



DEBATES

OF THE

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

19 October 1993

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MADAM SPEAKER (Ms McRae) took the chair at 2.30 pm and read the prayer.

PAPER

MR STEVENSON: I ask for leave to present a petition from interstate petitioners.

Leave granted.

MR STEVENSON: I present an out-of-order petition from 157 interstate petitioners requesting that the Assembly ban the sale, hire and distribution of X-rated video pornography.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Planning Policies - Forrest Meeting

MRS CARNELL: Madam Speaker, my question is to Mr Wood, the Minister for the Environment, Land and Planning. The Labor Party organised a public meeting in Forrest last night to explain the Government's planning policy, I assume, to local residents. How is it that Mr Lamont, a backbencher, was sent to defend the Government's policies and that you, the Minister, declined to attend? Were the local residents satisfied that the social and heritage values represented in Forrest, Red Hill and Deakin will be protected by the Government? Was Mr Lamont able to guarantee that?

MR WOOD: Madam Speaker, I recall that the question was that I or the Government organised - -
-

Mrs Carnell: No, that the Labor Party organised.

MR WOOD: Well, I did not organise it. That is as much as I know about it. I was not able to go. I freely go to meetings if it is open to me to go. I am very happy to do that. Further than that, the Government and the Planning Authority often organise such meetings. We have often gone into the community and organised to talk to the people. On this occasion we did not. Madam Speaker, I cannot help the Leader of the Opposition. I am not sure who organised it. I knew that it was on and I knew that I was not able to go.

MRS CARNELL: I ask a supplementary question, Madam Speaker. As I understand it, the meeting was called by Mrs Kelly and Bob McMullan. The letter, which I seek leave to table, suggested that Mr Lamont would be there and would be chairman.

Ms Follett: I raise a point of order, Madam Speaker. It is clearly open to the Leader of the Opposition to address her question to Mr Lamont as chairman of the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee. I do not know why she does not do that.

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MRS CARNELL: No, I do not want to. I am not doing that. He is the Minister.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Carnell, is this really a supplementary question? It sounds like a whole new question.

MRS CARNELL: Yes, it is a supplementary question. I am asking again why Mr Lamont was present at this meeting and in what capacity.

MR WOOD: Madam Speaker, we have a friendly arrangement here on the Government side. You will find that when Ministers cannot go somewhere we will find another Minister who may be able to do it, or another member who may go. Unlike the Liberals, we have no anxiety if one of our colleagues attends a meeting to do with affairs generally across our system. There is no problem with that. That is the background for your question. You simply cannot understand that that sort of arrangement can apply; but I tell you that it does.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Carnell sought leave to table a document.

Leave granted.

ACTTAB

MS ELLIS: Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Chief Minister in his capacity as Minister for Sport. Could the Minister inform the Assembly as to the performance of ACTTAB during the spring carnival?

MR BERRY: Thank you, Ms Ellis, for the question. It is still performing well. ACTTAB has continued to improve its recent strong performances, recording its first million-dollar day outside of Melbourne Cup days, and that is a significant move for the ACT. Last Saturday, Caulfield Cup day, the ACTTAB turnover exceeded the \$1m mark for the day. This was the first occasion on which this mark has been passed, excluding Melbourne Cup days, as I have said.

Mr Humphries: So what?

Mr Connolly: This is good news.

MR BERRY: They do not like good news. They are just spoilers and wreckers. Members of the community do not take any notice of them. We have here in the Liberal Opposition the greatest crowd of spoilers and wreckers you have ever come across.

A total of 83,833 bets were processed by ACTTAB's outlets in agencies, subagencies, on course and through the telephone betting system. That is a pleasing result for ACTTAB, I am sure everybody will agree, and it represents an investment of about \$3.50 per head of population for the ACT. On the Caulfield Cup alone turnover exceeded \$190,000, and turnover on the Melbourne meeting was \$450,000. That means that ACTTAB has been able to attract good quality business here in the ACT. During the Melbourne spring racing carnival, which commenced on 2 October and concludes on 13 November, ACTTAB is expecting turnover in excess of \$15m. That is a huge turnover and one which they are to be congratulated for. Of course, this Government takes some of the credit for that as well.

Mr Humphries: Oh, come on!

MR BERRY: They all chuckle because they think ACTTAB is just a big joke. It provides a lot of employment here in the ACT, it ensures that the racing industry is viable, and, of course, it is now performing better under Labor, and you do not like it.

Mr Humphries: Would you accept blame if it had rained that day?

MR BERRY: The \$26m man chirps up. He goofed off - - -

Mr Humphries: I will raise \$26m for you any time.

MR BERRY: I would be quiet when it comes to talking about performance, Mr Humphries, if I were you.

Mr De Domenico: How many are on the waiting list today, Minister? Did they all have a bet too?

MR BERRY: Do not worry about that. They will all be looked after under Labor. The recent performance of ACTTAB is a clear message to those who have supported its privatisation, including Mr De Domenico. It is a very efficient community asset in the hands of government, and it is continuing to provide a return for punters, as I have said, the racing industry and the ACT community, so I think it is good news. The Liberals would not like it, of course. It is good news for the TAB, good news for the racing industry, and good news for the community, this Government and this Assembly, except for the Liberals.

Anti-Apartheid Building

MR DE DOMENICO: Madam Speaker, my question without notice is to the Minister for the Environment, Land and Planning, Mr Wood. Noting that F.W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela jointly were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize earlier this week for their successful joint efforts to bring about an end to apartheid in South Africa, and given the universal acceptance of this award by the international community, what justification is there for the ACT Government continuing to disgrace a foreign mission by allowing the anti-apartheid shack to remain outside the South African Embassy?

MR WOOD: Madam Speaker, I am pleased that Mr De Domenico has acknowledged the work of Nelson Mandela. I had some doubts about him at one stage.

Mr De Domenico: I have acknowledged it for months and for years, Mr Wood.

MR WOOD: Thank you, Mr De Domenico. I have to say that the ACT Government did not put that edifice on that site.

MR DE DOMENICO: I ask a supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Noting that you are the Minister responsible for that area of land, have you received documentation or applications for that edifice to be on that site? If those documents have been received, do they comply with the current Territory Plan? If not, will you remove the shack?

MR WOOD: Madam Speaker, that was there long before I came into this job, so I am not sure what documentation went on at that time. I will check the detail of the Territory Plan and the National Capital Plan to see just whose property it is on. I recall that with the crosses outside the Indonesian Embassy there was some question as to who had the right to take them away or not to take them away. I think that created some debate. I would not assume automatically that it is in my province to make that decision. I suspect that in the end it is, but first I should make sure.

Diesel Fuel Franchise Fee

MR MOORE: Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Chief Minister in her capacity as Treasurer. In your presentation speech on the Business Franchise (Tobacco and Petroleum Products) (Amendment) Bill 1993, Chief Minister, you said:

The Commissioner for ACT Revenue advises that there is widespread abuse of the scheme, with exempt fuel being diverted to on-road use in vehicles serving the construction and transport industries, as well as personal use in four-wheel drive and other diesel-powered vehicles.

How was such a conclusion reached? In the light of evidence presented by, amongst others, the Canberra Business Council, and the experience of the X-rated video franchise scheme not being able to reach its projected revenue, how do you expect to raise revenue when it will be possible for the targeted group simply to buy the fuel across the border, thereby encouraging firms to relocate out of the ACT?

MS FOLLETT: Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Moore for the question. I reiterate the figures that we have on the use of the diesel fuel exemption certificate and advise members that there are about 2,600 people in the Territory, all up, who hold those certificates. Ninety-one per cent of those certificates relate to domestic home heating, 2 per cent relate to primary production and 7 per cent relate to other off-road uses, for example, construction. I presume that Mr Moore is talking about that last category. The Commissioner for Revenue has advised me that he is aware of misuse of that concession. I do not have details from him. I can certainly seek those from him if the member requires the sort of evidence that he has collected. I would like to remind members that the original intention of this concession was to assist primary producers. As I have said, currently there is some 2 per cent of the exemptions going to the assistance of primary producers.

I would also remind members that not just this Government but all governments have increasing demands on concession regimes. They are increasing all the time, across the board. It is more essential than it ever has been, in my view, that concessions are targeted to people who need them. Madam Speaker, it seems to me to be quite inequitable that people are enjoying a concession on this particular type of fuel when that concession is not available to users of other types of fuel, for instance, gas or electricity. Members ought to be aware that there is, in fact, a levy on the use of gas, and members ought to be aware that the electricity supplier, ACTEW, pays a very substantial dividend to the Territory - some \$25m this year. That constitutes, in another form, a tax on that particular energy source.

Mr Moore asked: Will not the removal of this exemption result in businesses moving across the border? I really do not believe that this is the case. There is, Madam Speaker, fuel that is sourced and supplied by New South Wales suppliers, obviously; but where that is supplied for ACT use it will be subject to the full price and it will be liable for ACT tax. Fuel that is supplied in New South Wales to ACT users is not entitled to exemption. I put it to members that it is in the interests of both New South Wales and the ACT to ensure that there is not avoidance of the tax by that means. Clearly, the New South Wales Government would have no interest in extending an exemption to ACT users of that fuel, and, quite clearly, the ACT Government also has an interest in ensuring that we collect our own revenue. Both the ACT and the New South Wales revenue offices will be on the lookout for purchases of exempt diesel fuel from New South Wales distributors for use in the ACT - both revenue offices, not just ours. Members might be interested to know also that penalties of up to 200 per cent of the avoided licence fees can be applied if there is this kind of avoidance. Offenders can be prosecuted. Our own revenue inspectors will be liaising very closely with the New South Wales Revenue Office to deal with attempts to avoid these licence fees.

As for the last part of Mr Moore's question, Madam Speaker, there should be no loss of legitimate ACT business to New South Wales distributors. In the event that ACT distributors do see a loss of particular customers inexplicably and suspect that they might be going to New South Wales distributors, I would encourage them, and the Revenue Office would certainly encourage them, to contact the Revenue Office, as the former customer may well be trying to beat the system and avoid paying a tax for which they are liable in this Territory.

MR MOORE: I have a supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Chief Minister, you mentioned the gas levy. Can you indicate what percentage of home heating, for example, is covered in terms of the gas levy? Would you not see section 92 of the Australian Constitution playing a role in terms of free trade between the ACT and New South Wales as far as that fuel supply goes?

MS FOLLETT: Madam Speaker, I will take the so-called supplementary question on notice.

MADAM SPEAKER: As for the legal opinion, Ms Follett, you are not required to answer.

Education Institution Councils

MR HUMPHRIES: My question is to the Minister for Education. Can the Minister confirm that the councils of the Australian National University, the University of Canberra and the Canberra Institute of the Arts have been without ACT Government nominees for more than two-and-a-half years or so? Can the Minister explain to the Assembly what impact those vacant seats on those bodies are having on the operation of those institutions? What is the source of the Government's paralysis on this question?

MS FOLLETT: Madam Speaker, the question is in my province and I am happy to answer Mr Humphries. It is the case that there are vacancies on those boards as a result of the ACT not having nominated representatives. Madam Speaker, there is a clause in the Australian National University legislation which specifically excludes the nomination by the ACT of members of this Assembly to that board. I have long taken the view that that was a quite inappropriate clause in the legislation. I took that matter up with the Federal Minister, Madam Speaker, and, in the not too distant past, I had a response from him which, in effect, denied my request that that clause be removed from the ANU's legislation. We do have a situation now where, I presume, we can go ahead with nominations to all of those boards, with the anomalous position in regard to the ANU that I am not permitted, by virtue of their legislation, to nominate any member of this Assembly to that board. I have taken that on board from the Federal Minister and I am considering suitable nominees for all three boards. The nominations will be made in due course.

I would have to say, to answer the other part of Mr Humphries's question, that the lack of this representation has had no effect whatsoever as far as I can see. It appears to me that none of those institutions has crumbled and, in fact, all continue to thrive and prosper.

Mr De Domenico: Why put anyone on at all?

MS FOLLETT: By way of interjection, Mr De Domenico asks, "Why put anybody on at all?". Madam Speaker, I think that, by his very interjection, he has indicated that he does not regard this as a matter of urgency. The nominations will be made in due course. In looking at possible nominations, I do still think it is extremely regrettable that we are not able to nominate MLAs to the ANU board. That situation does not apply in the other cases. Nevertheless, my approach will be to look for nominations from across the community for all of those positions. That is the way in which I am pursuing the matter at the moment.

MR HUMPHRIES: I have a supplementary question, Madam Speaker. If the Chief Minister is looking for nominations from across the community for all those positions, why has she allowed a refusal by the Federal Government to nominate politicians, or members of the Assembly, to the council of the ANU to stay in the way of making those other appointments?

MS FOLLETT: Madam Speaker, I thought I had just explained that. The refusal of the Federal Minister was, as I said, in the not too distant past, and up until that point I was considering nominations, including members of this Assembly. I am no longer considering members of this Assembly for those positions.

ACTEW - Engineering Services

MRS GRASSBY: My question is to the Minister for Urban Services. Can the Minister inform the Assembly about the work that the ACT Electricity and Water Authority is doing in exporting its environmental engineering skills and services to other countries in our region?

MR CONNOLLY: I thank Mrs Grassby for the question. ACTEW has long had a well-deserved reputation for engineering excellence, and in particular for excellence in environmental engineering. Recently, senior ACTEW officials accompanied the Federal Minister for Industry, Technology and Regional Development, Mr Alan Griffiths, who led an Australian trade delegation to Jakarta. Out of that mission a clear need was identified from the Indonesian Government to tap into Australian expertise in providing urban water treatment and supply facilities. The infrastructure in that part of the world is of a considerably lower standard than that which is to be found here. They have a pressing need. They have substantial investment dollars available through the World Bank and other sources to make that infrastructure investment, and there are significant opportunities for Australian business to link and to provide that investment.

I am pleased to announce that, as a result of that delegation, a senior ACTEW engineer, Mr Peter Buscombe, is about to leave for Indonesia for some six weeks, leading an engineering and liaison group from Australia with a view to providing Australian sources for that infrastructure. Mr Buscombe will be accompanied by officers from the Australian company, Macquarie Corporate Finance, which is looking at commercial opportunities there, and will be closely cooperating with the Indonesian Government's Department of Public Works. Madam Speaker, this is potentially very good news for the ACT. We invest substantial ratepayer dollars in developing our engineering and environmental expertise in ACTEW, and properly so, to protect the inland waterways of Australia - something that I am sure all members would want us to do. By exporting that engineering expertise and linking ACTEW into this developing infrastructure market to our north we have a potential to recoup significant benefit to the ratepayers who invested in the technology in the first place.

Planning Variations - Delays

MR WESTENDE: My question is to the Minister for the Environment, Land and Planning. Can the Minister confirm that at present the average waiting time between lodgment and approval of a variation to a lease purpose clause is approximately five-and-a-half months? Does the Minister understand the impact that such delays have on business? What is the Minister doing to streamline the process?

MR WOOD: Madam Speaker, I have no information that suggests that five-and-a-half months is the waiting time. There is one factor at the moment, however, that needs to be taken into consideration. For some time now quite a number of likely applicants for change have been aware that the new Territory Plan is to come into effect. Indeed, the Planning Authority has been indicating this to applicants if they did not know. There has been, reasonably, a view from the Planning Authority that it would be better for applications in the last few months to wait until yesterday, when they would be encompassed under the Territory Plan. It seemed not the best way to proceed, to go through the draft variation process - that can be a quite extensive undertaking - so soon ahead of the Territory Plan. If there is any accuracy in the months that Mr Westende indicated, that might be the reason for it. I think my explanation would satisfy him.

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MR WESTENDE: I ask a supplementary question. Minister, if my information is correct, and I have good reason to believe that it is, will you undertake to have the process streamlined to avoid such delays, which are very costly to business?

MR WOOD: Madam Speaker, I take the point that it is important to get things done efficiently. I believe that in the Territory Plan there are very good arrangements to see that things are done efficiently. As members would know, there are time constraints built into that plan to determine that things happen within a given framework of time. I think there will be very good response to applications that are made, bearing in mind, of course, that it is also important that appropriate time be given for people to be aware of what is happening and for the necessary consultation to take place. I think we would all agree that that is very important. I do believe that the Territory Plan will see to it that matters are handled expeditiously. I would also point out that in the early days of my appointment to the ministry I did get numbers of comments from the community about the time that was taken. I have not been getting those in recent times, so I think the Planning Authority has been working very well. I think this interim period before the plan comes into effect may have aroused the questions that you asked.

Self-Government Legislation

MR STEVENSON: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. On 27 May this year Senator Faulkner, in his second reading speech on the Arts, Environment and Territories Legislation (Amendment) Bill 1993, in representing the Minister in the Senate, said that the Bill had resulted from a review by "the ACT administration and my department". He went on to say:

Possible more important changes are being examined and would be included in a separate Bill at a later date.

My question is: What are these important changes? Are they being examined by the ACT administration, or the department, or both, or not?

MS FOLLETT: Without being able to read Senator Faulkner's mind, Madam Speaker, I really do not see how I can answer Mr Stevenson's question, except to reiterate the answer that I gave to almost precisely the same question last week, which is that the amendments that Mr Stevenson refers to arose as a result of an Assembly inquiry during the course of the First Assembly. That inquiry was chaired by Mr Kaine and Mr Norm Jensen respectively. The results of that inquiry were responded to on behalf of the Government by Mr Kaine, because he was then Chief Minister, and quite correctly were conveyed to the Federal Parliament for the necessary amendments to the Act. Madam Speaker, that is an entirely proper process. If Mr Stevenson ever deigned to take part in committee procedures he might have been a bit more aware of these matters. As I said last week in answer to precisely the same question, Madam Speaker, I know of no other review and I am unable to answer the entirely hypothetical part of Mr Stevenson's question.

