—which is regarded as non-productive.

In view of these facts, the visible impact on the consumer price index will be small. Of more importance is the symbolic value. The decision to reduce certain tariffs by 25 per cents is perhaps most important as a symbol of a determination to restructure Australian industry. If its immediate impact on inflation will probably be slight, so will its impact on the budget. Revenue from customs duties totals over \$500 million, but much of this is from revenue duties that are not affected. Any reduction in unit duty may be partially offset by higher volume.

The Hon. L. P. Connellan]

The Prime Minister stated that the reduction is designed to (a) increase price competition, and (b) accelerate imports flow "to help meet pressing demand."

There is a situation in the economy of "too much money chasing too few goods."

I believe that I am quoting the Prime Minister here.

A reduction in tariffs does not make more imports available—it makes imports in certain areas of the economy more competitive in terms of relative price. In this sense, the impact will be largely felt by those industries that fully utilize the available tariff protection.

The impact on the balance of trade is likely to be small. It is estimated that imports will increase by \$300–\$400 million in 1973–74 as a result of this decision—not enough in itself to put much of a dent in the \$2,000 million surplus recorded for 1972–73.

I might say that the 1972–73 surplus was due to the great recovery by the primary producers of Australia, particularly the producers of wool, meat and wheat. This is why I deplore so much the scathing attack made last Thursday on the farmer and primary producer by the Hon. N. K. Wran. As an ordinary farmer, I take great exception to what he said. We in the country do not have all the academic knowledge, but we do our part for the economy of Australia. This has been highlighted this week by the tremendously satisfactory position of export returns. This will enable the Australian Government to carry out many of its promises without, I hope, affecting the taxpayer unduly. If the reverse had happened, and if the bad seasons and low prices had continued, the position would have been calamitous—certainly for the taxpayer.

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: What does the honourable member think of Mr Anthony's comment that the tariff reductions, which the honourable member is now supporting, were cowardly?

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: If the honourable member wishes to make a speech, he should do so later. However, I do not agree with what Mr Anthony said on this subject. I said that at the beginning of my remarks. The Country Party, like the Labor Party, has a wide umbrella, but

ours does not leak. In a discussion on tariffs, another consideration is the vital GATT negotiations, which are due to commence next month. I am not criticizing the rationale of reducing tariffs: I say merely that the tariff cuts could have been done on a more rational basis. I believe that this decision would have eroded some of the Australian Government's bargaining power. Despite this, I still support the principle.

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: Did the honourable member say that that had little effect on inflation?

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: Yes. I take the advice of economists who say that it will have little effect in many areas. It is a sign of determination to assist the primary producers and exporters of this country, and as such I welcome it.

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: The honourable member aligns himself with the Hon. Jim Cairns on the subject?

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: No, it would be difficult to line myself up with him for I cannot understand more than one or two sentences when he speaks.

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: The honourable member is showing some slight bias?

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: Not at all. I have a lot of respect for his ability.

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: You agree with him on this?

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: Yes, if that is what he said—and I can only take the honourable member's word for it. From what has been said by the economists, it is difficult to assess the effect of these tariff cuts on rural industry, but the Monash University has estimated that the additional costs created to the tariff structure in the past years have cost something like \$120 million, or 13 per cent of the total expenditure on goods purchased and services used by the farm sector. In other words, there has been a 13 per cent additional cost. These estimates include the indirect cost for protection which results from tariffs on imports used by industries which then sell their

goods and services to farmers. However, the 25 per cent reduction in tariffs would not be simply a 25 per cent reduction of this total.

I hope it will have some influence on the costs of primary producers. I am not suggesting that they should get all the consideration, despite what the Hon. N. K. Wran says, but they have been suffering severe difficulties for a number of years. Fortunately, there has been a great change in the markets.

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: And a change in government.

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: Surely the honourable member is not giving the Commonwealth Government the credit for the increased wheat prices in the past few weeks?

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: The wheat farmers did not get much help from the McMahon-Anthony government.