Gungahlin Golf Course

MR KAINE: Madam Speaker, I would like, through you, to direct a question to Mr Wood, as Minister for Planning. Mr Wood, during the Estimates Committee hearings we were told that "the Gungahlin golf course was proposed originally to be a joint venture". There are two documents that relate to that. One was issued on 6 May 1992 - a very comprehensive one which was in fact a notice of sale by restricted auction. That failed. About a month later a second document was put out headed "Sale By Tender". Minister, can you tell me where in either of those documents the Government's intention that this would be a joint venture was stated? Secondly, at what stage in the process was that intention abandoned by the Government?

Mr Berry: I raise a point of order, Madam Speaker. The standing orders clearly rule out questions in relation to proceedings in committee not reported to the Assembly.

MR WOOD: Madam Speaker, I am prepared to take this question further. Certainly, Mr Kaine, I think, raised this in estimates, and I think he is - - -

MADAM SPEAKER: Just a minute, Mr Wood. Let me have a look at this point of order. I am fairly relaxed about Ministers choosing or not choosing to answer questions. Let me have a look at this.

MR WOOD: I can answer it without transgressing standing orders, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I was considering the setting of any precedent because, quite clearly, I have allowed other questions that have referred to estimates material. It is a clear transgression of standing orders to refer to matters that are under committee consideration.

MR KAINE: I can rephrase the question so that it does not refer to the Estimates Committee, if you like.

MADAM SPEAKER: I was going to say, however, that either the Minister can choose to phrase his answer so as not to refer to Estimates Committee material or Mr Kaine may rephrase his question.

MR KAINE: Madam Speaker, I will rephrase the question. I will simply note that the tender documents in connection with this project do not state that the Government had any intention that this be a joint venture. If it does, perhaps the Minister can tell me where this is referred to in the documentation. If that was the Government's initial intention, at what stage during the process was that intention abandoned?

MR WOOD: Madam Speaker, Mr Kaine has the advantage in that he has the documentation in front of him and I do not.

Mr Kaine: You are the Minister. You should have your set.

MR WOOD: I have not come with that set of documentation. It is not right in front of me, so I cannot indicate where it is in that. At this stage I would have to say that the answer I gave or that Mr Guild gave at estimates time is the one that holds. We are happy on any occasion to provide the amplification that Mr Kaine seeks.

Physical Education in Schools

MR LAMONT: Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for Education. I refer him to a number of press reports over the latter part of last year about physical education in schools. Could the Minister inform the Assembly as to the status of the physical education and sport consultative committee's report into physical education in the ACT?

MR WOOD: Madam Speaker, it was, I think, released yesterday or today by the secretary of the department, Ms Cheryl Vardon. The report has given consideration to matters affecting the way that physical education is taught in our schools. Obviously, we will be looking at that report and deciding what action may proceed as a result. I might point out that at the time, I think last year, that Mr Lamont mentioned, and again recently, after the Olympics, there has been quite a deal of comment about the teaching of sport and physical education in this Territory. I think that comment has been generated by enthusiasts in that area who have been able to gain some media profile because, I guess, it is a bit more newsy than the approaches I get on the same sort of thing from people who may be interested in advancing literature or science or art. There are no fewer enthusiasts in those areas pushing claims for more and more resources than there are in the area of physical education.

I believe that physical education is well taught in our schools. I make a particular point that it is well taught in primary schools, because there were some comments about the ability of our primary school teachers to do that. It is very well taught in primary schools and I think the children that we turn out from those schools are fit and healthy and have a wide variety of physical skills.

Ms Follett: I ask that further questions be placed on the notice paper, Madam Speaker.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

MR LAMONT: Madam Speaker, I rise to make a personal explanation, pursuant to standing order 46.

MADAM SPEAKER: I grant you leave, Mr Lamont.

MR LAMONT: Thank you. This morning on the Matthew Abraham program which is called "Whiplash" the Opposition Whip made accusations about the conduct of question time, drawing a number of conclusions which he said arose out of that. Madam Speaker, it is interesting to note - - -

Mr Humphries: I raise a point of order. I think Mr Lamont took the same point of order last week. You said that it had to be related to a personal matter that affected the member of the Assembly. I am not sure that I made any accusation about Mr Lamont.

MADAM SPEAKER: I gave directions to Mr Humphries last week, as I remember, to focus on his own involvement in that particular issue. Is that not so, Mr Humphries?

Mr Humphries: Yes, you did.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Lamont, I would caution you to do the same.

MR LAMONT: Thank you. Madam Speaker, this afternoon I have asked one question. The other two members of the back bench of the Labor Party have asked one question each. It is interesting to note that, out of the six members of the Opposition, nine questions have been asked in this question time by them.

Mr Humphries: I take a point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Humphries, I think Mr Lamont has finished now. The point is well taken, Mr Humphries.

SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION Papers

MR BERRY (Deputy Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, pursuant to section 6 of the Subordinate Laws Act 1989, I present subordinate legislation in accordance with the schedule of gazettal notices for regulations.

The schedule read as follows:

Landlord and Tenant Act - Landlord and Tenant Regulations (Amendment) - No. 39 of 1993 (S214, dated 18 October 1993).

Medical Practitioners Act - Medical Practitioners (Advertising) Regulations (Amendment) - No. 38 of 1993 (S214, dated 18 October 1993).

TWIN CITY RELATIONSHIPS Ministerial Statement

MS FOLLETT (Chief Minister and Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I ask for leave of the Assembly to make a ministerial statement on twinning relationships between Canberra and other places.

Leave granted.

MS FOLLETT: Thank you, members. I would like to bring Assembly members up to date with progress on the question of formal sister or twin city relationships between Canberra and overseas cities. Madam Speaker, twinning has long been encouraged by the United Nations as a means of constructively promoting world peace and cultural diversity. All Australian capital cities have twinned with particular overseas cities. The States have also formed international sister province relationships.

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While there are other means of establishing closer ties between the ACT and overseas centres, the general experience of twinning within Australia suggests that it provides an entree for the development of valuable cultural and commercial links. It is perhaps a measure of our separate identity since self-government that Canberra has been put forward as a suggested twin for several overseas cities or provinces. As members would be aware, it has been my view that twinning arrangements should be instituted by the ACT community and that any decision to adopt an official relationship should not be taken unilaterally by the Government.

Earlier in the year I mentioned to this Assembly that there were a number of suggestions for sister city relationships with Canberra and that Nara in Japan was the most advanced of these proposals. There have been several interchanges at government and community levels between the two cities, both before and after self-government. Ainslie Primary School has fostered a twinning agreement with Tsubai Primary School in Nara, and Canberra Girls Grammar School has initiated a series of exchanges with Ichijo High School.

The links between different sectors of the Canberra and Nara communities have blossomed over the past few years, culminating recently in sister ties between the ACT and Nara Australia-Japan societies and a twinning agreement in April 1993 between the ACT and Nara chambers of commerce and industry. Assembly members also had the opportunity last week to meet with the Speaker of the Nara City Local Assembly and some of his colleagues when Madam Speaker hosted part of their visit to Canberra.

The Government considers that an official sister city relationship between Canberra and Nara would have the potential for increased links across our communities, to the benefit of both cities. It is for this reason that, when I visit Nara next week, on behalf of the Government and the people of Canberra I shall sign a proclamation with the Mayor of Nara to announce in-principle agreement to such a relationship. This document will acknowledge the existing ties between our cities and set out our intentions to progress the relationship through twinning. The proclamation will be followed in due course by the development of a program of activities to enhance the sister city relationship.

Madam Speaker, I would like to turn now to other twinning proposals. It is the Government's view that all other cities or provinces suggested as twins for Canberra or the ACT should be examined in more detail. The Government will initiate an assessment process for the current proposals which involves community input. Relevant considerations in the assessment process for cities or provinces proposed for twinning with us will include government commitment to social justice and human rights for all citizens; the city or province being a centre of national or provincial government and having an innovative urban planning focus and quality in education and training; broadly based community support within the ACT; educational, cultural or tourist links with Canberra or potential for these; and bilateral investment opportunities. I shall be announcing the details of the proposed assessment process shortly.

I would like to emphasise, Madam Speaker, that in the climate of financial restraint, and given the need to take account of the ongoing nature of twinning, it is the Government's intention that, apart from reciprocal hospitality at an official level, any sister city relationship be substantially self-supporting.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the many people in our community who have worked so hard over the past decade to bring the relationship between Canberra and Nara to a point where the Government is able to recognise the special nature of that relationship. I present a copy of this statement, and I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MR KAINE (3.12): Madam Speaker, I would like to comment briefly on the Chief Minister's statement. First of all, I think it goes without saying that I strongly support the twinning of Canberra and Nara. It is a matter that has been on the agenda for many years. It had my support when I was Chief Minister, and it still has. I agree entirely with the benefits that the Chief Minister identifies and that can flow from this kind of relationship.

I am also delighted to hear that the Chief Minister intends to pursue other twinning proposals. I am sure that there are many cities throughout the world, perhaps some of them in those areas that we sometimes refer to as the Third World, that could benefit. We may not benefit so greatly, except in terms of the cultural exchange; but we could perhaps provide a benefit for cities in some of those areas of the world that are not as advanced technologically as we are. In seeking to find other cities with which to twin, perhaps the Chief Minister will look to some of those areas of the world rather than the more affluent ones.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I note that the Chief Minister refers to a program of activities to enhance the sister city relationship. I would ask the Chief Minister whether or not she is also working on such a program of activities to enhance the relationship that has existed for some years between us and Versailles, which seems somehow to have slipped into obscurity as far as the Government is concerned. There are people in the private sector who work assiduously at maintaining the relationship between the two cities. Given the Chief Minister's enthusiasm for the twinning arrangement with Nara, which I know is genuine, and that a program of activities will be developed for Nara, which I am sure will be most beneficial, I would like to see also some initiatives on the part of the Government to develop that same kind of relationship with Versailles, rather than the Government allowing that relationship to languish. Madam Speaker, I welcome this proposal and all such initiatives on the part of the Government to establish twinning arrangements with other cities.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**SCRUTINY OF BILLS AND SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION -
STANDING COMMITTEE
Report and Statement**

MRS GRASSBY: I present report No. 18 of 1993 of the Standing Committee on Scrutiny of Bills and Subordinate Legislation, and I ask for leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MRS GRASSBY: Report No. 18 contains the committee's comments on six Bills, one piece of subordinate legislation and four Government responses. I commend the report to the Assembly.

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STAMP DUTIES AND TAXES (AMENDMENT) BILL (NO. 2) 1993

Debate resumed from 15 September 1993, on motion by **Ms Follett**:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

MR KAINE (3.15): Madam Speaker, this amendment Bill seeks to achieve three objectives in connection with the original Act. The first of those is to prevent avoidance of stamp duty where there has been a practice of rescinding a sales agreement that has been entered into, which is then set aside in favour of a later agreement with a third party. Of course, the net effect of that is that the stamp duty that would otherwise have been payable on the first transaction is forgone by the Government. The Opposition does not agree with that kind of tax avoidance action and therefore supports that part of this Bill.

A second thing that the Bill seeks to do is to prevent the avoidance of such duty on transactions involving a transfer of an interest in a Crown lease. That can be either an assignment of the lease in some fashion or a sublease. Again the Liberals in opposition do not agree with that kind of action to evade or avoid the payment of duty which is legitimately payable. We have no difficulty at all with those parts of the Bill.

The third objective of this Bill, however, is one that the Liberal Party does have difficulty with. That is the one which is described by the Chief Minister in her tabling speech as the imposition of a \$20 minimum duty for processing documentation where stamp duty may or may not in the end be payable. We have two bases for taking exception to this proposal. First of all, what the Government is proposing to do is not to impose a \$20 minimum duty because at the end of the day, as the Chief Minister herself acknowledged in her tabling speech, with a lot of these documents, when the assessment is done by the Revenue Office it is demonstrated that no duty is payable. A \$20 charge cannot be in the nature of a duty. It is, in fact, a document handling charge. But that is not the way the Bill describes it; it describes it as a \$20 minimum duty. We have difficulty with that.

Perhaps the Chief Minister, in replying to the in-principle stage of the debate, might inform us on some aspects of that. For example, what kinds of transactions attract stamp duty at the moment? What kinds of transactions are exempted? The tabling speech does not identify those. It talks about some 1,100 transactions last year which were exempted from duty, but there is no information as to what kinds of transactions they were. Were they transactions in connection with land? Were they transactions in connection with the transfer of moneys? Were they transactions in connection with gifts from one person to another? Just what were they? Once we know the nature of these transactions, we might then be able to accept a \$20 document handling charge to process the documentation. It might be acceptable, if we know the kinds of transactions to which it relates. But we have no information on that. Perhaps the Chief Minister can tell us just which transactions and what kinds of transactions they are.

The other thing that we have some difficulty with is the \$20. What is the basis of the determination that \$20 is a fair fee? Is it a cost recovery thing? Is it the user pays principle? Is it full cost recovery? Would full cost recovery require a fee of, say, \$50 or \$70 or \$100? We have no information. We simply have the Government saying, "We intend to make an arbitrary charge of \$20 to process this documentation, even though we know that in 10,000 or more instances there will be no duty payable; but we call it a minimum duty payment". My colleagues and I find it rather reprehensible that this tax is being hidden and described as something else.

Mr Stevenson: Did they not do this last week? Was not another tax described as something else?

MR KAINE: It happens all the time, but you may have some other instances that you want to put on the table. Mr Deputy Speaker, before the Liberals in opposition will accept this particular part of the Bill, we need more information as to just what transactions it relates to and does not relate to, how the \$20 figure was arrived at and whether in fact that is a reasonable figure. Either the figure is based on the user pays principle and we are recovering the full cost of processing the documentation or the Government should be able to demonstrate, in their language, that this \$20 is a socially just payment that we demand of people who may have an obligation to pay a duty, so that we can find out whether they are obliged to pay the duty or not. It seems an unusual approach, and we will require far more justification from the Government than has been provided so far before we agree with it. While in principle the Opposition has no difficulty with two-thirds of this Bill, we certainly do have some difficulty with the other third, Mr Deputy Speaker. If the Government is unable to satisfactorily answer our reservations, then during the detail stage we will seek to amend this Bill.

MR MOORE (3.21): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to indicate that I will be supporting this Bill. I use the opportunity to point out that, although Ms Szuty and I have made a specific commitment to allow this minority Government to have their supply and appropriation Bills, we normally interpret that to mean allowing the Government to have their budget.

In this particular case, in dealing with the Stamp Duties and Taxes (Amendment) Bill (No. 2), it seems to us that what the Government is doing here is a reasonable and equitable approach to revenue raising. We have no difficulty in raising with the Government issues about measures that we consider to be inappropriate or questionable. We will continue to do that. Indeed, I raised some questions at question time and will pursue further questions later on today when we deal with the Business Franchise (Tobacco and Petroleum Products) (Amendment) Bill.

When clearly there are going to be costs associated with administrative functions, it is appropriate to have a charge. I think that the way the Government has acted in this particular instance, by establishing a \$20 charge when, because of the way the percentages work, no other fee might be payable, is quite reasonable. It means that people will not get something for nothing.

I find it quite surprising that the Liberals are not quite enthusiastic about this, because in fact we usually have an indication from them that they are interested in a user pays regime. Personally, I often have trouble with a user pays regime. Government is there to provide a service, and there are certainly occasions when

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the service is such that it is appropriate for a user to pay; but there are also many occasions when a user pays regime is inappropriate for the style of service that government provides. I think it is fair to say that all members here generally agree with that concept, although we draw a different line between where users should pay and where they should not. In this particular case, Mr Deputy Speaker, I think the Bill as drafted, with the relatively minor amendments foreshadowed by the Chief Minister, is quite appropriate.

MR DE DOMENICO (3.24): Whilst the Chief Minister is taking on board some concerns raised by Mr Kaine and Mr Moore, she might care to take on board another concern that I have personally. What is the definition of "documents"? Which documents will attract this \$20 charge? I cite the example of someone who may have been overcharged stamp duty by, say, an amount of \$30. One would hope that, if that is the case, such a person would not have to pay a \$20 fee in order to get back \$30 that had been overcharged. I think an explanation of what the legislation defines as being a document would be very helpful, as would an explanation of which so-called documents attract stamp duty and which documents are currently exempted from stamp duty.

MS FOLLETT (Chief Minister and Treasurer) (3.25), in reply: I thank members for the support that they have given to this Bill. I will address my remarks to those parts of the Bill to which Mr Kaine has expressed opposition. Mr Deputy Speaker, Mr Kaine, first of all, asked what sorts of transactions might be exempt from duty. Mr De Domenico asked the same question. I can advise that there is a range of exemptions. They include things like transfers under wills, and they include transfers of marketable securities where there is a change in the trustees but the beneficiary remains unchanged. Those are the kinds of instances, Mr Deputy Speaker, where a document would be exempt from duty.

The difficulty for the Commissioner for Revenue, Mr Deputy Speaker, is that he has to see all documents in order to assess whether or not they are dutiable. Therefore, there is a requirement that taxpayers lodge all documents so that the Revenue Office can make that assessment. Where taxpayers are able to self-assess, later compliance audits, I am informed, have consistently revealed a number of transactions which were incorrectly categorised as exempt; so I support the commissioner in his action in examining all documents. Also, Mr Deputy Speaker, by examining all exempt documents, the Revenue Office also has the chance to become aware at an early stage of any undesirable avoidance practices. I hope that that clears up that point for members.

Mr Kaine also asked whether the proposed sum is full cost recovery. I would not hesitate to say that that is not the case. It is a figure that has been arrived at after reviewing what occurs in other States. All States except Victoria impose such a fee. The amount varies between \$2 and \$20. In seeking to impose the fee ourselves, it was my view that the upper figure would recover more of the cost and would be a better reflection of the administrative workload in dealing with these documents. There are a large number of these documents and the administrative workload is considerable. I think I advised members earlier that there were over 11,000 such transactions in marketable securities alone, and there were well over another 1,000 documents which were exempt for other reasons. This is a significant workload in the Revenue Office, and there is a significant cost in servicing that workload.

The Bill is consistent with what occurs in other States and I think it is reasonable to ensure that there is some cost recovery. I do not believe that at the \$20 figure it would be full cost recovery, but that is the highest level in other States and I think that it would be consistent for us to adopt that same figure. I commend the Bill to the Assembly, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I foreshadow that, following the report of the Scrutiny of Bills Committee, I will be moving an amendment in line with the committee's report on this Bill.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail Stage

Clause 1

MR KAINE (3.29): Mr Deputy Speaker, before proceeding with the debate in detail I propose to move that the debate on this Bill be adjourned. I propose doing that on the basis that only now have I received a communication from the Law Society which in fact is addressed to the Chief Minister. It is dated only today, so she probably has not seen it either. In it the Law Society takes up some issues that they say they discussed with officers of the Revenue Office only last Thursday. Since that has not been brought to the Chief Minister's notice yet, I submit, and certainly not until today, and they raise questions about this Bill, I think it would be inappropriate for us to complete this debate until those issues have been resolved.

Mr Moore: Can you identify the sorts of questions it raises?

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Kaine, you might answer Mr Moore. You cannot adjourn the debate, having just spoken, but you might explain and somebody else, if they wish, might adjourn it.

MR KAINE: I am happy to deal with those issues if it is the wish of the Assembly that I do so.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER: It appears that we have a little bit of confusion here. Do you want to elaborate a little more, Mr Kaine? I must point out that, if you do, standing order 63 does not allow you to move a motion for adjournment. Somebody else can adjourn the debate after you have explained the situation, and that may be well worth while for the clarification of members.

MR KAINE: In that case, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will address just one of the issues that have emerged. Interestingly enough, it was in connection with an aspect of the Bill to which we did not take exception. The Law Society refers to the refund of duty and a 30-day period for rescission of commercial and residential contracts, which is an issue to which we did not take exception. They state the problem. They say:

The ACT Government has detected a revenue loss through contracts being rescinded by unscrupulous parties taking advantage of the refund provisions. Often this masks an on-sale, where both sales would normally be dutiable.

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That is the matter to which I referred. The Law Society says:

The Society considers it inappropriate that the vast majority of honest, standard and necessary commercial transactions involving conditional contracts should be affected by the actions of a few.

They go on at great length, explaining their exception to this matter. This had not been brought to my attention previously, although I notice that there has been earlier communication from the Law Society to the Chief Minister. We do not know what she did with that earlier communication. Since this one is dated today, 19 October, and raises significant issues, I think we would be quite wrong to proceed with the debate and either pass or reject the Bill without giving consideration to these matters.

Debate (on motion by **Mrs Carnell**) adjourned.

LAND (PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT) (AMENDMENT) BILL (NO. 3) 1993

Debate resumed from 16 September 1993, on motion by **Mr Wood**:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

MR KAINE (3.33): Mr Deputy Speaker, this Bill has the support of the Opposition. Again it is a Bill that tidies up the original Land Bill. Matters have been identified that either are anomalous or were not clear in the original Bill and the Minister has moved to address three issues. There are no detrimental effects for members of the community and we therefore support the Bill. When the Land Act was passed by this Assembly I noted that this new law, together with the new Territory Plan, which became law only yesterday, merely formed a new baseline from which change would take place. It is obvious that we are not going to remain static. There always will be things emerging, both from the law and from the plan, which cause people difficulty and where circumstances will require change. This is simply such a case. The implementation of the Act over a two-year period has demonstrated that these three particular matters need attention in the public interest, and we support the Minister in his attempt to make the Act more workable.

MR MOORE (3.35): The tenor of what I have to say is similar to that presented by Mr Kaine. Ms Szuty and I looked very carefully at clause 5, which amends section 19 of the principal Act by adding at the end the following subsection:

This section does not apply in relation to a draft Plan variation that has been revised by the Authority pursuant to a direction under paragraph 26(1)(b).

That paragraph relates to where the Executive sends something back to the Planning Authority to be redone or reviewed. Our immediate concern, Mr Deputy Speaker, was that in some way community consultation or public consultation will be cut. We discussed this with Mr Wood's officers who briefed us on this, and also with Mr Kaine. On carefully reviewing it, it is quite clear that

the Assembly's Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee still retains power to ensure that public consultation does occur where it is appropriate, and, of course, the Assembly in turn. It seemed to us that the convenience of what is now perceived to be a minor change is quite appropriate. We have no difficulties with the other clauses of the Bill and therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, can indicate that we are quite happy to support it.

MR WOOD (Minister for Education and Training, Minister for the Arts and Minister for the Environment, Land and Planning) (3.37), in reply: Mr Deputy Speaker, I would add one thing to the comments of Mr Moore. As Minister, I too am able to see that further public consultation does take place. All the safeguards and all the openness that we would want are still secured in the Act.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

POSTPONEMENT OF ORDER OF THE DAY

MR BERRY (Deputy Chief Minister) (3.38): Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion to postpone order of the day No. 3, Executive business.

Leave granted.

MR BERRY: I move:

That order of the day No. 3, Executive business, relating to the Business Franchise (Tobacco and Petroleum Products) (Amendment) Bill 1993, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Mr Moore: Would you like to explain why?

MR BERRY: Because Mr Humphries wants to speak on the matter and he and Mr Connolly are out of the chamber. It was proposed, and I thought you were aware of it, that we put it off until a later hour today so that it can be discussed by those people who are interested in it.

Mr Moore: I am happy.

MR BERRY: I knew that you would be.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

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CANBERRA IN THE YEAR 2020 STUDY Final Report and Paper

Debate resumed from 26 August 1993, on motion by **Ms Follett**:

That the Assembly takes note of the papers.

MRS CARNELL (Leader of the Opposition) (3.39): The Opposition wholeheartedly supports the development of a vision for Canberra. Indeed, thinking ahead is something that we often fall into the trap of not doing as we grapple with day-to-day issues. In the Liberal Party we believe that it is impossible to put together a cohesive and cogent policy without a vision for the future that we want. Often those opposite seem somewhat unable to have a vision for the future. I made a submission to the 2020 Reference Group. In fact, I was the only MLA to do so. Canberrans need to think, as do members of this Assembly, about where we are heading in five years' time, possibly in 10 years' time; but I have to admit, as much as I think that visions are a good idea, that it is hard to believe that it is very practical to have an achievable vision that is some 27 years down the track. The very essence of a vision is that it must be workable; that it must have consensus. Put simply, it must be achievable.

There are many laudable goals outlined in this 2020 vision for Canberra. You could argue, though, with some of the detail outlined in "Canberra 2020 : Vision for Prosperity" and in the vision generally. Whether the renaming of the War Memorial to the War and Peace Centre would be embraced by the RSL and other players in this field could be very debatable. Whether it is a hugely important issue could be debated as well, but probably not debated quite as much as changing the name of ADFA to the Australian Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution Academy. It certainly has a ring to it, Madam Speaker, but I - - -

Mr Kaine: What is the acronym?

MRS CARNELL: It is not good, Mr Kaine. I can see that a number of the young people who currently attend ADFA may have some difficulty with the name change. I think it is far more beneficial to attempt to focus on the big picture. Specifically, I would like to examine some of the preferred options for Canberra's future and to contrast them with the course that the Follett Government is pursuing today. Let us do as the report did and move forward in time. I am quite surprised that Mr Berry has not interjected, as he has great difficulty in doing this. I think it is important to attempt to put ourselves into the future, as the report does, and I think it does make very interesting reading.

The report suggests that Australia is a republic in the year 2020 and in fact has been so for some 20 years. The report suggests that we have a new flag. I was somewhat surprised to read in the report that the new flag was adopted in the year 2002. That is after the Olympic Games; it is after the centenary of Federation. Why on earth we would adopt a new flag in 2002 is a bit of a mystery to me.

Mr Berry: You will have to wait to find out.

MRS CARNELL: I am just bringing forward some unusual parts of the report.

Mr De Domenico: Did they give odds for that as well? I would like a bit of that.

MRS CARNELL: No, they did not give odds. This might be the preferred vision for some, but there is no doubt, Madam Speaker, that it is not the preferred vision for many Australians. It is also interesting to note that the Prime Minister's republican position, according to the 2020 study, is going to be adopted in full. According to the 2020 study, we are going to have the minimalist position. We will have a republic and, of course, we will have a new flag. That is interesting, taking into account that the Australian community generally now either does not want a republic at all, or, alternatively, if you believe the polling, is not interested in having a popularly elected president. It appears that lots of people are going to change their mind. In fact, this is hardly a vision that encourages consensus, or, for that matter, non-partisan support. Madam Speaker, a vision that is not shared, I think, is no vision at all. In fact, it is really just merely an opinion.

Madam Speaker, some of the other very interesting parts of this report I would like to quote directly. Let me quote from "Canberra 2020 : Vision for Prosperity". It says:

Our democracy is now more participatory and less representative. There is instant electronic voting on issues which attract the signatures of 20 per cent of petitioning registered voters in each region, or for the whole nation.

Interesting indeed, Madam Speaker! Only this week the Chief Minister described the concept - well, last week actually - - -

Mr De Domenico: Last week; she changed her mind.

MRS CARNELL: Yes, that is right; she changed her mind. She described the concept of voter initiated referendums as nonsense. Mr Berry called it chaos.

Mr De Domenico: What did Mr Lamont say?

MRS CARNELL: Mr Lamont said that it was some great invention of the League of Rights and was mere propaganda. Now we find that it is actually in "Canberra 2020 : Vision for Prosperity". It would appear that it is not nonsense, it is not chaos and it is not some invention of the League of Rights.

Mr De Domenico: It is visionary, is it?

MRS CARNELL: Yes. In fact it is part of our vision for the future of Canberra, for the future of the region, and possibly for the future of Australia. The Liberal Party, as any progressive group would do, is examining this proposal to increase community participation in government, as this vision embraces. The Chief Minister has made her position very clear. Voter initiated referenda certainly are not part of her vision, but they certainly are part of the Reference Group's vision. Possibly Ms Follett may have to change her vision in this particular area.

I turn to another snapshot of Canberra in 2020 and again I quote from the report:

... there has been a deliberate policy, by the conscious plantings of relevant plant species, to attract native birds to the city ... and to drive the exotic birds out.

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What happened earlier this year in Gungahlin? We saw in the newspaper a picture of the Chief Minister at the Yarralumla Nursery proudly declaring that Gungahlin was about to receive 9,000 trees. Madam Speaker, these were not all native trees. In fact a very large percentage of them were exotic trees - cherry plums, Manchurian pears, Chinese elms - which are not really attractions for native birds, it seems. If this report is right, we are aiming to be the "city of parrots" by 1995.

Mr Cornwell: We are the city of galahs now.

MRS CARNELL: Many people would say that that is probably a fair description, Mr Cornwell. The Chief Minister, I suggest, Madam Speaker, had better start talking to Yarralumla Nursery about the sale of Manchurian pears and cherry plums. It is suggested, and suggested regularly, that the planting of native species is the way to go for the future if we are to head down this track. Again, Madam Speaker, a vision needs to be shared and it appears that the Reference Group did not quite share their vision with the Chief Minister.

The 2020 report also talks about a fifth ministry in the new ACT regional government. Surely this report is not talking about the David Lamont show, or is it? He is not even here.

Mr De Domenico: Yes, he is. He is smiling, thinking "What a good idea!".

MRS CARNELL: Yes. Mr Lamont, we know, dreams about being Chief Minister. From what we see at the moment he only really manages to be chief headkicker. It is very sad for Mr Lamont that he might have to wait until 2020, assuming that a Labor government exists by that stage. Anyway, we certainly have found out that it is going to be a very long wait.

On a more serious note, Madam Speaker, the Liberal Party does welcome the preferred vision for government as outlined in the report because it very much matches our own vision and totally contrasts with that of the Labor people opposite. The report says that government will have a flatter organisational structure and that there will be bipartisan policy and decision making - a ringing endorsement for the ACT Liberals' position that there should be a less adversarial and a more participatory style of government, a more council-style of government

Mr Lamont: A what?

MRS CARNELL: A less adversarial and a more participatory style of government, Mr Lamont. The report goes on to say:

All public servants work on contracts, and there is no more security of tenure than for the private sector. There is no age of retirement -

that is something we support -

and part time work is commonplace, among men as well as women.

Mr De Domenico: Did they pinch our platform?

MRS CARNELL: Yes. These are concepts full of merit. I can see Mr Berry blanching over there. Some of the left-leaning members of the Government may not be quite so positive about them, but they are straight out of the vision for prosperity, Mr Berry, and something that we obviously support. There is also much to commend in the study about our preferred future and, Madam Speaker, there is much to do. Future governments, be they Liberal or Labor, must plan in the longer term if we are to achieve the prosperity and quality of lifestyle that this report forecasts.

Unfortunately, up to this stage anyway, this Government has shown little propensity to plan ahead. The Follett Government has not even shown the capacity to plan until next year, let alone next century. Need I mention the ubiquitous Berry health budgets, those famous documents full of rubbery figures which, every year, have different targets, changing bases and goal posts that continue to change? He cannot even come up with an appropriate framework for this year, let alone next year. In the Estimates Committee we found that he did not know where he was going to find the \$3m savings this year, let alone what is going to happen in the year 2020.

I found it really interesting, Madam Speaker, that this vision for the future, this vision for prosperity, suggests that in 27 years' time we are going to spend 50 per cent of our health budget on health promotion and maintenance. That is very interesting. That means, I think, that Mr Berry has to increase expenditure by about 5,000 per cent, Madam Speaker. In fact the amount of money we have been spending on health promotion has not gone up for so long that obviously there are going to have to be some huge turnabouts. You can assume that that will happen only on the basis of a change of government.

We also have found out, and I am sure that our meat producers will be very happy to know, that 40 per cent of people will be vegetarians and there will not be too much eating - - -

Mr Lamont: Mr Berry is leading the way again.

MRS CARNELL: Or Mr Stevenson. Again I say, Madam Speaker, a vision is one thing but an achievable goal is another. The Opposition supports a workable vision that Canberrans and their governments can implement together, and a vision that we can all share. Indeed, we are planning ahead and we look forward to working with the community to make this city and this region an even better place in which to live and to work than it is now.

MR LAMONT (3.53): The process which we have gone through in arriving at this substantial report is one that this Assembly should feel proud of, having initiated it by resolution. Indeed, the Government should feel proud of having the carriage of it and, through the Chief Minister, submitting the final report to this Assembly.

Mrs Carnell, in a somewhat jocular fashion, attempted to rationalise some of the more fringe-oriented issues and band wagons she wishes to climb on to in an attempt to justify the latest round of populism that she has embarked upon, suggesting that that was what everybody was thinking of when the 2020 report

was handed down. What I would indicate, Madam Speaker, is that the range of scenarios outlined in this report is wide. The options which we are given to achieve the outcomes are clearly identified in the broad sense of a strategy.

When we talk about economic activity in the ACT and in the region - I think that this report talks about the regional context within which Canberra resides - when we talk about economic development issues, we talk about a thriving tourism industry, we talk about a thriving business sector and we talk about quality issues associated with a thriving community. I have great concern about actually being able to achieve a number of those outcomes. I think I alluded to that concern last Thursday afternoon, Madam Speaker, when I raised a number of concerns concerning the operation of the Canberra Airport.

I think it is recognised that, for regional centres such as the Australian Capital Territory and the south-east region to prosper in the manner outlined in the 2020 vision, we need to have viable, sustainable and workable solutions within our transport systems. If you take a look around Australia at the most successful demonstration of regional economic development, it invariably exists where you have strong transport infrastructures. That transport infrastructure should not be reliant upon one particular mode. It does not rely singularly upon the road capacity. It does not ride singularly, if you will pardon the pun, on the issue of the rail network, and it does not ride singularly on air links and air transport. In fact, each of those in its own way is important. If you look at regions within Australia where economic development has been exemplary over the last decade you find that there is, in general, a substantial input from at least one of the transport modes. The perfect example, of course, is far north Queensland. In far north Queensland we see a thriving and growing industry in the rural sector, in farming, in horticulture and so on. We also see a thriving industry in tourism-related development, not just international tourism-related development but national tourism-related development.

Here in the Australian Capital Territory we are blessed with being in a position in the south-east region of Australia where we can provide a gateway to all of the types of things that I have just talked about. We can provide a gateway and access into a region that has, on the south coast, as readily recognised, some of the best fishing in Australia, some of the best waters for fish in Australia, in particular the types of seafood known throughout South-East Asia. We also have a thriving agricultural products industry in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, from the traditional big exports such as wheat and rice to the specialist-type export industries, fruits in particular, and other products which are time critical in terms of their transport. Australia has achieved wide export markets in not only Asia but also Europe and the Americas, but one of the problems we have is the tyranny of distance between Australia and those ports.

We could, I believe, secure expanded activity in the regional context for those exports were we to achieve, as at least envisaged in the 2020 document, an international-style gateway within this region. That does not necessarily say that it has to be Canberra. My preference, and I think the preference of most of the members of this Assembly, would be that it occur in Canberra, but in order to service the regional economic issues it should be here within the south-east region. Places such as Badgery's Creek and Kingsford-Smith are not suitable to do so when you consider some of the logistical issues associated with those areas.