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: I would not question the actions of the Hon. Jim Cairns, by suggesting that he would sell wheat at bargain rates to some other countries, for political considerations, at a time when the Australian wheat grower and the Australian Government could get a decent benefit from good returns for their product. Only a few years ago we were forced to sell it at prices that were barely payable. Then the farmers were suffering from drought, and they were in trouble.

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: Who made those sales?

The Hon. L. A. SOLOMONS: The Australian Wheat Board.

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: What government was in office at the time?

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: The honourable member will have plenty of opportunity to explain these things during this debate. I explained at the start of my speech that I am not an economist. I am just a farmer, and I am an Australian who is interested in government decisions that

affect all the people, in the country, in the towns and in the cities. If I believe they are good decisions, I say so. I have said so tonight. I could say a great deal more about tariffs, but I believe there has been sufficient discussion already. I trust that in future the Australian Government will not need to act in such an arbitrary, across-the-board fashion. A rational approach should be made to the 3,000-odd items that are subject to tariff scrutiny, and I do not believe it would be difficult to classify them; indeed, I understand that at one time they were classified as high, medium and low. This would obviate problems and individuals would not be hurt. In future these individuals should not be hurt, be they employers or employees. Also, it would obviate the great cost to the Government, which is estimated, I believe, at \$25 million, subject to amendment, to compensate the many people and industries who will suffer damage to their structure through these tariff reductions.

I find myself much in support of the appointment of the Industries Assistance Commission. After all, this was a matter of Country Party policy and I should like to quote briefly from the paper submitted to the Minister and the Prime Minister by Sir John Crawford. The importance of the commission is amply demonstrated by the following quotation from the report:

The Commission will review, both generally in its Annual Reports and specifically in industry reports following inquiries, the assistance provided for industries which in aggregate represent a very substantial part of Australia's gross national product. From the Government's decisions on these reports it could be expected that a more clearly defined policy of assistance to industry will evolve. The Commission's work will therefore have a marked impact on the future pattern of industry development in this country, with important consequences for economic growth and living standards.

I propose now to leave the theme of tariffs and industry assistance and to refer to another matter raised on Thursday by the Hon. N. K. Wran when he spoke about the redistribution of seats. Having been the victim for nearly a quarter of a century of the greatest gerrymander in Australia's history, I speak with some feeling. The splitting

The Hon. L. P. Connellan]

of Broken Hill into two electorates to dominate half of New South Wales meant that people such as myself were completely disfranchised. I feel sympathy for those who suffered in this way for twenty-three years. I have had a long and perhaps bitter experience of those days when it was impossible for the members concerned to look after those electorates. This is not a criticism of those members. I have considerable respect for them as persons but it was impossible for them to get about their electorates. That is the real problem.

It sounds good in theory to talk of one vote one value. But there is a vast difference between a member who can step out of here and walk around his electorate in half an hour or perhaps an hour—even though it has 25,000 or 30,000 electors—and the honourable member for Castlereagh who in one year would be flat out getting around the various parts of his electorate between sessions of parliament. Honourable members should ask him or any other honourable member representing a country seat whether it is the wish of the people of Australia that those who live outside the urban areas should be disfranchised. Electors in a huge country seat have no access to their local member and he has no opportunity of discovering what the people want. I am quite sure that many members of the Opposition would appreciate this position. It is a strange thing that two Labor governments in Australia have recently made decisions that might surprise the Leader of the Opposition—if he has not heard of them. South Australia, in its 1969 Act—I may be wrong, but I think it was introduced by the Labor Government—has a 15 per cent variable. The Labor Government in Western Australia by Act No. 136 of 1973, which was amended, has raised the variable from 10 per cent to 20 per cent in order to cater for these conditions in the rural areas. That in itself should be the answer to the proposition put forward on Thursday by the Hon. N. K. Wran.

The Hon. N. K. WRAN: That is no answer. There is no differentiation between metropolitan and country quotas.