The Assembly's Standing Committee on Tourism and ACT Promotion has a reference on the particular issue of the airport. As a member of that committee I am confident that we will be able to bring down a very forthright report to this Assembly over the coming months. Under the stewardship of the chairman of that committee, Mr Westende, I am confident that we will be able to help progress that matter.

In relation to the other modes of transport, some of which are outlined in this document, we have talked in general about the need for rapid mass-transit systems. One of the most interesting documents put out as adjuncts to this is the transport strategy document which is internal to the ACT. Not only are we reliant upon the external transport connections into the ACT; we also, as a community, are extremely reliant, for the achievement and attainment of a number of our social objectives, on a cost-efficient but effective internal transport network. ACTION has provided an increasingly efficient and increasingly cost-effective service. I believe that the Minister not only has quite adequately defended the record of ACTION under his stewardship, but also has gone on in this Assembly to demonstrate how that vision, which is outlined in the 2020 document, fits into the current rationale for the operation of that public transport system.

The difference between this side of the house and that side of the house, Madam Speaker, is quite clear in these matters. If it is a government organisation such as ACTION, ACTTAB, ACTEW or one of the other government instrumentalities, what those on that side of the house would like to do is to parcel it up and flog it off.

Mrs Carnell: This is just not true.

Mr De Domenico: That is not true. As usual, that is nonsense.

MR LAMONT: Despite these protestations, that really is the fundamental belief that they have. They still have that John Hewson approach to economic development as far as the ACT is concerned, irrespective of where that leads us in ripping asunder the fabric of society in the Australian Capital Territory.

Mr Kaine: I wish you would stop doing that; then we would not have to worry.

MR LAMONT: Madam Speaker, it is interesting to note the plethora of spokespersons on the other side of the house. This one today will be the economic spokesman but tomorrow will be the Treasury spokesman. At least when Mr Kaine was in charge of the Opposition we knew whom we could look to for proper and appropriate leadership from the Opposition. In those days we got it.

Mr Kaine: I like this; keep it up.

MR LAMONT: Thank you, Mr Kaine. I will write you a reference as well. Instead, these days we get a hotchpotch from people like the \$26m man and his sidekick Threepence. This really is the level to which the Opposition has had to sink in order to debate and to discuss these issues. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have been able to contribute my worthy tome to this debate this afternoon.

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MS ELLIS (4.03): I have become progressively more and more interested in this 2020 process since it began in August of last year.

Mr Kaine: That started from zero interest last year, did it?

MS ELLIS: Before it existed you probably had zero interest too, Mr Kaine. The three reports that were tabled during its progress and the final reports tabled in August deserve far more serious consideration than the flippancy that has been coming from the other side today. Maybe there is just a mood over there at the moment and they cannot resist the temptation to joke. I really think that there are some fairly serious considerations in these reports.

Peter Ellyard, the chair of the Canberra in the Year 2020 Reference Group, is an incredibly highly regarded person in this country. I think that any report that he has anything to do with deserves a much better reception than we have heard today. For instance, just in passing, I noticed the hilarity that Mrs Carnell attempted to bring on with the change of the name of the War Memorial to a name reflective of peace. That may occur and it may not occur. I do not think it is important if it does not occur. What I think is important is that there is such a consideration in the community and among the people consulted in this process; that they would even imagine that the world in which we live could move towards a peaceful environment at some stage in the year 2020.

Mrs Carnell: That is why we have a war memorial.

MS ELLIS: If you stop talking and listen you might pick up a few tips, because, frankly, you do not know it all.

The other funny comment I want to mention - I am looking for the reference - is about the "city of parrots". Yes, sure, there might be a funny ring about that, but there are some parts of this world where people cannot see one bird, native or exotic, in a day, a week, or a month. I am really taking you literally, Mrs Carnell. If you stand up and make these comments in this house, then I think that they are deserving of some sort of comment back. I could not care less, frankly, if Canberra becomes known as the city of parrots. At the moment I do not think we are looking at a future where we have acid rain to worry about. We are not looking at a future where birds are going to disappear. I think it would be wonderful if it became known as the city of parrots, or the city of eagles, or the city of brolgas, or whatever. I really do not think that those sorts of comments - - -

Mr Cornwell: We are not looking at a future at all under your administration.

Mr Westende: As long as they are not Indian mynas.

MS ELLIS: Madam Speaker, I really would like a little bit of order over there because I think this is a far more serious debate than the Opposition are pretending it to be. I have not paid as much attention to the "Vision for Prosperity" report as I have to the yellow covered one, "Choosing our Future". The reason is that there are some subjects in here that are of great interest to me. Under the "Social Development" heading there are some aims and some targets that I think are really worth noting in a debate such as this. People in this place and people who happen to listen to what is said in this place need to be reminded of them. I quote:

Quality of life depends not only on individual circumstances but on conditions in the wider community. Families are mostly small but social networks are wide and vigorous, providing care and support for people in need.

These are important aims. I would like to think that we could have that sort of social environment before 2020, and anything that I can do towards that, as a member of this community and of this Assembly, I will be doing. I think that they are very important goals. They are goals that can be measured and they are goals that matter. The report continues:

Social justice issues are accommodated in all aspects of life. Principles of equity, access, participation and rights are natural elements of society.

What a wonderful thing to aspire to. Mrs Doobov, from the Council on the Ageing, said in her submission:

Education (is) considered lifelong with retired people being more involved in tertiary education and facilities such as the University of the Third Age.

That is a great thing to aim for. The report says:

Goal: To foster an education and training system that allows people of all ages, backgrounds and capabilities to reach their potential. Education, training and retraining are pursued throughout people's lives.

That is yet another thing that I think is very worthy of trying to attain. I think people in this place should be turning their minds to trying to get to those things, rather than having a light-hearted, flippant sort of attitude towards these important aspects of these documents. The main impression that I get from reading these reports is that there are some things in here that probably will not be attained. There are some things in here that I hope we do not attain, quite frankly; but, in the majority of cases, these generally are comments that I would wish, in the most part, upon any society on this Earth. I want, very quickly, to refer to one to indicate what I mean by that. The report says:

In 1996, the ACT Government launched the annual Canberra Prize, which was funded by the private sector, for the most outstanding international contribution to the promotion of human learning and development. This helped to consolidate Canberra as a world centre for education and human development.

What a great aim to have written down somewhere. I think we need to remind ourselves in the future that this report exists and trot it out occasionally to see how we are measuring up. What I think is most interesting and most topical in terms of today is the reference to the famous Mabo decision. I heard some rather wonderful comments on *AM* this morning, first of all from a person whom I think this country is going to hold a great debt to, the current Prime Minister. The program mentioned the work he has put into the Mabo decision and the reconciliation that he has begun. I found the total negativity of the conservative spokesperson on the same issue absolutely disgraceful. This report says:

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40 per cent of Australia's land is now under native title. The famous Mabo decision of the High Court ... assisted in the development of true reconciliation between Indigenous and Immigrant Australia ...

I think that is a wonderful thing to aspire to. Madam Speaker, as a member of this Assembly, I am happy to see this report come in. As I said, there are some parts of it that I do not particularly subscribe to, but I believe that it contains statements, aims and objectives of a social nature, particularly, that we should keep in our minds as goals for this community. In some cases, hopefully, we can transmit those ideas to some of the other communities on this Earth. If some of these things are attained - not all of them; just some of them - I think it will be a better place.

MR KAINE (4.10): Madam Speaker, it is rather hilarious to hear a member of the Labor Party talking about members of the Opposition joking about this document. It is quite hilarious when you think that the Government undertook this study only at the insistence of this Assembly. In fact the initiative for it came from an Independent member of the Assembly. I remember that when this was first brought up in the Assembly the Government did not want to have a bar of it. Ms Szuty put forward a motion and it received the support of the other Independents and the Opposition in this Assembly. That was how this motion was passed. Now we have a member of the Government claiming credit for all this and accusing the Opposition of joking about it. Well, the joke is on the Government.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, I think that one of the best things that could come out of the development of Canberra over the next 30 years would be the removal from debate in this place of some of the acrimony that we currently have to endure.

Mr Wood: You start it.

MR KAINE: No, that is not true, Mr Wood. Without going into the detail of these documents, which, generally speaking, I subscribe to, I think that the net result of this study is beneficial. At least somebody has had a bit of a look ahead to see what we might be and the directions that we might be taking. I think there is a lot of odd stuff in here. For example, I found it almost offensive that there is a presumption in here that we are going to become a republic. That is by no means a foregone conclusion. I know that certain elements of the community would like us to become a republic, and I take no particular exception to that; but the debate has not even begun, let alone been concluded. This document says:

Although Australia is a republic it still supports three tiers of government.

Who says that it is going to be a republic? Under the heading "Canberra 2003" it says:

The euphoria of the Republic lives.

There are major presumptions here; first of all, that the bulk of our population will opt for a republic, and, secondly, that it can be achieved in the sort of timescale talked about here. That is the sort of thing that puts a question mark about the validity of the report. I am not saying that we will not be a republic.

We may be. We may be by the year 2000; we may be by the year 2020, or 2050. I do not know. To build into a document like this that all of these things will be happening because we are a republic, or that being a republic is fundamental to much of the thinking in it, does tend to put a question mark about it.

Like Ms Ellis, I read these documents with a certain amount of cynicism. There is much in them that I think we should accept as read, but there is much that one has to question. I was just looking at some of the headings that I think anybody would be sensible to agree with, such as "Creating a learning society". I would certainly hope that we do just that and that learning extends to all sectors of the community and not just to some. "Creating economic equity" is another heading. I would hope that we would be striving to achieve that. Another is "Reconciling Indigenous and Immigrant Australia". That is a worthy objective that I would hope we would all be working for. Others are "Looking after our Elders" and "Equity for people with disabilities". These are general propositions, general concepts, that nobody could argue about. They ought to be objectives of this society. Another heading is "Removing conflict from our culture". I talked about removing the acrimony from debates in this place. It would be a good place to start. Of course, removing conflict from our culture would be a good thing to do. We hear a lot about that today - about violence in the home and the like. Violence begets violence. I suspect that we would be better as an organisation if we were not so violent in some of the debate that takes place here. So I can subscribe to a good deal of this.

I would hope that long before the year 2020 we will have achieved a lot of the objectives spelt out here. I am sure that we will. With a government of goodwill, with an Assembly in which productive and useful debate takes place and where we spend our time constructively and not destructively, all of these things are within our reach. All are capable of attainment. I think that we should be adopting them in the generality without being specific or putting some form of priority on them. The whole government program ought to be directed towards achieving these things. I would certainly support the Government in anything that it does to set some of these concepts in concrete and to develop a program to implement them. What I am afraid of is that, like so many things that we talk about here, and so many reports that are tabled and so much work that is done by all sorts of people and all sorts of organisations, we will talk about them and that will be the end of the matter. A whole lot of energy, a lot of innovative thinking, a lot of productive work goes on, and it does not seem to lead to anything.

I have been critical of this Government very often. For instance, the Ellis report on social justice for the ageing contained 28 recommendations, if my recollection serves me correctly. I do not know that the Government has yet given any indication that it is going to put any of them into effect. When the Government comes back and responds to a report like that I would like to hear them say, "We adopt these things and here is the program by which we intend to implement them". Without that, it is meaningless. I think this is another case where many good objectives, many good statements of intent - much wishful thinking, perhaps - are set down. Not only would I like to see the Government endorsing it, as Ms Ellis has done, and other members of the Government will, no doubt; I would like to see a little bit more than that. I would like to see some evidence that as well as endorsing it they intend to do something about it. I repeat that if they do that they will have my support.

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MR STEVENSON (4.19): I rise to draw attention to a vision without which I do not believe that Canberra will prosper at all. The vision I talk about is representative democracy. I think the opposite is epitomised by what happened to the coat of arms in Canberra. If we look at the coat of arms behind your seat and above your head, Madam Speaker, we see a crown at the top and a scroll at the bottom. From this distance you cannot read it, but I know what it says. It says:

For the Queen, the Law and the People.

First of all, the crown stands for our constitutional monarchical heritage. I believe that it is the greatest form of government that has ever been devised on the planet. I am happy to debate anybody publicly, should they wish to have a say on it. It is useless doing so in this place; it does not go anywhere. When we look at the scroll, "For the Queen, the Law, and the People", why were the words removed? One could say that there was not enough room, but the truth of the matter is that they were removed by a group of people who find each of them an absolute anathema. They cannot stand the Queen, they cannot stand the law, and often break it, and, from their actions, they find the people quite repugnant.

What I would do is look at what has happened throughout this nation and throughout the world. We find that there is a move towards people regaining control of their lives, regaining control of their government. Most governments throughout the world are not even called democratic. Ours is. It is not democratic, but it is called democratic. There are things that can be done that would make it democratic. Government should be closer to the people, not further away.

One of the very good ways of achieving this is through precinct groups. I have heard about precinct groups for a long time and I have spoken about them, but I never actually knew how they could work. I thought, "Well, what is the good of setting up precincts all around Canberra, or anywhere else; the politicians will only ignore them. What is the use?". Then I found the answer in Manly, Sydney. The answer was that they have a full-time paid precinct officer. Paid by whom? By the people, of course. It is the people who pay anyone in government. What that precinct officer does is liaise between the 11 or 12 precincts in the Manly area, the council staff and the councillors. I have spoken to the precinct officer and the people and they think it is a great idea. Even most of the councillors think it is a good idea.

What would happen when you had the precincts and a precinct officer to make sure that these things happen? You would see that there would be consultation. No, I do not mean what we get here. I do not mean the word "consultation" being used often. I actually mean consultation. That is where you get out and you talk to people. You ask them what they want done, ask them what their concerns are, listen to them and accept most of the concerns and change things; you do not then ride roughshod with a steamroller across their ideas and do what you wanted anyway. There would be a minimum of 60 days for the people to have an opportunity to find out what was going on, unless it was agreed in council or in the Assembly, which should be a council anyway, to be an urgent matter or one of a minor administrative nature.

The next thing that could happen is like what was pioneered in North Sydney under Ted Mack and that merry band of individuals. They decided that there should be democracy somewhere in Australia and they started with North Sydney. Noticeboards were put up in each of the precinct areas. What were they for? They were to let the people know what was happening in the community; what was happening in government. You would find there the names of the members. You might say, "Oh, come on! Why would you need the names of the members?". Under the Labor Party in this Assembly, we do not even appear in the phone book, so it would be damn handy to have the names up on a signboard somewhere. People could go along and find a name and an after-hours number and they could ring someone. When you leave it in the hands of politicians they are liable to obliterate you all from the phone book. It did not happen under the Liberal Party.

Mr De Domenico: Some of us would even have the same number, whether it is during the day or during the night.

MR STEVENSON: Indeed we would. We come to another very important factor - freedom of information. Once again, similar to "consultation", I do not talk about freedom from information, which is what we have, but freedom of information. Talk about George Orwell's doublespeak. This is one of the things that are happening all the time. Finally, the people will say, "We want freedom", and they will throw you in irons.

Mr Berry: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order. I know that Mr Stevenson has spent a lot of time with assertiveness training, but we are not deaf. We can hear him quite easily if he speaks like a normal person, not like an enraged bull.

MR STEVENSON: May I make the point?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Stevenson, please do not shout.

MR STEVENSON: May I make the point? I just have a strong voice. You have never heard me shout, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Stevenson, on my account, Mr Berry's point of order was fair enough. I am finding your voice loud.

MR STEVENSON: It is a fair enough point of order. Let me tell you why I make the point strongly. Mr Berry says that he is not deaf, but he ignores the will of the people again and again. If that is not being deaf, what is it? We should have freedom of information. People should be able to get access to the information on which decisions in this Mickey Mouse Assembly are made. It is often said that the people - - -

Mr Berry: I take a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Stevenson, when a point of order is taken would you please be seated.

Mr Berry: Madam Speaker, I am sure that you would not tolerate this Assembly being described as a Mickey Mouse Assembly, and neither would any of the members here.

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MADAM SPEAKER: Standing order 54 asks that you not be offensive against the Assembly. I would ask you to withdraw that, please, Mr Stevenson.

MR STEVENSON: Indeed; I should have said "Mickey Mouse self-government".

MADAM SPEAKER: Would you please withdraw both comments, Mr Stevenson?

MR STEVENSON: Not "Mickey Mouse self-government". Why?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Stevenson, firstly, withdraw "Mickey Mouse Assembly".

MR STEVENSON: I have withdrawn that already.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR STEVENSON: But I do not withdraw "Mickey Mouse self-government". It is a Mickey Mouse self-government. Why should I withdraw that?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Stevenson, it does not matter whether something is true or not true. If you are asked to withdraw, if the Assembly finds it offensive, then you should withdraw.

MR STEVENSON: May I ask that you take that particular point on notice, as to whether or not I can call this Mickey Mouse self-government a Mickey Mouse self-government?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Stevenson, it would be polite if you simply withdrew it because I asked you to.

MR STEVENSON: I have this aversion to saying things that are not true.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Mr Stevenson, I take the point that you wish to say things that are true or not true. That is fine. But the standing orders require a certain type of behaviour and, until they are changed, I am afraid that I have to enforce them. So, please, would you withdraw it?

MR STEVENSON: I truly have a difficulty, Madam. I have withdrawn a number of things, but a number of them have not been just. I take the point on the Legislative Assembly, surely; but, as for "a Mickey Mouse self-government", it is. That is casting no specific aspersion on the Assembly.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am afraid that it does, Mr Stevenson, and I have been very patient and withstood a lot of argument. Please withdraw it.