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: The position here with the redistribution is that the number of New South Wales country seats is the same, but three additional seats are provided in the central area which covers Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. This central area covers 1,149,000 electors and each seat has a quota of 29,531, with a maximum of 35,477 and a minimum of 26,625. Electorates in the country area—the remainder of New South Wales outside Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong—have a quota of 21,606, with a maximum of 25,927 and a minimum of 17,285. In the country area there are 33.3 per cent of seats representing 26.8 per cent of the electors, whereas in the central area there are 66.6 seats representing 73.2 per cent of the electorate. In the country area 21 electorates remain completely unaltered and 12 have been subject to alteration.

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: How many of those 12 have been made smaller?

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: I am sorry but I cannot answer that. None of them was reduced. The minimum is 17,285.

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: None was made smaller.

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: No; they retained the same number.

The Hon. L. D. SERISIER: The basis was changed to make them safer.

The Hon. L. P. CONNELLAN: The honourable member has a different outlook on politics from mine. As an organization member of a political party, I do not regard any seat as safe for Labor, Liberal or the Country Party, or for an independent. I do not believe that there is such a thing as a safe seat.

The Hon. P. McMAHON [5.47]: I thank the Hon. L. P. Connellan for his introductory remarks concerning myself and others on this side who have been concerned in local government, and I should like to congratulate the Hon. W. J. Holt on his maiden speech. It is a privilege to be able to

address this Chamber on the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply to His Excellency's Speech. Though I accept my role as a member of the Legislative Council with enthusiasm and trust that during my term here I shall be able to contribute to debates and the making of laws that will improve the well-being of citizens of New South Wales, my enthusiasm does not extend to becoming excited about what was described in His Excellency's Speech as a comprehensive programme of legislation. I am convinced that the Government needs to introduce much more practical and positive legislation to improve the lives of the citizens of New South Wales. There are so many obvious omissions in the Speech that I suggest with respect—and having heard the Hon. L. P. Connellan's remarks I trust that honourable members do not take offence at these remarks—that I am entitled to make some practical criticism.

The Government lacks foresight of the needs of the citizen—a theme that I shall develop later—or is unaware of those needs but does nothing practical and constructive by legislation. For too long this coalition Government has patched up holes in many of the measures that it has introduced. By contrast, other State governments and the Australian Government are making improvements in their legislation which do not appear in New South Wales. Incidentally, I should like to digress for a moment to congratulate the Hon. L. P. Connellan upon referring to the Australian Government. Probably it is the first time that this expression has been used in this House and it shows an acceptance of the term Australian Government, the name by which that Government wishes to be known.

An aspect I consider vital, and one which affects three quarters of a million citizens and their families, who are employees in New South Wales, is the Industrial Arbitration Act and ancillary Acts. There is not one reference in the Speech of His Excellency the Governor to proposed amendments to those Acts in order to improve industrial relations. All about us we see the importance of improved industrial relations and the need for legislation leading to

better conciliation. The only reference I can find to this subject is the comment that industrial hold-ups cause losses. Of course they do. They cause losses to employees who can ill afford loss of wages. Employees do not cause stoppages for the purpose of losing wages: they are forced into that situation in given circumstances to try to improve conditions when this cannot be achieved by pursuing ordinary courses of action. No employee deliberately involves himself in an industrial stoppage with a view to losing wages. This is particularly so with the increased cost of living and the increased cost of consumer goods.

A large part of one's life is spent working, and the Parliament should give prime consideration to enacting legislation to provide the best possible working conditions and adequate superannuation. Generally speaking, conditions of employment are linked with the environment of the work place, office or factory, which is created by good industrial relations. A number of parliaments in Australia have given an impetus to proper schemes and have gained the approbation of all those active in the sphere of industrial relations. By contrast, when one examines the position in New South Wales one finds that the State Government has not fully exercised its legislative function over the matter of pensions on retirement. It has a responsibility to ensure the provision of adequate superannuation rights for those who, at the end of their employment, are in areas over which this Parliament has legislative control. During the last session some amendments were made to Acts affecting the rights of some employees; but other people have been left without any protection. I shall deal with that area shortly.

Industrial arbitration in this State had its genesis in the Industrial Arbitration Act enacted early this century. That Act contained a definition of industrial dispute and industrial matters. Industrial matters were defined as "matters or things affecting or relating to work done or to be done, or the privileges, rights or duties of employers or employees in any industry". The definition

The Hon. P. McMahon]

is a wide one and the purpose of the legislation was to provide a scheme for the settlement of industrial disputes as so defined. The original Act has been the subject of many amendments over the years, but during the present Liberal-Country party Government's eight-year term of office it has been amended on only a few occasions and to no significant degree—except for certain repressive amendments directed against the trade-union movement.

In my view the Government has not kept up to date with present trends in the industrial relations field. By contrast, the approach of the present Australian Government is a realistic one, though some of its measures envisaged have yet to be enacted. By their legislation other States have passed this State. I strongly urge members of the Liberal Party and Country Party in this State to ensure that New South Wales exercises its legislative rights and gives adequate protection to employees, so many of whom have to look to the legislature for protection, or redress of grievance, in relation to their employment.

It is true that large sections of the trade-union movement do not have to rely so much on the legislation of this Parliament but, in the light of State industrial awards and the application of the Industrial Arbitration Act, it is clear that there is still a large group of employees who rely on this Parliament to safeguard their interests. As I have said, they number almost a million throughout the State. In this respect the State Government is vested with powers which are not limited, unlike the Australian Government whose powers are limited by virtue of the Commonwealth Constitution. The Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act has limited effect.

The Parliament of New South Wales can legislate for improvements in the weekly hours of work. All honourable members will remember statements made in recent years about the necessity to reduce hours worked, as well as for improvements in sick leave and annual leave. Payment for annual leave has been a subject of much debate. Others are accouchement leave, long-service leave and equal pay. There is need for our Industrial Arbitration Act to

be updated, lest a vacuum be created. At the moment the Act does not have much application. The purpose of the statute should be to ensure the greatest coverage for employees.

I should like to refer to an article on the question of the reduced working week that appeared in *Rydge's Journal*. That journal would probably be regarded as a bastion of business conservatism by those looking for some enlightenment on this subject. In a recent edition that publication said that, given that the 35-hour week was likely sooner or later, employers' first responsibility is to maintain productivity. The way not to do this is to wage protracted and debilitating confrontations with the trade-union movement. In that article it was suggested that there must be a getting together. In my opinion that was given as the view of a large number of employer organizations in New South Wales, indeed, throughout Australia.

Another State government has already moved for the granting of additional payment to its public servants when on annual leave. I do not think any honourable member would deny that when a worker goes on annual leave at the end of a year he should be able to reap some of the benefits of productivity to which he has contributed. He should have some additional remuneration for a proper holiday, so that he can resume his employment refreshed. Workers are entitled to receive some benefit for their assistance in respect of the productivity of the business, firm or organization in which they are engaged.

Many persons, including members of this Chamber have been somewhat critical of the Australian Government and its proposals for centralist control of certain issues, one of which is the one to which I have just referred. Should this Parliament not be prepared to legislate on this issue or on any other issue it should not accuse the Australian Government of centralism. A positive approach must be adopted and the answer lies in the legislature taking action. If a State has left an issue open and without covering legislation it is not adopting a positive approach and should not criticize

central control at Canberra. Where the answer lies within the State and it has processes by which it may enact legislation to relieve the situation the responsibility lies with the State to provide complete coverage otherwise it is only natural that the citizens of Australia will look elsewhere for protection.