MR STEVENSON: All right, Madam Speaker; as you have been patient, I withdraw my statement that this is a Mickey Mouse self-government that we have in Canberra.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Stevenson. Would you like to proceed?

MR STEVENSON: The next most vital point we should have is to do with the voice of the electorate. I covered that area quite well in my introduction speech last week. I gave due credit to the Labor Party when they were worthy of the name and not a rotten, stinking carcass of a once great party; but our Chief Minister - - -

Mrs Grassby: Madam Speaker, I object to that statement.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am sorry; I was distracted at that point of time, Mrs Grassby.

Ms Ellis: You were very lucky, Madam Speaker. Please do not ask him to repeat it.

MR STEVENSON: I am trying to get on. We are running out of time.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, I gather that, Mr Stevenson; but perhaps you could refrain from making statements that upset people. Would you continue, please?

MR STEVENSON: Perhaps I could say that, before the debate finishes, we may see someone within the Labor Party stand up and talk about the people as they once would have, a long time ago.

MR CORNWELL (4.29): Madam Speaker, this report on 2020 is something of a wish list. It shows, I think, an optimism; but it does reflect, perhaps, the aspirations and the dreams of people 27 years hence. Therefore I reflected on what it was like here 27 years ago. As members may remember, the lake had just been established in 1966; Sir Robert Menzies had just stepped down as Prime Minister; there was an advisory council here in the ACT, not self-government; the suburb of Curtin had just been established, and the rest of the Woden Valley, Tuggeranong and Belconnen had not even been considered. There was, however, work for all. There was confidence in the future. There was law and order. There was faith. I wondered, therefore, whether we could say the same thing of 1993, and I came to the conclusion that we could not.

I have no real objection to this 2020 report, except that I would hope that it does not encourage the Government to ignore the realities and the problems that beset this city in 1993 and to look too far ahead into the future, to 2020. The problems that affect us today will certainly reflect upon what may happen 27 years down the track if we do not sort them out, if we do not provide some jobs for our young people, if we do not give people a decent future, and if we do not balance our budgets.

I can understand that the members of the committee probably seized upon this wonderful opportunity to gaze into a crystal ball and make up all sorts of decisions and hopes and aspirations. I too, however, wish to place on record that I find their presumption that Australia became a republic in 2001 not just a presumption but an arrogant presumption. I could just as well have written and said that this country and this city were in ruins because of a debilitating civil war on the question of a republic. There would be nothing to say that that may not occur. That would be equally presumptuous, but it could be just as correct. Part of the problem with this republican debate is the fact that the supporters have found that they are not quite as strong as they thought they were. In certain quarters the idea is, "Let us accept it as a fait accompli. Let us tell all those mugs out there that in fact we are going to have a republic whether they like it or not". They completely forget, and they conveniently forget, that there has to be a referendum before anything of this nature.

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Mr De Domenico: And the Prime Minister might change his mind, like he does on Mabo, daily.

MR CORNWELL: The Prime Minister might change his mind. Most certainly, the Prime Minister will not be here in 2001, and that is a nice comforting feeling which, I am sure, will do a great deal for the confidence of people in Canberra for the future. But there certainly is this arrogant presumption creeping into reports of this nature that we have automatically assumed that we have become a republic.

Mr Berry: Why is that so repugnant to you?

MR CORNWELL: I find it repugnant because I have not been asked. If we are going to live in a democracy, and I hope that we will continue to do so, despite the attempts of the Keating Labor Government - - -

Mr Wood: No-one asked me to live in a monarchy.

MR CORNWELL: If you do not like it you can always move, Mr Wood. Nobody is asking you, or any of your supporters, to stay here. You do not have to stay here; you can go. May I say that I find particularly repugnant - I wish to place this on record too - the attempt by the Prime Minister to inject sectarian issues into this matter; his attempt to divide this nation by making remarks about Roman Catholics. I find that particularly offensive in this whole republican debate. Of course, he did not have the guts to make them in this country, did he? He waited until he was overseas.

Looking through some of these suggestions under the heading "Canberra and its People" - Mr Kaine referred to these before - I see "Creating a learning society". I would have no problem about that. Next is "Creating economic equity"; then "Reconciling Indigenous and Immigrant Australia"; "Looking after our Elders"; "Becoming healthier"; "Removing conflict from our culture". This is, indeed, Madam Speaker, a wish list. This, I think, is the fundamental point of it. The thing about it that disturbs me most is that it fails to recognise human nature in all of its forms, good and bad. Another heading is, "Rites of passage", and I was interested to read this:

Most births are attended by midwives who have cared for the mother throughout her pregnancy.

Our friend, Mr Berry, will overcome the health problems, will he not, by closing down all the hospitals? That will be the way to get rid of all the difficulties that we face. How about "Ending the culture of welfare and of violence"? Oh, that that did happen; but, again, it is not, in my opinion, accepting of realism. What I found a bit strange was "Enjoying our sport" - I thought we did that already - and "Belonging to Canberra". My experience has been that most of the people who live here are very strongly supportive of this city and are against many of the criticisms by people elsewhere.

I fear that some members of this committee probably had to compromise on some of these points. Seeing some names that I recognise, I accept that they are well-meaning people. I am sure that all of them would not have agreed with everything that went into this. I would like to conclude on this point, however. On looking through and seeing all these very commendable recommendations and aspirations and hopes, I do hope that we do not end up living in a terribly boring city.

MRS GRASSBY (4.36): Madam Speaker, it has been an interesting discussion. It started off with Mrs Carnell thinking the whole thing was a joke and she went on in that way. Obviously, she does not have a lot of vision, so I would not expect her to understand what vision is about. Ms Ellis went on to say that she did not agree with all of the report, but she thought there was something there on which she could look to the future and that would give us some ideas. Mr Kaine virtually carried on with this. He talked about the things in it that he thought were good and the things he did not think were very good. He pointed out that it was a quite interesting piece of work.

Mr Cornwell started off with something that I rather liked. He started off with what they say in Spanish, "Pan, amor, y fantasia", which means that we all need bread, love and dreams. He said that it obviously has some bread that we can survive on, that it has some dreams and that there is a bit of love in it. But then he got onto this nonsense about being a republic. He went on and on about it, as though it was the only thing in the whole report and there was nothing else there to worry about. Of course, what he does not understand is that I object to the fact that I am discriminated against. Because I am a Catholic I could never be part of the royal family. They do not allow Catholics to be kings or queens. I object very much to that. I want to see a republic because I object to that.

Madam Speaker, Canberra in 1993 is certainly a wonderful city. Not a person who lives here or comes here would not agree with this. It has everything going for it. I believe that the 2020 study confirms these positive elements. Let us face it; there are lots of things that we do not all agree with, but this is a study that has been put together for us to look at. The 2020 study is an important contribution to a long-term vision for Canberra. We need visions. As I said, we need pan, amor, y fantasia. It sets out quite positively to look ahead and to plan for the next 30 years. It also raises important issues that the community needs to address to make us a leading class city. After all, this is the capital city of this country and it should be a leading city.

The study confirms that Canberra does have considerable advantages in the areas of environmental management, planning, public administration, education and advanced technology. There is no doubt that it is one of the best educated communities in the world. Importantly, Canberra will be able to draw upon these advantages and utilise its location in serving people in Sydney and in Melbourne. It is a capital city between two great cities. This will provide the required critical mass to allow businesses to take their products into a booming Asia-Pacific market. Canberra will be the linchpin in a highway between Sydney and Melbourne. It will not be just a physical transport highway like a road or a rail link; it will be a highway of the twenty-first century, an information highway.

Much more, activities will be conducted from home. An optical fibre cable will link us and will open up new opportunities for all who live here. Technology will be used in a manner unimagined a century ago. Schoolchildren will be able to learn at their own pace from home. Retail purchases will be selected from on-line catalogues with specials, and the elderly will be given new

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freedom to communicate and to participate in recreation. This is a wonderful thought for the older generation. Canberra in 2020 will provide excellent opportunities for new businesses and new services. Products will be made easily and tested rapidly. They will be brought into production and distributed by state-of-the-art systems.

We as elected representatives of the Canberra community do need to step back from the day-to-day decision making of government and its associated politicking and to think more about the issues raised in the study. The study also highlighted what we can start doing now in the form of action in health and in preventing violence and social dependencies. Madam Speaker, we can all read this report and say, "Yes, there are a lot of things in it that we do not agree with". But, after all, it is a vision; it is a study. It is not going to be perfect. It is what people foresee and possibly a lot of what they would like to see happen in Canberra, what they would like Canberra to be.

Madam Speaker, I enjoyed reading it. I thought it was interesting to read about what people had looked at and had studied, and the way they thought Canberra would be at that time. Like Ms Ellis and some of the other members here, there are a few things that I had a smile about and I did not quite agree with, but there are a lot of very good things in there. I thought that if they were to come into being and became part of the city we live in in 2020 - please, God, we will all be here to see that - it will be a wonderful city to live in. It will be a wonderful city because it will be taking care of the elderly and it will be taking care of the young. It will be an ideal city for all who live here. We can all dream.

Mr Humphries: Not during question time.

MRS GRASSBY: We can all hope that it will be the sort of city we would like to live in. Mr Humphries, you have not been here all afternoon.

Mr Humphries: I have been working hard.

MRS GRASSBY: They tell me that you have been away having a snooze, but maybe that is not true.

Mr Humphries: No, that is not true, Mrs Grassby.

MRS GRASSBY: Madam Speaker, as I say, I enjoyed reading it. Ms Szuty came up with this idea. Let us congratulate her on it. That is what we are here for - for people to come up with ideas.

Mr Humphries: That is what you are here for, not us, I can assure you.

MRS GRASSBY: No; the Opposition is supposed to play a part in the government too. It is very hard for the Liberals to do that. Obviously Ms Szuty found a way of doing it. She does it extremely well, as does Mr Moore. But we know that the Liberals are just spoilers. They are here just to spoil - except for Mr Kaine, of course. Mr Kaine does not spoil anything. He does a very good job. I am sure that in the year 2020 Mr Kaine will be back here leading the Liberals and doing a wonderful job, as he has done in the past.

Mr De Domenico: He will be 109 by then, I think.

MRS GRASSBY: I am quite sure that he will be young and he will have lots going for him. I am quite sure that Mr De Domenico will not be here, but never mind.

Ms Ellis: That will be available. It is all covered in the vision.

MRS GRASSBY: That is right, Ms Ellis. You are correct. We will have found a drug that will be able to keep Mr Kaine alive and like he is now. That is it. Just make sure that we keep it away from the rest of the Opposition.

Mr De Domenico: We will make him read your speeches.

MRS GRASSBY: Yes. That is very good, Mr De Domenico. If he has to read yours he will really curl up and die. I enjoyed reading the report. I think it was a very good idea, Ms Szuty.

MR MOORE (4.45): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the invitation to speak on this vision for the future. I think it is worth drawing attention to page 52 of the Reference Group's report where, under the heading "Conclusion", they say:

In making action plans we set out to accomplish three things: ...

They set out the three things they wished to accomplish. The first was to solve many of the problems in 1993. They talk about unemployment and, in particular, other unwanted baggage. Some members seem to lose the tone of this piece of writing. It is set in the future, looking back. That appears to have been lost in some of the speeches that we have heard today. The writers said that they had a desire to create a non-violent Canberra, a walkable Canberra. They said:

We then set out to invent our way to achieve this.

They said that they thought carefully about things such as bushland, the nature of our city, our high value on education and the retention of bits of our heritage.

Madam Speaker, I would now like to refer to where the initiative for this vision came from. We know that Ms Szuty put it up in the Assembly and she deserves to be congratulated on that. Ms Szuty had a vital part in writing the platform upon which she and I stood. Our platform, at the very beginning, deals with the vision. It states:

We must look to 2020, thirty years hence, and work towards a sustainable future. We must deliver for our children a sustainable and stable economy, a sustainable and enriching environment, with equal rights to health, education, employment. Our plan to 2020 must set social priorities.

Planning is the centre of this vision for Canberra. It is a vision in which all members of the community share and it is through a visionary approach and a planning strategy we have gained the Canberra we have now.

By planning to the year 2020 we accept the same challenge as the planners of the early 60s who formulated the decentralised town centre concept: the plan that has delivered to us a Canberra where the urban environment is second to none in the world.

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Right through the platform, Madam Speaker, there are references to this vision for the future. I will refer to just one of them in particular, planning. I quote:

Strategic planning should be a central function of the ACT Government.

All Government activity should be coordinated through the strategic plan in order to implement "whole of government" strategies. This strategy should set the social priorities of the community.

That is where the initiative came from. So it is with great pleasure that I rise to see the stage we are at now, Madam Speaker. I see it as a stage in developing a future for our Canberra and in getting us to look to the future, instead of, as we are wont to do on many occasions, feeling buried by some of the current difficulties. That is a natural phenomenon which all of us are susceptible to, Madam Speaker.

It was very interesting that Mr Lamont stood up earlier and talked about how Labor can be proud of what it has achieved in this area. He was under some criticism from the Liberals about that. They pushed the idea that Labor were dragged kicking and screaming into this. Whatever the case in the past, Madam Speaker, even on this issue, the point is that each of us who has participated, who has spoken, who has looked at this, can now take a hand in our vision for the future and work towards that future. I suppose that it is of some concern to me, Madam Speaker, that we have in front of us two documents. One is the Reference Group's report, "Canberra 2020 : Vision for Prosperity", and the other is really a government response to it. Perhaps that is an unfair way to present it because the Government took on the role, set up the Reference Group and pushed this issue along. It seems to me, though, that the next stage of this development is an Assembly view and a community view of this report.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take some specific examples from the report to illustrate some of the things that I find exciting about the future. I recognise what Mr Kaine was saying about considering a future where there is a republic. It is important for us to remember the tone and how this is established. It does not necessarily mean that that will happen. We are looking to the future, accepting that perhaps there are some parameters, some of which will be the case and some of which will not. In the report, Madam Speaker, there are recognitions of what is going on around us at the moment.

One of the issues I see from the Reference Group is that the Constitution include a Bill of Rights. A Bill of Rights, Madam Speaker, is indeed something that many people yearn for. I do not think it provides all the answers. One of the difficulties I have with the notion of a Bill of Rights is that it actually hands a great deal of power to the judiciary. Whether we wish to achieve that or not is another question. The more simple a Bill of Rights, the easier it is to understand, the more power goes into decisions that are made in the High Court, and they invariably become more and more complicated. However, of course, there is an argument for them. That is one of the issues that I have, Madam Speaker. I take another example. On page 14 the report says:

Major gains made in the prevention of premature ageing, which until ten years ago ... was not well understood.

It goes into how we deal with our elders, and this will be an important part of our planning and where we are going. More importantly, Madam Speaker, Mrs Carnell raised the issue of 50 per cent of the health budget being spent on health promotion and maintenance rather than on the treatment of illness. I think there is a growing understanding in the community of the difference between health care and sickness care. That is dealt with very well in this document. I quote:

Generally speaking people have access to a wide range of alternative health approaches.

More importantly, and contrary to what has been going on, first with Mr Humphries as Health Minister and now, the report says:

The hospital system is now beginning to break down into smaller more manageable units in order to return illness treatment to the community. The former centralisation of hospital facilities has been in reverse for some 15 years now.

So another 10 years of centralisation before we go back to a decentralisation process is foreseen. I am not saying that these are all the answers; I just accept the tone of the document. Something that I have a particular interest in, Madam Speaker, is drug consumption. The report says:

Generally drug consumption is strongly discouraged and general attitudes towards drugs are less permissive than in the last years of the last century.

I see that as a very positive thing, Madam Speaker. It continues:

The long term aim of society is that many drugs such as heroin, cocaine and cannabis, should follow tobacco into oblivion.

Madam Speaker, the paper also makes it very clear that such drugs are dealt with in a reasonable and rational way of controlled availability rather than the system we have now. Interestingly enough, that is one of the areas in the Government response that I would like to draw attention to also. On page 26 of the Government response these words appear:

Use of tobacco and dependent drugs, although legal, is minimal.

I think that is a goal that many of us would be happy to see. Another small area of interest to me at the moment, Madam Speaker, especially as chair of the Select Committee on Euthanasia, is this vision mentioned on pages 18 and 19:

People with extremely disabling, terminal or life threatening illnesses can plan their deaths for a time and place of their own choosing. "Dying with dignity" is now a reality rather than a slogan.

It will be interesting to see, Madam Speaker, whether this does develop and come about. I do remind members of the tone of this piece of work. It says:

Life's major transitions are more likely to take place at home than in highly specialised institutions.

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That is something we already seem to be working towards. Madam Speaker, on page 21 these words appear:

Now affirmative action is itself unnecessary.

I think that that in itself is such a positive statement. There are people who object to affirmative action just because of the nature of the beast, if you like. To me, affirmative action is very positive, provided it has a limited time and it is there to resolve specific problems. Madam Speaker, I think the notion that gender equity and racial equity are just part and parcel of the way we live indicates a very positive attitude to the future, and that is what comes through this document again and again. It has such a positive attitude to the future. (*Extension of time granted*) Thank you, members. It seems to me that one of the things that are needed in our community at the moment is a positive sense for the future. Certainly, we see indications of this happening around us.

One of the indications that I would like to draw attention to now is dealt with on page 21 under the heading "Developing our art and culture". It is said that Canberra has an autumn festival, the eisteddfod, a musicfest, an art biennial and things like that, and it is a positive time for us, Madam Speaker. Effectively, we have something like that operating right now in Canberra. I realise that it is not autumn, but the art festival that Ms Ellis opened on behalf of the Chief Minister last Friday night is a very exciting thing for Canberra. It seems to me that it adds to the positive tone of what is going on in Canberra at the moment.