The report of the President of the Industrial Commission of New South Wales for 1971 referred to the necessity for legislation to be enacted to cover applications concerning reinstatement, promotion, et cetera of employees. That matter had been the subject of considerable concern for some time prior to May, 1972, when His Honour prepared this rather lengthy report. Obviously the reason for His Honour taking so much space in his report with this item is because of its importance, though to some people it may not appear to be of much real significance in the sphere of industrial relations. The President wrote:

In these circumstances I suggest that it is desirable for early consideration to be given to the desirability of amending the *Industrial Arbitration Act*, and, in particular s. 5 in so far as it defines "Industrial matters, and s. 20 (1):

- (1) to make it clear beyond doubt that the industrial tribunals constituted by the Act have power to make binding awards (a) requiring an employer to reinstate a dismissed employee in employment, and in his old position or one not less advantageous, notwithstanding that the dismissal of the employee has been in accordance with the terms of the contract of service and of any relevant award and (b) settling any disputed questions concerning the regression or promotion of an employee;
- (2) to provide that these powers should apply whether or not the employer is a statutory body and irrespective of whether the employee may have some other alternative form of redress available by way of an inquiry before another tribunal.

It may be said that the Government is looking at this problem. However, as each month goes by more and more stoppages occur. The trade-union movement is severely criticized in relation to stoppages but many of them arise from this very issue. Recently hundreds of employees were on strike for four weeks over an issue relating directly to reinstatement. This occurs frequently and I could produce a rather lengthy

schedule showing details of industrial disputation which has arisen largely through the Government not rectifying the matter by legislation. I appreciate that the Minister for Labour and Industry has been looking at the problem but time goes by. His Excellency in his Address to the Parliament made no reference to this problem, so it would appear that it might be some considerable time before legislation will be brought in to correct it. If by the end of the year the Government wants statistics indicating a reduction in disputation in industry I strongly propose that it should enact legislation to obviate the vortex in which employers, employees and organizations alike find themselves. It is most frustrating for employers and employees to be unable to deal with these situations in a satisfactory manner.

Over the past few years appeals on industrial disputes have been taken to higher industrial courts and even outside jurisdictions on grounds of supposed principle. These appeals have created immense problems and are no doubt well known to honourable members. If this situation is allowed to continue workers will look beyond the recognized areas of settling disputes through conciliation and arbitration. Surely the code of law within the industrial framework should be complete, involving the conciliation committee system and the industrial commission system, designed to deal with matters inter-related with a view to solving problems. It should not be possible for anyone, on supposed matters of principle, to frustrate genuine parties to a dispute by referring matters to other jurisdictions.

The Governor in his Address mentioned a 10 per cent increase in wages and an 8 per cent rise in prices. That concerns me greatly though it may have been a real endeavour to set out the factual situation. I point out that should there be an 8 per cent rise in prices New South Wales consumers are entitled to and should receive adequate protection especially with regard to essential commodities both as to quality and wholesale profiteering. This lack of protection has already affected the housewife, the land purchaser, the homebuilder and most recently the family man in respect of medical costs.

The Hon. P. McMahon]

It is not unusual in a given period for the percentage of wage increase to be more than the percentage of price increase. There should be adequate control over prices and only minimal increases permitted. Any wage increase is eroded by taxation, fares to and from work and compulsory deductions for superannuation.

The statistics might show that wages have increased by 10 per cent and prices by 8 per cent, but the rise in prices is real, whereas the rise in wages could be reduced by as much as 50 per cent. Indeed, the increase in prices is outstripping by far the rise in wages. I shall not mention all the statistical information that is available, but it clearly shows that net real pay is far different from nominal gross pay. The same applies to any adjustments that are made over a period. For these reasons, concern should be shown and action taken towards building a consumer-protection price-control system.

Another factor that emphasizes the need for the control of prices of commodities is that in June, 1972, the wages annual gain was 8.8 per cent, and the company profits annual gain only 2.4 per cent. Since then the position has been reversed. In December, 1972, the wages annual gain was 10.6 per cent, and the company profits annual gain 12.3 per cent. In March, 1972, the company's profit annual gain was over 100 per cent more than the wage annual gain—25.2 per cent compared with 12.1 per cent for wages.

I am not suggesting that anyone who provides goods and services is not entitled to make a reasonable profit, but where excessive profits are being made adequate controls should be exercised. The State Government has indicated that it would be willing to do so in conjunction with the Australian Government, but in other States action has already been taken. In order to gain the confidence of the people of New South Wales, the Government of this State should exercise its prerogative to impose some controls.