Madam Speaker, under the heading "Building Economic Sustainability" as part and parcel of the vision, on page 33 is set out a whole series of things that we are making and doing, such as education services, learning technologies, ecotourism, solar electric and solar hydrogen systems, electronic design techniques, printed circuit boards, electro-optical systems. Once again, we have the same thing - a very positive vision of the future. That is what, it seems to me, comes most clearly through both the document of the Reference Group and the document from the Government entitled "Choosing Our Future : Canberra in the Year 2020".

Madam Speaker, these documents provide us with a potential for such a positive attitude to where we are going, a positive attitude to an Assembly and a community that is working together, with some clear goals in mind. I think it would be a great shame, Madam Speaker - and I echo some statements made by members - if it were left now to gather dust. One of the things that I wish to do is to talk to members outside this chamber about ways we can ensure that these documents do not just collect dust but become much more part and parcel of our thinking and much more part and parcel of ensuring that the community and this Assembly are working towards, wherever we can, an agreed vision for the future. Madam Speaker, after those few words I would like to congratulate the Government for the excellent job they have done on this particular vision. I look forward to seeing more work on it in the future.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Szuty**) adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 4.58 to 8.00 pm

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

MR KAINE: Madam Speaker, I seek leave to make a personal explanation under standing order 46.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Kaine.

MR KAINE: At the conclusion of the debate on the Canberra in the Year 2020 report, Mrs Grassby made a remark about my still being here in the year 2020. Another member of the Assembly then commented that I would be 109. I wish to correct that, Madam Speaker. I certainly will still be here in 2020. Whether I am leading the Liberal Party or not remains to be seen. But I will be only 92.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO MEMBERS

Motion (by **Mr Lamont**) agreed to:

That leave of absence be given to the following Members for the specified periods:

- (1) Ms Follett from 23 October to 5 November 1993 inclusive.
- (2) Mr Lamont from 23 October to 5 November 1993 inclusive.
- (3) Mr Moore from 15 to 22 November 1993.
- (4) Mr Westende from 13 to 19 November 1993.

BUSINESS FRANCHISE (TOBACCO AND PETROLEUM PRODUCTS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993

Debate resumed from 15 September 1993, on motion by **Ms Follett**:

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

MR HUMPHRIES (8.01): The Opposition will be opposing the Bill before the house tonight. We see this Bill as inequitable. We believe that it imposes a direct consumption tax on one form of home heating in the ACT but not on other forms of home heating - at least, not in the same sense. It is worth reflecting on the general nature of the legislation and observing that on a number of points it flies in the face of some of the more important principles of government and public administration which have been enunciated by this Government.

The Government has made repeated reference, for example, to the need to bring the ACT's system of administration, particularly its revenue system, into line with those of other States, especially New South Wales. That was the rationale used only a week ago to justify the half a cent a litre increase in the petrol price in the ACT - to bring us into line with New South Wales. This Bill will put the ACT, on the question of diesel fuel, very clearly out of sync with New South Wales. That principle appears to have gone by the board in this legislation.

The Government professes to want to create jobs in the ACT. It also says that it wants to make sure that industry and others in the ACT are capable of sustaining job growth. Clearly, this Bill will cost jobs. It will cost the jobs generated in the primary producing sector, in the construction industry sector, and in the sector that distributes diesel products at the present time. The Government claims to want to help business thrive, to let business get on with the job. This diesel fuel increase is no more than an attack on business since it is, in many cases at least, business which will pay this increase.

Most importantly of all, this Government professes again and again to have a concern about social justice, but the measures that are being debated tonight fly in the face of social justice. In fact, they constitute a direct hit on low income earners in the ACT. It is very often poor people, self-funded retirees, people with large families, who have diesel fuel heated homes, and they will have to find that extra \$105, \$110, \$140 a year to pay these additional charges. The Chief Minister has described the 2,500 homes in the ACT which use diesel fuel for heating as a "very small number". But 2,500 homes in the ACT is not a small number; it is a significant cross-section of the ACT. This Government apparently has abandoned social justice as far as that 2 per cent, or whatever they think it might be, is concerned. It seems to me that social justice applies no matter how few the number of people you are talking about might be.

I see this as a desperate, half-thought-through grab for dollars, and I believe that there is a very great chance that this measure will be ineffective. At the present time in both the ACT and New South Wales there is a general exemption for off-road uses of diesel fuel; that is, any person who uses diesel fuel for off-road purposes is entitled not to have to pay the 7.08c per litre franchise fee that is payable by on-road users. That includes particularly people in the farming sector, people in industry, and people who use diesel fuel for home heating purposes.

The Chief Minister said today that only a small percentage of the total number of certificates of exemption issued in the ACT related to industry, and that is quite true. Of the 2,599 certificates of exemption granted in the ACT in the period from 1 November 1992 to 6 October 1993, only 172 related to industry, compared with 53 for farming and 2,374 for residential. The Chief Minister quoted percentages to indicate the number of people who had exemptions from the diesel fuel franchise fee. But what she did not quote was the total number of litres purchased using those exemption certificates, and that paints a very different picture indeed. I think the Chief Minister said that only about 5 per cent of the certificates related to industry.

Ms Follett: Two per cent.

MR HUMPHRIES: Two per cent; I beg your pardon. Two per cent related to industry, but approximately 66 per cent of the total litreage used under those certificates relates to industry. In other words, the 53 farming exemptions result in the purchase of 243,000-odd litres; the 2,374 residential exemptions give you 3,500,000-odd litres; but the 172 industrial exemptions give you approximately 8,652,000 litres of fuel each year. So notwithstanding what the Chief Minister said earlier today, there is a very large impact on industry in the ACT that uses diesel fuel. That is principally the construction industry, where it is used for large earth-moving equipment and other machinery.

Mr Kaine: Mostly off-road vehicles.

MR HUMPHRIES: And mostly off-road vehicles. The impact of a 7.08c per litre increase on those vehicles, on those industries, will be quite enormous. It will translate into lost jobs.

The approximate cost of diesel fuel to home heating customers at this stage is 70c a litre. This means that this tax will raise the cost of home heating for those people by some 10 per cent. A 10 per cent tax has been placed on these people. The Chief Minister has described this as a tax on heating fuel and says that it is appropriate because a similar tax is applied to other forms of home heating in the ACT. With great respect, that is total bunkum. There is no tax on any other form of home heating - at least not in the ACT, at least not in the direct sense of there being a tax on a transaction to purchase home heating fuel or home heating energy. It is true that the Australian Gas Light Co., which supplies gas in the ACT, pays a tax to government based on its turnover. It is true that ACTEW pays a dividend to government based on some formula which is not necessarily linked to turnover but certainly is based on a dividend it pays to government. But they are not taxes on transactions because, clearly, they are not related to what the purchasers actually pay at the bowser, or whatever other form of supply it might be, for the quantity of fuel they are receiving to heat their homes.

To say that there is a tax on electricity is as true as to say that there is a tax on sandwiches, in the sense that a shopkeeper who gives you a sandwich at lunchtime pays payroll tax and he pays rates and he pays other government taxes. That does not mean that you are paying tax on the sandwich, except indirectly. In that sense, there is a tax on various forms of heating in the ACT.

Mr Kaine: It is the hidden tax on electrical energy that is the problem - the \$25m dividend.

MR HUMPHRIES: They are hidden taxes, as Mr Kaine correctly points out. There is no direct tax on any other form of heating energy in the ACT. There is now to be such a tax on those people who use diesel fuel.

Mr Kaine: Guess what? This is a consumption tax.

MR HUMPHRIES: Indeed, Mr Kaine has again got it right. This is a consumption tax. It is a tax on consumption. It is a tax on the amount of this particular fuel that you use. That is not the basis on which other indirect taxes on heating and energy in the ACT are levied. It is entirely inappropriate to make that comparison. I will also have something to say in a moment about the inequity of the rates of taxation, if you consider them that, which are charged between these different forms of energy.

Farmers are also affected by these changes. The average farmer customer will pay an extra \$325.83 per annum to run a farm in the ACT, at a time when farmers across the nation, no less than in the ACT, are facing extremely serious challenges. So much for the Government's concern about the rural sector! During the period from 1 November 1992 to 6 October 1993 there were 172 industrial uses as well, and I have referred to the number of litres they used. These forms of taxation are not equitable. The Chief Minister told the Assembly only today, "It is inequitable that people enjoy concessions on this type of fuel when concessions do not apply to other types of fuel".

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Mr Moore asked Ms Follett to detail what levies apply to gas, and she could not say. She said, "I will take it on notice". In fact, gas is taxed at 1.75 per cent of the gross revenue derived from the sale of reticulated gas. Her own budget papers tell us that, and it appears that she is not familiar enough with them to be able to tell us when we ask that question on the floor of the Assembly. The tax that will go on diesel fuel is 7.08c a litre. At a retail price of 70c a litre, approximately, that represents a 10 per cent tax.

If we assume that we are looking at taxes on home heating, why are they so inequitably applied across the system? Why is it that a person who uses gas is taxed at a rate of 1.75 per cent of what they purchase, but a person who uses diesel fuel is going to be taxed at a rate of 10 per cent of what they use? That is clearly inequitable. I have done an equivalent calculation, using the Chief Minister's assertion that there is a tax on electricity as well, which I think is an exaggeration. Looking at the equivalent figures for electricity, based on total revenue earned by ACTEW and the dividend they paid in the 1991-92 year, which was \$19m, dividing the total revenue on electricity sales into the total revenue, if only 65.58 per cent of ACTEW's total revenue related to electricity sales, you can assume that 65.58 per cent of the dividend paid to the Government - that is, \$12,460,200 - is generated by electricity sales. That is the electricity tax, if you like. That works out to be a 6.1 per cent tax on people who purchase electricity. The Chief Minister herself told us only a few days ago that there is no tax on heating oil. I quote the Chief Minister on 16 September:

I point out to members the advice I have, which is that heating oil is not the same as diesel fuel. In relation to heating oil, the Government has taken no action whatsoever. We do not tax it.

So we have no tax on heating oil; there is none, presumably, on solid fuel such as wood; there is 1.75 per cent on gas; there is 6.1 per cent on electricity; and now we have a grand total of something like 10 per cent on diesel fuel. Clearly, this Government does not know where it is going. It is all over the shop. It does not have a policy on this. You just grabbed the dollars because you know that you need a lot of money. You decided to grab the dollars that might be available at this point in order to give you a balanced budget. Frankly, it is not good enough. It is important for us to bear in mind that this amounts to a very heavy impost on certain selected sections of the ACT community and not on others. It is inequitable. It flies in the face of social justice. Ms Follett said today that it was inequitable that the Government allowed diesel fuel to be exempt from taxation while other forms of heating were subject to taxation. Yet she herself has not applied that principle consistently.

There is also the issue of purchasing in New South Wales. Today in question time Mr Moore asked an interesting question about customers who have off-road equipment that uses diesel fuel and who simply then go over the border, on the application of this tax in the ACT, and buy their fuel where exemptions exist for purchase of diesel for off-road equipment. Let me quote from the New South Wales statute, the Business Franchise Licences (Petroleum Products) Act 1987:

"off-road purpose" means any purpose other than that of propelling diesel-engined road vehicles on roads.

That is very similar to the position at the moment in the ACT. It continues:

The Chief Commissioner may, on payment of the prescribed application fee, grant a permit to purchase diesel fuel for off-road purposes to any person who, in the opinion of the Chief Commissioner, uses diesel fuel for those purposes.

That is, off-road purposes. There is no reference here to a residential requirement. There is no indication here that you need to be a person living in New South Wales to be able to obtain that exemption. Indeed, we took the trouble today to ring both the office of the New South Wales Treasurer and the New South Wales State Revenue Office to clarify the situation. They confirmed that there is no residency requirement to obtain an exemption from a diesel fuel franchise fee. If I go to New South Wales and show that I am a primary producer, even a primary producer in the ACT, and that I need diesel fuel for off-road purposes, I am entitled to obtain a certificate of exemption.

Obviously, those opposite think the people of the ACT are pretty stupid. They apparently do not imagine that these people will have the nous to realise that they can walk across the border to New South Wales, produce the evidence that they have produced up to now to the ACT Government and show that they are off-road consumers of diesel fuel, and then say, "We would like a certificate in New South Wales and we will purchase our diesel fuel in New South Wales and we will be 7.08c a litre better off by doing so". Of course that is what they will do. I would suggest that it is conceivable that even some home heating consumers could do the same thing - put a 44-gallon drum on the back of their ute, go across to Queanbeyan, perhaps satisfy them there that they are using this for home heating purposes, and take it back over the border and not pay the 7.08c a litre.

I mentioned that there were some eight million litres of diesel fuel consumed by industry in the ACT. The fact of life is that people will go across the border if they possibly can. I have had the advantage of a briefing from people in the Chief Minister's Treasury, people who have provided information about the situation, and I will apprise the Assembly of what they have told us. They have indicated to me and a couple of other members of the Assembly that they believe that it will not be possible for people to go across the border and obtain certificates in New South Wales because fuel that is to be consumed in the ACT will not be eligible for the exemption which the Chief Minister is now proposing to remove.

It has not been explained to me or to the other members at that briefing how that tracing of fuel purchased in New South Wales is going to be engineered. If I fill up my backhoe on the back of a trailer in Queanbeyan, how does the retailer of diesel fuel know that I am going to use it in the ACT? If I am a company that does business in both the ACT and New South Wales, how on earth is he going to be able to tell whether I am going to use this particular purchase of diesel fuel in the ACT and not New South Wales? The Chief Minister seems to feel that it is illegal to purchase that product in New South Wales. It is not, according to the State Revenue Office of New South Wales. They say that it is perfectly possible for people to purchase that product in New South Wales - perfectly legally possible.

Mr Berry: Legal or possible?

MR HUMPHRIES: Both legal and possible, Mr Berry.

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Mr Berry: You have the earnest cloak on again and it is not convincing anybody.

MR HUMPHRIES: I am afraid that your Bill is not convincing anybody, because the State Revenue Office of New South Wales - and I suggest that you ring them yourself, Mr Berry - suggest that there is no disability on obtaining a certificate in New South Wales, any more than there is a problem with my driving across the border to Queanbeyan. (*Extension of time granted*) The fact of life is that there is not any problem with that. It is possible to obtain a certificate in New South Wales. If I understand correctly what the officers of Ms Follett's Treasury said to us, they did not deny that that was the case. They did not deny that it was possible to obtain a certificate in New South Wales. What they suggested to us - I think I have got this correct - is that somehow it is possible for revenue officers between the two jurisdictions to trace fuel which was used in the ACT. I think that is fanciful. I do not know how they could do that, in the first place. Secondly, I do not understand what legal basis they have for saying that a person who purchases fuel in New South Wales, who has a certificate to that effect, who even freely admits that he is going to use it in the ACT, can be prevented from doing so. I do not know what legal impediment there is to doing so.

The critical question, of course, is where the sale occurs. If the sale occurs in New South Wales, New South Wales taxes apply to it. If I purchase diesel fuel in New South Wales and New South Wales does not require the payment of a 7.08c per litre diesel fuel - - -

Mr Connolly: If you have an exemption certificate.

MR HUMPHRIES: If I have an exemption certificate - - -

Mr Connolly: Meeting the criteria in New South Wales.

MR HUMPHRIES: The criterion in New South Wales, to answer Mr Connolly's interjection, is that you are using the fuel for off-road purposes - not off-road purposes in the ACT or New South Wales or anywhere else, but off-road purposes. I have a copy of the relevant page of the Act that you can have a look at. Perhaps I have been misadvised by the New South Wales Revenue Office. Ms Follett might care to indicate to me why it is that this advice is inaccurate. Certainly, it is not obtained by reading the New South Wales Act.

This Bill, if enacted, will cause the ACT's regime of revenue collection to be out of sync with that of New South Wales, and that, of itself, is a temptation. It is a temptation to other people to abuse the system. It is a temptation to other people to take advantage of arrangements which allow them to purchase fuel in New South Wales. It is a temptation to some businesses to move across to New South Wales. A backhoe hirer might purchase a great deal of diesel fuel each year and wants to be able to continue to do so more cheaply than otherwise would be the case. If you imagine that that person would not seriously consider crossing the border and setting up in New South Wales, you have rocks in your head. Of course he will do that.

Ms Follett: And you think they deserve a concession - more than unemployed people, more than pensioners?

MR HUMPHRIES: No, this is not the issue. I am proposing that you not tax people of any kind for the use of home heating fuel or for other uses of diesel fuel which produce jobs. People are not involved in primary production in the ACT because they happen to like spending lots of time out in the fields with muddy boots on. They do so because they make a living out of it. In many cases they employ other people; they provide jobs in this Territory. That is why the Liberal Party is opposed to this revenue measure. That is why the Liberal Party feels that you are being inequitable in pursuing this measure.

The Chief Minister has said a number of things which cause me to wonder what is going on. She says that the original scheme was provided to allow primary producers an exemption from the payment of diesel fuel. Her solution to this problem has been to remove altogether the exemption from primary producers - a strange solution indeed. The Chief Minister suggested in her presentation speech that suppliers of diesel fuel found some discomfort with the present system. She said:

The current scheme is burdensome to the diesel suppliers ...

We have been in touch with all these suppliers in the ACT and not one has made that point. Not one wants to see this new arrangement put in place. Who are these people who are complaining about the burdensome diesel exemption system? The Chief Minister falls silent. She also said:

... it is difficult to police.

Mr Moore asked a question today about abuse of the present system. The Chief Minister took it on notice. She might have forgotten that she took on notice last week a similar question from me on exactly the same issue. What evidence is there that there is widespread abuse of this system? The fact is that, according to your officers, although this scheme has been in place for some time, there have not been any prosecutions for abuse of this system. Where is the evidence of abuse?

I have no doubt that there is bound to be someone who at some stage is going to use some diesel fuel they have purchased for an on-road purpose. That is bound to happen; it is human nature. But you need more than just an assumption about human nature to be able to prove that there is such wide-scale fraud going on in the application of this system that you are warranted in chucking out the whole system and, in the same breath, imposing a considerable burden on those people in the ACT who depend on diesel fuel for a livelihood or for home heating. I think the Government has not clearly thought through the implications of this decision. It puts us out of sync with New South Wales, it is not socially just, and it will certainly, at the end of the day, cost jobs. I believe that this measure is inequitable and should be opposed by the Assembly.

MR MOORE (8.28): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin my speech at the in-principle stage by reiterating from our election document just what our commitment was for stable government:

guarantee stable government (in a balance of power situation) by guaranteeing support for the Chief Minister in a no-confidence motion and guaranteeing passage of the Supply and Appropriation Bills.

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It has been the practice of Ms Szuty and me to read that in a much broader context. It has been our practice to read it in terms of the budget as a whole, and while we can we will continue to read it in that way.

We do have some difficulties with this Bill. The first difficulty is the concept of the widespread abuse - the subject of the question I asked today of the Chief Minister which she was not able to answer at question time. We have some information provided by the Revenue Office in a briefing they were kind enough to give us at half past seven this evening, a briefing which we appreciate and which was able to resolve some of the questions we raised. I read from one of the papers the Revenue Office provided for us:

The ACT Revenue Office does not maintain records on diesel fuel usage other than total usage. Therefore there is no data as to the volume or value of diesel fuel used for on-road or off-road consumption.

It seems to me that, when we are dealing with a situation that talks about on-road and off-road use, the concept of widespread abuse under these circumstances is difficult to ascertain. At the same time, I think it is important to emphasise that the officers who gave us the briefing indicated that they suspected that there was a loss of some \$110,000 to the ACT revenue last year through abuse of the system. I still do not understand how they have been able to come up with that figure, and that is one of the concerns we have.

It is important at this stage to put into perspective the fact that whenever we deal with revenue measures we have a series of people phone our offices and say, "We object to this new revenue measure". That has been the case since I have been in the Assembly. When there is a new revenue measure that is going to affect people and that seeks to have more money coming from individuals' pockets, of course they are going to object. The construction industry has approached us; of course they are going to object. People with diesel fuel fired furnaces have approached us for exactly the same reason. I think it is important that we keep that in perspective.

At the same time, we believe that, before we support a Bill such as this, it is important to determine whether there will be further damage done in some way that is going to outweigh the benefit to the ACT. I remind members that in the previous Assembly, when a revenue measure was brought up by the Alliance Government under Mr Craig Duby as Finance Minister and he suggested a 40 per cent impost on X-rated videos, I pointed out - you will be able to find it in the *Hansard* - that such a high level of taxation on an industry previously untaxed would mean that we would get a minimal amount of revenue from it and that it would just have the effect of driving the industry back underground. Of course, that was the reality.

Mr Kaine: That was the idea. They challenged us to tax them, remember?

MR MOORE: The Chief Minister of the time says, "Yes, that was the idea". Indeed, if you go back to the *Hansard* you will see how a number of members misled this Assembly in their approach. It may be interesting to see what Mr Kaine said at the time.

The issue of compliance, of course, is the responsibility of the Revenue Office. Nevertheless, it is important for us to determine whether or not we believe that compliance is possible. Mr Humphries has very eloquently presented the position as he perceives it in terms of what would happen as far as the New South Wales legislation goes. He has read from the New South Wales legislation; he has commented on the messages and the contacts he has had. They contrast with the briefing we had from the officers from the Chief Minister's Department, who indicated that they have agreement from the New South Wales Commissioner of Revenue and that all will be hunky dory. It seems to us that we are now faced with a decision as to whether we are going to believe one person or another. At this stage we do not believe that the situation has been resolved to our satisfaction.

It is also important to recognise the hardship this impost will cause to some people, keeping in perspective, as with any revenue measure, that people will identify the hardship. The Chief Minister has certainly recognised, in terms of the home heating fuel bill, that there should be exemptions not only for people with pensions but for those with health care cards, and I think that is commendable. I have some concern, I must say, for those people on superannuation who have contacted us, who are at the bottom of the superannuation level and who are now going to have to find extra money. That is always going to be a problem, wherever we draw the line. There is always going to be somebody just over the line and somebody just under it. That is something we can consider.

The other important group is farmers, and we have been contacted by farmers from places such as Pialligo and so forth about the extra impost on them at a time when they are struggling. Perhaps we need to consider whether the exemption should include those farmers and the impact it is going to have on them. These are the issues we are wrestling with.

It is also interesting that the Chief Minister today indicated that we already put an impost on gas for heating; we take a dividend from the Electricity and Water Authority - \$25m this year - and therefore in an indirect way people are required to pay an extra tax into the ACT revenue. It is important to contrast the dividend on natural gas, which is 1.75 per cent, and the dividend that would be expected on diesel fuel, which is closer to 10 per cent. There may well be good environmental reasons for that; I can certainly think of some very good environmental reasons why we would make a decision to operate that way. But that issue has never been raised, other than by me at this time, and it is an issue that also needs to be answered.

Similarly, the officers briefing us were asked about home heating oil - the stuff that is normally used for home oil furnaces - as opposed to diesel oil for home heating and we were not able to get a definitive answer on whether that fuel is taxed. They think at this stage that it is taxed at the same level as we are proposing to tax the diesel fuel, but that is something they were not able to tell us. It is still open because they were not able to give us a definitive answer.

It seems to Ms Szuty and me that at this stage there are still too many questions unanswered, and before we are prepared to support this Bill we want to have those questions answered. There is still time to have them answered we are sitting for another two days. It is for those reasons in particular that when Ms Szuty speaks she will be moving to adjourn the debate.

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MR CORNWELL (8.38): The Labor Party, this Labor Government, are very free with the idea that they like to support minorities. I am rising tonight as the rural spokesman for the Liberal Party to support a minority of fewer than 250 people here in the ACT - - -

Mrs Grassby: He has a couple of chooks in his backyard.

MR CORNWELL: Thank you. I acknowledge Mrs Grassby's interjection. She regards the rural community of the ACT as people who keep chooks in their backyard. I speak on behalf of fewer than 250 rural primary producers in this Territory, who are very concerned about the impact of this diesel fuel levy upon their future prosperity. As my colleague Mr Humphries indicated, it appears that it is going to cost them something like an extra \$320-odd per annum if this concession is taken away. Yet this afternoon the Chief Minister herself said that originally the concession was applied with the intention to assist primary producers.

It may be passing strange that some 4,500 people currently hold exemption certificates in the ACT, although I would suggest to you that obviously they are not all primary producers. But is it the concern of primary producers that more people than the primary producers you talk about wishing to assist, Chief Minister, hold these exemption certificates? I think it is a matter for your administration to examine, but you should not be victimising this group of fewer than 250 people. The Chief Minister said:

The current scheme is burdensome to the diesel suppliers -

Mr Humphries has answered that -

and is difficult to police.

It is not difficult to police in relation to primary producers because they receive a primary producer declaration. I have seen a copy of it. It is in fact an exemption certificate for taxation purposes. There is nothing difficult about the policing of this diesel fuel concession for such people.

Mr De Domenico: You do not even need a computer to count them. There are only 250.

MR CORNWELL: Exactly, Mr De Domenico. It can be done very simply. Thirdly, the Chief Minister went on to say:

The Commissioner for ACT Revenue advises that there is widespread abuse of the scheme, with exempt fuel being diverted to on-road use in vehicles serving the construction and transport industries, as well as personal use in four-wheel drive and other diesel-powered vehicles.

Is there any suggestion in that statement that primary producers are abusing the system? I put it to you that there is not. So why would you want to victimise a small group of people in this Territory?

Mr Connolly: So the primary producers use the exempt fuel for the farm, but when they jump in the Landcruiser to go shopping they pay ordinary prices, do they? They do not use concessions when they go on holidays?

MR CORNWELL: I find it remarkable that the Attorney-General, the man who is supposed to uphold the law, should be accusing, without justification and without any evidence, primary producers of abusing the system of diesel fuel concessions. That is an outrageous statement, and I think it is absolutely appalling that it should come from the chief law officer of this Territory in relation to primary producers here in the ACT. I hope that Mr Connolly will have the decency to stand up later and withdraw that imputation against our ACT primary producers.

The fact is that this is a very petty victimisation of a small section of the community who, I suggest, along with every other person in the rural area, certainly of eastern Australia, are having a pretty hard time of it at the moment. It seems to me that this is a remarkably petty action to take. There are ways and means of dealing with the abuses, if such exist, in other areas; but there is nothing to suggest that the primary producers are contributing to these abuses. Might I suggest that if you do insist on imposing this extra charge upon them you may find that, not only are they not being as productive as they should be, but there may be greater implications because there will be a disincentive to use their equipment to carry out weed control, erosion programs and various environmental activities which they are carrying out at the moment. This Government, in relation at least to fewer than 250 people in this community, the rural producers, may be being penny wise but they are being extremely pound foolish in the long run.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Szuty**) adjourned.

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS MEETING Ministerial Statement and Paper

Debate resumed from 15 June 1993, on motion by **Ms Follett**:

That the Assembly takes note of the papers.

MRS CARNELL (Leader of the Opposition) (8.44): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that this has finally come up on the notice paper today, when it has been there for so long.

Mr Berry: Did you ask for it to come up earlier?

MRS CARNELL: No, I was not complaining about it, Mr Berry. I was just making the comment that it is surprising, taking into account that Mabo was the most important issue discussed by the Council of Australian Governments in June. Certainly its importance has diminished very little since that council meeting. The confusion and uncertainty has been added to by the Federal Labor Party's inept handling of the whole issue. I suppose that all we can do now is hope that Mr Keating's backdown of last night will bring some resolution to this particularly difficult issue.

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Mabo certainly shows that long debates in the media about complex issues that affect people's lives and undermine fundamental ground rules of investors, land owners and farmers will inevitably cause great anxiety in the community. And for what? Who could really say that, as a result of the whole convoluted process, anybody has gained or that reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians is any closer or that relations are any more constructive? I know that many Aborigines believe that the Mabo situation has actually set back reconciliation, and this is obviously a tragedy for all Australians.

Mr Berry: Names? How many?

MRS CARNELL: People on the reconciliation council are saying that. Another important issue discussed was the national electricity grid. The ability this will bring for real free trade in electricity will certainly mean a more competitive and rational pricing structure that will be in everybody's best interest, although of recent days it seems that there may not be able to be appropriate agreement on such an issue. Nationally, there certainly would be savings in the generating capacity and related capital expenditure. I do not think anybody can doubt that. Let us hope that agreement can be reached. I was fascinated, though, by the Chief Minister's statement in this area:

... it is most important to remind the Assembly that all of these reforms are aimed at creating greater competition between electricity producers and so provide consumers such as the ACT with choice between suppliers and the potential for lower prices than would otherwise have been the case.

This is very interesting, taking into account the comments that were made on regular occasions during estimates. The council discussed the micro-economic reforms being achieved elsewhere among the States in their electricity, water and transport areas. These changes are important in "improving the competitiveness of Australia in the international economy". Those are not my words; they are straight out of the communique that was issued after the COAG conference.

Mr De Domenico: Was Ms Follett there?

MRS CARNELL: Ms Follett was there. It is appropriate to quote directly from the communique released after the COAG conference. Under the heading "Micro-Economic Reform", it says:

The Council discussed a range of micro-economic reform issues. It noted that progress is being made in the area of micro-economic reform including reform in the electricity, water and transport areas. The Council agreed that the momentum for reform needs to be maintained in the interests of improving the competitiveness of Australia in the international economy.

In other words, reform needs to be maintained. Obviously, in some States it needs to be hotted up a bit. It seems that the confusion in the ACT may be in the words "micro-economic reform". Maybe this Labor administration got only the micro bit right, meaning that there has been very little reform at all in this area. I wonder what the Chief Minister is going to say when she goes along to the next COAG conference.

It is a great pity that the Chief Minister had such difficulty in translating this laudable principle of micro-economic reform into such areas as the ACTION bus service, certain areas of parks and gardens, and areas in ACT Health, to name but a few. In her speech she admitted that competition produces lower prices, but due to pressure from her left-wing union mates she refuses to make any of the necessary changes to allow competition into ACT government services. Possibly, she believes that the ACT public sector could not cope with real competition. Certainly, we do not believe that that is so. The ACT has many talented public servants who, given the right conditions, could compete well with the private sector. The real winners would be the people of the ACT, who would get more cost-effective services produced more efficiently. This Labor administration seems to be wedded to an ideology, despite the facts.

The recent Hilmer report, which I think was discussed at the COAG conference, was described by the chairman of the Trade Practices Commission, Professor Allan Fels, as an "important historic opportunity to adopt a national competition policy which will benefit all Australians". He said that State governments should not fear the effects of competition policy and the winding back of current monopolies in areas such as electricity and agricultural marketing boards; that the resulting increase in competitive pressure will bring benefits for the State economy as a whole. That is a fairly definitive statement, I would have thought; but what was the Labor Party's response to questions on the use of competition, questions they were asked regularly during estimates? The response was no, no, and no again - no, it is not party policy; therefore, regardless of the outcomes, regardless of efficiency, regardless of price, no, it is not on.

Mr De Domenico: What did CIT say?

MRS CARNELL: That is the one. It was quite interesting in estimates that Minister Connolly was heard to say that competition would lead to lower prices for goods and services, but unfortunately he was bound to party policy, to ideology.

Mr Connolly: I raise a point of order, Madam Speaker. First, it is out of order to quote from a committee that has not reported yet - - -

MRS CARNELL: I did not quote. I said that you said that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Let Mr Connolly make his point of order.

Mr Connolly: The point of order, which you ruled on earlier today, is that it is out of order to refer in debates in this place to what is alleged to have been said in a committee which has not yet reported. It is also, I presume, out of order to misquote and make such a patently nonsensical statement. What you are saying is not what I ever said, Mrs Carnell, and I will serve it to you with both barrels when you finish this pathetic little speech.

MRS CARNELL: I am exceedingly happy to withdraw that, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs Carnell.

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MRS CARNELL: I am happy to wait until the committee reports. This is despite the fact that ACTEW, CIT and the now decorporatised ACTTAB all stated strongly that competition and the use of competitive tendering yielded better results. As usual, Mr Berry and his Labor colleagues will not change. They will not let the facts or the advice or the commonsense get in the way of ideology.

Mr De Domenico: Have a look at the health budget.

MRS CARNELL: That is right; absolutely wonderful! There has been no progress in the provision of concessions and fringe benefits for part pensioners and older long-term beneficiaries, although it does seem that the Federal Labor Government again got it wrong and grossly underestimated the cost. I will not quote estimates, but I understand that Ms Follett accepts the fact that the Federal Government underestimated the cost and possibly that the ACT has not recouped the amount of money it has cost us to implement what was a unilateral decision of the Federal Labor Government. Again, we suffer at the hands of Labor.

Equally, though, and in a more positive light, progress to uniform national holidays must be welcomed by all Australians. The absurdity of having a national day that is not necessarily celebrated on the actual day or on a uniform basis must stop immediately. I totally applaud the decision of COAG to stop such stupid situations. I am concerned at Ms Follett's statement that there is no intention of reducing the number of public holidays. I hope that this does not mean that we are going to go to the highest common denominator in public holidays in Australia and end up adopting the number of public holidays of the State with the most. That would definitely be not in the best interests of business in the ACT, and I understand that that is not Ms Follett's intent either.

Progress continues to be slow in reconsidering intergovernmental relations and we continue to have overlap and waste.

Mr Berry: Like what?

MRS CARNELL: This is just a straight quote from the communique, Mr Berry. Access and accountability in government are desirable goals. The duplication and triplication of functions arise because other spheres of government seem not to be able to work together and certainly do not seem to be able to get on with the job. It is essential to define who is responsible for what and to provide the funding or revenue base to support that activity.

Mr Berry: What inane rubbish!

MRS CARNELL: I am interested that Mr Berry said that, because I was going to go on to comment that we have to sort out planning in the ACT. We must never end up with another situation like that on the hospice siting. Once and for all, it is essential that the Federal Government and the ACT Government get planning right. I would have thought that was something Mr Berry would have totally agreed with. Again, it is a situation that must be overcome in the interests of the ACT, and it must be overcome if we are to get the Kingston foreshore development up and running as we all know it should be.

The ACT has the potential to be a model for government in Australia. At least in the ACT we do not end up with the overlap of State and municipal functions. But to achieve this potential we must maximise our strengths, become outcomes orientated, stop empire building, minimise duplication within the ACT government sector, and form a real partnership with the private sector - fascinatingly, Madam Speaker, something that is in the 2020 vision for Canberra.

MR CONNOLLY (Attorney-General, Minister for Housing and Community Services and Minister for Urban Services) (8.58): Madam Speaker, I presume that we are debating the statement on the heads of government meeting, rather than 2020. Mrs Carnell may have got the wrong conclusion to the wrong speech. I was stirred to speak in this debate tonight because of the inane comments the Leader of the Opposition was making in relation to micro-economic reform and government trading enterprises in the ACT. Parrot-like, the Liberal Party says, "Competition, privatise, corporatise". It is a view of the world which is ideologically hidebound. It is a view of the world which says that an ideology will solve the problem. Interestingly, that criticism is the criticism that Liberals for years would throw at the Labor Party, but it is perfectly appropriate for us to throw that right back in your face. You are taking a simplistic and ideological view of the world and you are ignoring, or you are unaware of, the massive progress we have been making under this Government in turning around this Territory's trading enterprise sector.