Any person who wishes to discuss rising prices need go no further than the price of land and building. This evening I was

pleased to hear the Minister for Decentralisation and Development refer to leasehold land being made available in the Albury-Wodonga area. I only hope that the rates that will be applied to that land will be reasonable and not excessive. But while the Minister referred to only a small area of this vast State, I am referring to the whole State and to the problems of young people and families who are obliged to move to other areas in order to seek employment. Honourable members are aware that these people are being required to pay excessive prices for building blocks, let alone the cost of house construction.

Surely the cost of building should concern the Government, which should examine how it could apply controls. I do not agree with the reported statement of the Minister for Labour and Industry, that people want a chateau when they should settle for a cottage. Most Australians who settle down want to purchase a block of land and build a reasonable house, which will last for a considerable time and provide adequate accommodation for their intended families. My experience in building societies is that people do not seek to borrow more money than they need. In Australia, and in other parts of the world, people follow the tradition of aspiring to own a house and garden, and the Government has an obligation to ensure that they can bring their dreams to fruition at a reasonable price.

Last Thursday the Hon. L. A. Solomons, when mentioning local government, said that the State Government had given great assistance in this area. The Hon. L. P. Connellan also mentioned local government. I agree more with him, especially in regard to what he said concerning the \$6 million provided by the local government grants commission. The proposal is that it be increased to \$20 million, but the Hon. L. P. Connellan believes \$30 million to be a more realistic figure. I agree with him, because the vacuum to which I referred in other matters was created by the previous Government in Canberra and the present Government in New South Wales. When sufficient finance does not come from one

source, it will be sought elsewhere, with or without strings. If the money is not provided by the local government grants commission, local government will look elsewhere for it.

I agree with the Hon. L. P. Connellan's comments concerning dismissal of councils. I agree with the arguments he and others have advanced for a close examination by the Government. I understand that when in other parts of the world accusations are made against a member or members of a council, the accused persons are the only ones to be suspended. If they are found not guilty, they return to the council; if they are found guilty, they are finished. No stigma is placed on anyone else. After all, members of councils are ordinary people who take on responsible civic duty, mostly at their own expense. This is an important issue, and a solution should be found now for this problem.

The Hon. L. A. Solomons referred to the Barnett committee report. This committee, which was set up when Parliament was in recess and has no mandate from Parliament, will be making recommendations concerning variations in local-government boundaries. I am bearing in mind that since 1965 other recommendations on boundary variations have been disregarded. Honourable members are aware that growth centres are to be established. Australia is a growing country, with a population that will grow with or without a large migrant intake. I spent portion of my earlier life at Ladysmith and, therefore, like the Hon. L. P. Connellan and others, have an affinity for places far flung. I know that people in these places want a say in local affairs. Local government has been built up as small centres have developed and the local populations have expanded. No attempt should be made to destroy towns by amalgamating small councils. The report of this committee should be subjected to the closest scrutiny, to ensure that local views are considered, and that any changes made will not be detrimental to employees and employers, the suppliers of goods, and the people in the surrounding areas who have a keen interest in the vitality of the district.

One other matter in respect of the programme of proposed legislation deserves comment. No reference is made to the improvement of superannuation for those covered by the Local Government and Other Authorities (Superannuation) Act. Indeed it is no small group to which I refer. Over 80,000 employees in hospitals, councils and other organizations are affected by this legislation and because no reference has been made to foreshadowed legislation I feel that I should bring this matter to the attention of the Chamber. These people have been left out in the cold. If dependants are taken into account this means that in New South Wales about 200,000 persons could be deprived of adequate superannuation. Last year up to 10,000 persons left the scheme; many retired or died which meant that they on their retirement or the dependants after the officer's death were inadequately catered for.

It is at least five years since representations were made and at least eight years since in a report from the local-government superannuation board it was proposed that a rate of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of salary, was not out of keeping, being the contributions paid by employers in industry generally. It was accordingly suggested that the contribution by employing authorities in respect of each new employee under the present scheme should be fixed at least at $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The rate at the moment is $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent and has been so ever since the local-government benefit fund legislation was enacted. There are other provisions in the local-government superannuation scheme—an insurance scheme which gives a total of \$12,000 if a person insures for the maximum. Many officers in local government, because of their responsibility, receive salaries in one year equivalent to that total.

No matter where honourable members may look, whether to private enterprise, the public service or to other organizations, it is generally conceded by actuaries and insurance companies that an insurance scheme should be based on three to five times the salary of the employee over the last five years prior to retirement. For too long people and their dependants

The Hon. P. McMahon]

have been deprived of a proper superannuation policy. Other proposals to the Government on this matter should be looked at. In Victoria the Liberal Government made its superannuation board a self-insurer. It is conceded that this is advantageous to contributors. Another benefit is that more is available for lending to local government—an area in which much financial assistance is needed.

There are a number of other matters that I should like to put to this House. I was happy to hear the Minister for Labour and Industry say in answer to a question that a report would soon be available in relation to worker participation in management. This procedure has worked overseas and it is not a new concept but for New South Wales it is. I do not say that there is any analogy but there is certainly a comparison should someone claim that worker participation does not work effectively. I refer to the credit-union movement in New South Wales which has funds of over \$350 million servicing 500,000 citizens in Australia. The movement is managed totally by workers—not merely by 30 per cent or 40 per cent of them on a company board. Thus the management of the funds, exceeding \$350 million, is 100 per cent in workers' hands. This is an example of how worker participation can be applied. If workers get the opportunity to do it they will accept responsibility and participate effectively. Such a system would help solve many problems that arise in industrial relations.

The matter of drug trafficking is of concern to all in the community and it is necessary to provide adequate protection to the younger folk in our society from those evil persons peddling or pushing drugs. It is essential to restrain those who for their own insidious or profiteering reasons push drugs among the younger generation. I want to see Australia progress in the best interests of Australians. If multi-national corporations are not in the best interest of Australia, fail to provide the best for the citizens of New South Wales, or function at the expense of those citizens, the New South Wales State Government must act alone or co-operate with the Australian Government

in ensuring that such multi-national corporations with their immense power resources do not use this country to our detriment.

The State Government must act to ensure that its legislation is up to date. It should not ignore trends in the Australian Government or in the governments of other States. It is not good enough for us to put our heads in the sand and criticize without being positive. Honourable members, coming as they do from various fields of endeavour outside this Chamber, would have many diverse thoughts, and I should like to feel that if criticism comes from members on this side of the House it will be examined in a constructive way. Any proposals advanced to improve legislation should be looked at constructively and any measure should be enacted on the basis that it will be acceptable to the Chamber and those whom it is designed to benefit. I thank honourable members for their courtesy this evening and I trust that I will be able to continue long, with other honourable members, in examining legislation as required in this contemporary climate of today with its continually changing concept to ensure legislation is enacted to the best advantage of the citizen. If it is necessary for select committees to be set up to examine various matters I shall certainly support them.

Debate adjourned on motion by the Hon. J. H. Gardiner.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion (by the Hon. F. M. Hewitt) agreed to:

That this House, at its rising today, do adjourn until tomorrow at 4.30 p.m., *sharp*.

ADJOURNMENT

ACOUSTICS IN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CHAMBER

The Hon. F. M. HEWITT (Minister for Labour and Industry) [6.30]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

The Hon. L. A. SOLOMONS [6.30]: I rise on the adjournment motion to refer to a shortcoming in this Chamber. I find that the poor acoustics prevent members

on both sides of the House from being properly understood. There are two basic reasons. The first is the rudeness of some honourable members who seek to drown out the speeches of others—this is a matter that comes from both sides of the House—and the other is that many honourable members have differing voice production. Systems are in use both in Australia and overseas—perhaps many of them—but the one that I specifically had the opportunity of inspecting was the Tannoy system currently in use in the House of Lords. It is a relatively simple system consisting of a series of microphones with adjusting switches which enable every member's speech to be picked up directionally with clear reproduction without feedback. I ask you, Mr President, whether you would make representations to the appropriate authorities to ascertain whether a system such as this could be installed in this House to improve the acoustics.

THE PRESIDENT: Order! The honourable member was kind enough to let me know that he would raise this matter on the adjournment. Acoustics in the Chamber have been a subject of complaint for quite some years. As far back as 1969 the matter was referred to the Department of Public Works and a number of loudspeakers were experimentally installed in various parts of the Chamber. Two other proposals have been considered. One of them involved the suspending of a number of loudspeakers from the ceiling of the Chamber and the other the installation of small loudspeakers in the backs of the benches. I rejected the idea of suspended loudspeakers. In January last year as a result of a memorandum from the Clerk of the Parliaments to the House Secretary the department advised that it would be some considerable time before a comprehensive plan of sound amplification could be developed and an estimate submitted for consideration.

In view of the complaint now made by the honourable member I shall again take up the matter with the Minister for Public Works. I am not familiar with the Tannoy system to which the honourable member

referred but I understand from the description he gave that this is more a matter of cutting out interruptions and talk by other honourable members, so enabling the one member to be heard.

The Hon. F. W. BOWEN: Also it allows them to sleep.

The PRESIDENT: I am not familiar with this. I should take this opportunity to tell honourable members that recently I made formal application for a complete and early replacement of the existing benches in the Chamber and I am hoping that this can soon be arranged. It could be that at the time of the replacement of the benches the matter of sound amplification may probably come under review and we shall get the conditions that we really want. In any case, honourable members may rely on me to continue to press for an effective sound amplification and communication system and also for the installation of new and more comfortable benches.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned at 6.33 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 14 August, 1973

Death of James Matthew Concannon, a former Minister—Education Opportunities (Petition)—Questions without Notice—Governor's Speech: Address in Reply (Second Day's Debate).

Mr SPEAKER (THE HON. SIR KEVIN ELLIS) took the chair at 2.30 p.m.

Mr SPEAKER offered the Prayer.

DEATH OF THE HONOURABLE JAMES MATTHEW CONCANNON, A FORMER MINISTER OF THE CROWN

Sir ROBERT ASKIN (Collaroy), Premier and Treasurer [2.31]: I move:

That this House extends to Mrs Concannon and family the deep sympathy of Members of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained by the death of the Honourable James Matthew Concannon, a former Minister of the Crown.

With regret I have to inform the House of the death at the age of 82 of the Hon. James Matthew Concannon, a former member of this Parliament and Minister of the Crown. Mr Concannon died at his home at Bondi Beach after a long illness. He was a member of the Legislative Council from December, 1925, to April, 1958, an unbroken period of more than thirty-two years. He was honorary Minister without portfolio and a member of the Executive Council from 4th November, 1930, to 2nd April, 1931, and was Vice-President of the Executive Council and representative of the Government in the Legislative Council from 3rd April, 1931, to 13th May, 1932.

When he was first appointed to the Legislative Council in 1925 it was a nominee Chamber. Mr Concannon retained his place in it after its reconstitution as an elected body in April, 1934, and remained a member right up to April, 1958. The late Mr Concannon was active and effective in politics in the controversial days of the premiership of Mr J. T. Lang. In the first speech that he made in the Legislative Council in January, 1926, Mr Concannon, who only a few weeks before had been nominated to it, urged its abolition. He declared that the first article in the creed to which he gave absolute allegiance was that abolition of the Chamber was the only way to give effect to the will of the people. He was noted all his political life for his uncompromising and unequivocal attitude.

Mr Concannon was just as active outside the Legislative Council as he was inside it. In fact, he was one of the most active trade-union officials ever to take part in trade-union affairs in this State. He was widely regarded in the Labor movement as a pioneer in what is known today as white collar trade unionism. He made a close study of industrial law and frequently appeared in the arbitration court as an industrial advocate—and a vigorous one—for the various unions. He joined the water board in Sydney in 1907 as a junior clerical officer and was still a clerk in the board when he became a member of Parliament in 1925. He was organizing secretary of the Salaried Officers Association from 1915