Mrs Carnell: Where is the corporatisation? Where is the competition?

MR CONNOLLY: Mrs Carnell, turning around a trading enterprise and making it more efficient does not necessarily mean corporatising it. Corporatising was really the ideology of the 1980s. In a period through the early to mid 1980s in Australia, in the United States, in Canada, in Britain, we all fell in love with the entrepreneurs. We took the view that the entrepreneurs - the Bonds and the Skases, in the United States the Trumps, in Britain the Canadian property developers who were doing the big East Bank project which has collapsed - were the popular heroes. The view developed in public administration that one had only to ape the methodology of the private sector and magically things would be more efficient. I can recall during the last election campaign putting out a press release referring to Mr Humphries's magic pudding approach to ACTEW; where all you had to do was corporatise ACTEW and, like the magic pudding, it would continue to produce savings and produce dividends and produce money.

Mrs Carnell: Unfortunately, corporatising is not like that.

MR CONNOLLY: Corporatising is not like that, Mrs Carnell. Corporatising merely relates to the form of an enterprise, and the form means absolutely nothing in relation to its efficiency. What is significant, and I think you will read about this in the *Canberra Times* tomorrow, Mrs Carnell, is a report that has been released only this week looking at electricity and water authorities across Australia. That report finds that the two authorities that have done the best in terms of reducing costs to consumers are ACTEW and the Hunter Water Corporation.

Mr De Domenico: You would do a heck of a lot better if you corporatised.

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MR CONNOLLY: There we go. We almost had it there; but, once again, the ideology came in. The point is that the Hunter Water Corporation is held out, by those who take this simplistic view that corporatisation solves everyone's problems, as the model of a corporatised water authority because it was the first to be corporatised and it has gone the furthest. What is significant is that we retreated from your policy of corporatisation for ACTEW.

Mrs Carnell: Why?

MR CONNOLLY: Because we thought this was ideological claptrap. It was a nonsensical exercise to corporatise a natural monopoly supplier. However, when you had a government owned business which was competing with the private sector alongside four or five other identical businesses, there was no problem to corporatisation, so we maintained corporatising that type of enterprise. But a state monopoly, a monopoly supplier of essential services such as ACTEW, we thought there was no point in corporatising. It would have caused a lot of morale problems, a lot of anxiety, and a lot of cost, because a lot of consultants and management advisers get paid a lot of money for running around the country advising people on corporatising and a lot of lawyers make a lot of money from creating new corporate forms. But does it make any difference to the efficiency of the organisation? Not a whit, because ACTEW has performed the best.

Mrs Carnell: Did ACTEW want to be corporatised?

MR CONNOLLY: The then ACTEW board, the majority appointed by you lot, did.

Mr De Domenico: What about the current ACTEW board?

MR CONNOLLY: The now ACTEW board does not. The now ACTEW board is at one with Government policy, Mr De Domenico. The Hunter Water Corporation, held out as the model of what you can do with corporatisation, did well; but ACTEW did better. A statutory authority did better.

In relation to public transport, the report that was published by the Advance Bank, commissioned by Access Economics - who are not well-known supporters of the Labor Party, without suggesting that they have any particular political point of view - showed that the only government that had turned around the ever increasing ACTION deficit was this one. Our runs are on the board. We are achieving a \$10m reduction of the ACTION deficit over a three-year period. That amounts to about a 20 per cent reduction. The Industry Commission, and I have criticised them publicly before, said inanely, "Not fast enough". Mrs Carnell tonight says inanely, "Not fast enough". Mrs Carnell, you show me a public transport authority that has reduced its recurrent cost to the taxpayer by 20 per cent over three years. I challenge you to do that.

Mr Westende: Victoria - \$426 per family per annum this year.

MR CONNOLLY: That is what the Victorian Liberal Government now says. Let us just see what happens when that comes out through the Grants Commission, because there are a few sleights of hand that can be achieved in public transport, as I have identified. With a stroke of the pen I could reduce the deficit by \$7m and we could increase the education budget by \$7m by transferring school costs. It is a book entry; it is not about achieving real reform.

We are achieving real reform at a rate which has never been seen in this Territory - a rate which you people when you were in government were completely unable to achieve. You were a joke when you were in government. You were strong on the rhetoric, but when it came down to the action you were just a joke. You achieved nothing.

Madam Speaker, the ideology, "Let us privatise, let us corporatise, let us deregulate", of the Industry Commission, which Mrs Carnell so happily apes tonight, took another point in relation to the ACT when it was suggested that we should deregulate the taxi industry, that we should do away with licence fees. We indicated that that was not Government policy. I was most intrigued to see on Saturday that Bruce Baird, the New South Wales Liberal Transport Minister, said exactly the same thing as I did. He said, in effect, that a market is a lot more complex than the view of the world you get from reading a Micro-economics I textbook. You cannot just deregulate the taxi industry without causing massive disruption to a whole lot of small business people. Bruce Baird rejected the Industry Commission's recommendations in relation to the taxi industry just as strongly as I did.

This blinkered ideological view of the world from the Liberal Party is really a testament to their failure when they were in government. They had the chance when they were in government to achieve some real reform in the government trading enterprise sector. They conspicuously failed in their efforts there. Costs went up. The situation was getting out of hand. This Labor Government has taken a firm hand on the tiller. We have got our trading enterprises moving in the right direction. Mr Berry in question time today, to great guffaws from you opposite, demonstrated how ACTTAB is booming along as a statutory authority. ACTEW is achieving remarkable efficiencies and is continuing to deliver to the ACT ratepayer cheap water, electricity and sewerage. It is continuing to provide a dividend to ACT Government and is leading the country in reduction of costs. You do not have to corporatise or dabble in this ideology to achieve savings. You do it by hard work in government - something you lot were incapable of.

MR HUMPHRIES (9.07): Madam Speaker, I seek leave to speak again on this matter. I have already spoken on it.

Mr Berry: No more. We have had enough.

MADAM SPEAKER: Leave is not granted. Mr Humphries, I am advised that you have not yet spoken on this.

Mr Humphries: I thought I had spoken on it. I have a note saying that I have spoken on it.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please proceed.

MR HUMPHRIES: The Chief Minister spoke at length, when this paper was presented in June, about the heads of government meeting earlier in June and in particular about the implications of the Mabo decision for the ACT. It is worth reflecting on what has happened to that issue since that meeting of the heads of government, and in particular on how the position of the Labor governments, both federally and in the ACT, has changed since that time.

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Ms Follett: Rubbish!

MR HUMPHRIES: I quote some things Ms Follett said on the previous occasion:

... [as] a consequence of Commonwealth legislation, the implications of the Mabo decision for the ACT are not straightforward. It is very unlikely that existing residential, commercial or rural leases will be affected by a Mabo-style claim.

Subsequently there was a claim lodged by the Ngunnawal people in respect of the whole of the ACT and very large parts of surrounding New South Wales. The Chief Minister did not say that an Aboriginal claim would not be made; she said that it was unlikely to be successful. That point was consistently made by the Government, I admit, for some time. That was a primary reason for the Government at that early stage describing as scaremongering calls by the Liberal Party for action to be taken to validate existing titles in the ACT.

Mr Berry: Which they were - scandalous scaremongering.

MR HUMPHRIES: Let us be clear about this. That was the extent of the Liberal Party's demands, if you like, its calls, in this debate. Mr Berry might make other assertions, but he will not find us at any stage saying anything other than that the uncertainty created by Mabo demanded that the ACT Government, either by itself or in conjunction with the Federal Government, think about validating existing land titles in the ACT. Again and again, that was the contribution we made in this debate.

Mr Berry: Just scaremongering.

MR HUMPHRIES: Mr Berry says that it was scaremongering to demand that existing titles be validated. Strangely, in the light of Mr Berry's view, that is precisely what the Federal Government, and I take it the ACT Government at the same time, has decided to do - to legislate to validate existing titles.

Ms Follett: I said that from the start.

MR HUMPHRIES: If that was all you were saying - - -

Ms Follett: That is not all I was saying.

MR HUMPHRIES: That was certainly all we were saying, and in the circumstances you ought to have the good grace to apologise for having attacked the Liberal Party position on this question. We have been consistent in this matter. We said that the Mabo judgment by the High Court in 1992 raised issues in respect of the ACT which needed to be addressed and that the best way of addressing those issues was by validating existing titles in the ACT. The Chief Minister does not have the good grace to admit that that was sensible advice to offer to her Government. She does not have the good grace to acknowledge that the advice we offered at that stage is now being adopted by this Government and taken up.

Government members: Ha, ha!

MR HUMPHRIES: Those opposite laugh. I defy you to find where we have made a demand or a suggestion that has not subsequently been taken up by this Government in respect of Mabo. That is the challenge. We said from the outset that that was the appropriate course of action to take.

Mr Connolly: Mr Keating will get up tomorrow and say, "It was all Gary Humphries. Thank you very much".

MR HUMPHRIES: It was not only my call. There were plenty of people around Australia calling for that to happen. The Chief Minister of the ACT was notable by her exception to that. She was notable by saying to members of the media after the conference that she thought the Liberals' suggestions that there should be validating legislation was scaremongering. Those were her very words. But that is the position she has now taken - that there needs to be validating legislation.

I think the people of the ACT might reflect on the fact that the government of the day loudly proclaimed that there was no need for such legislation, that the suggestions that there could be any threat to title in the ACT - - -

Ms Follett: Tell the truth.

MR HUMPHRIES: The Chief Minister clearly said, as did her Attorney-General, who bought into the issue for some reason which was not clear - - -

Mr Berry: You would not know how to tell the truth, Gary.

MR HUMPHRIES: Madam Speaker, I think Mr Berry said that I was not telling the truth.

Mr Berry: No, I said that you would not know how to.

MR HUMPHRIES: I think that is the same thing, Madam Speaker. I would ask him to withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Berry, I think you should withdraw that.

Mr Berry: I will withdraw. He did not even get that right, Madam Speaker.

MR HUMPHRIES: The fact of life is that both Mr Connolly and Ms Follett did loudly accuse opponents of their position - not just us, I point out - by saying that calls for validating legislation in the ACT were premature and that the suggestions that native title might successfully be found in the ACT were unnecessary. Mr Connolly surely recalls having said that.

Whatever the element of doubt, it was obviously large enough to persuade the Prime Minister, and in turn his loyal ACT Chief Minister, to accept that that should be the case and promise to do just that. I hope that in future the rhetoric and the lip-service that is paid by members of the Labor Party to the need for a bipartisan approach on questions of Aboriginal affairs and the consequences of the Mabo decision might translate into an attempt to work out a successful approach that acknowledges that perhaps on some occasions we were right, and we were right from the beginning.

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MS FOLLETT (Chief Minister and Treasurer) (9.13), in reply: I thank members for their comments on this paper. The Council of Australian Governments was established with the aim of increasing cooperation amongst all Australian governments in the national interest. Despite that aim, I think it is inevitable that a gathering of all the heads of government in Australia will provide a forum for consideration of matters on which there will not always be agreement and on which there will be an element of tension from time to time. That has certainly been the case in relation to the High Court's ruling on Mabo.

There were a great many issues discussed at the June 1993 meeting of COAG. Members opposite have avoided mentioning any of the more successful issues that were resolved there, but they included matters such as reducing the number of ministerial councils from 45 to 21 - on the initiative of the ACT, I might add. I did not hear any congratulations flowing on that. Electricity reform was touched upon. Arrangements were put in place for the celebration of the centenary of Federation - something which surely will affect this Territory more than any other place. There was discussion on Commonwealth-State roles and responsibilities, eliminating duplication and so on. Nevertheless, Mabo was the most contentious issue discussed and it was the most challenging issue that had to be faced by COAG. That challenge remains with the Commonwealth Government, which is proposing to introduce its legislation next month.

I want to make a couple of comments on the Mabo issue, Madam Speaker. In my view, if ever an opposition has failed the test of leadership, it has been the Federal Opposition over the Mabo issue. They have completely failed to indicate any kind of cooperation, any kind of bipartisan approach on this issue. They have sought from the very start of the debate to follow a line that was divisive, that was aimed at - - -

Mr Humphries: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The debate is about the ACT, and the Federal Opposition is not part of this debate. It is about the heads of government meeting, and no member of the Federal Opposition was at that meeting. I suggest that it is not relevant for Ms Follett to talk about the Federal Opposition.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Humphries, the debate does allow discussion of Mabo, and it was a Commonwealth heads of government meeting, which would include the Federal Opposition in terms of authority.

MS FOLLETT: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I can understand why the Liberals are smarting. If ever there was a failure to demonstrate not only leadership but also a national interest, it was by the Federal coalition on this issue.

Mr De Domenico: Rubbish; absolute rubbish! You back-pedalled like you would not believe.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! The Chief Minister has the floor.

MS FOLLETT: I can understand Mr De Domenico totally losing his composure as I make those comments. Madam Speaker, I have only to ask members to compare and contrast the performances of the Prime Minister and Mr Reith on this matter.

Mr De Domenico: The Prime Minister has had more moves than the Hong Kong acrobatic troupe, I tell you.

MS FOLLETT: Again I say that members opposite are quite clearly extremely discomfited by this sort of debate, and well they might be. I believe that an opposition on an issue such as Mabo has a duty to the country to attempt to reach a national solution and not to use that issue in a divisive manner, in a manner that is designed to cause the greatest amount of uncertainty and upset to a range of groups within the community, and that has been the Federal coalition's role throughout.

It has also, although in a much smaller way, been Mr Humphries's role. At the outset on the Mabo issue Mr Humphries sought to cast the seeds of doubt. He also sought to say to the Canberra community, "What about your backyard?". That was precisely Mr Humphries's intention in approaching the issue in the way he did. What Mr Humphries has failed to say in his comments is the truth about what I said. I said from the very outset, right from day one, as Mr Humphries undoubtedly knows, that there is only the tiniest likelihood of any Mabo-style claim over the ACT succeeding. I also said - and Mr Humphries will remember that I said this - right from the outset that whatever action was necessary to secure ACT leases would be taken. He very conveniently forgot to mention that and has therefore conveyed a very incorrect and very improper impression of my approach on this issue. The Liberals' stance on Mabo has been to try to cause division, to try to cause confusion, to try to cause uncertainty. It is a disgraceful position, and I think history will judge them very harshly. The Federal coalition stands condemned for their actions on this issue.

I can say to members that the Prime Minister has sought the views of the ACT on the Mabo legislation and he has also sought the views of other jurisdictions, of industry groups, and of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. I was delighted to see on the television news this evening the Aboriginal groups in particular expressing their satisfaction with the Prime Minister's actions, their satisfaction with the view he is taking. The proposal from the Federal Government is very detailed and the ACT has still to consider its position, so I will not be commenting on that legislation in any detail this evening. I would like to say that the Commonwealth's desire to put in place a fair system that properly recognises native title - something some Liberal States have a problem with - and provides full security for people who hold grants of interest in land provided by governments in the past is very welcome, and it is certainly an approach that is supported by this Government.

I would like to raise a couple of other issues. Mr Connolly has addressed in eloquent detail the very unfortunate Liberal cant we heard from Mrs Carnell about corporatisation, privatisation, competition, and all the rest of the buzz words we get from the Liberals. What the Liberals will never acknowledge is that in the ACT some of our enterprises, such as ACTION buses, ACTEW and ACTTAB, are performing better and more efficiently than they ever have. They are not corporatised and they will not be. I know that the Liberals wish to sell them off. They have made that quite clear.

Mr Berry: No; only the profitable bits.

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MS FOLLETT: I beg your pardon; they wish to sell off only the profitable bits of those enterprises. They simply cannot see past their own ideology, to recognise when a good job is being done. They are blinded by ideology. I think it is regrettable that we get yet again the kind of vacuous ideological ravings we have heard from Liberal members opposite. The COAG meeting deserves better than that. The issues it addressed are very serious national issues. In COAG meetings they are addressed in a serious and businesslike way. If the Liberals opposite were ever to get the chance to attend one of these meetings, which seems highly unlikely, they would be a little chastened, I think, to see that the kind of ideological cant, the vacuous rhetoric, we have heard from them this evening has no place in this kind of forum. I will continue to report to the Assembly on further meetings of COAG, but I hope that in future I will get a better standard of debate from members opposite.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

HOUSEHOLDER SURVEY REPORT Ministerial Statement and Paper

Debate resumed from 26 August 1993, on motion by **Ms Follett:**

That the Assembly takes note of the papers.

MRS CARNELL (Leader of the Opposition) (9.23): Surveys, as we all know, can be exceedingly useful exercises. They can also be politically expedient. I think this is a good time to be talking about the 1993 ACT householder survey. The Chief Minister has already proudly declared that this survey and the 1991 survey were part of her ongoing commitment to community consultation. This is the second such survey conducted by this Government and, unless there are major changes, I think it should be the last. The Government should have at least reverted to its 1991 survey format if it were at all serious about hearing the views of Canberrans. The 1991 survey was four pages in length - two for general households and two for the Housing Trust tenants. The 1993 survey is only two pages in length, the other two pages being a letter from the Chief Minister and a very pretty photograph, but absolutely no place for householders to write what they really thought.

This latest householder survey is also far more blatantly political than was its 1991 predecessor. This year's questionnaire was clearly designed to minimise the number of adverse comments that could possibly be put in about government services. There were few open questions which could solicit any meaningful comments at all. Like the 1991 version, this survey report - - -

Mr Kaine: They wanted to know whether anybody had any dual-flush toilets.

MRS CARNELL: That is true. This survey responded to adverse results with blatant political statements which attempted to explain away any dissatisfaction. There is no indication either as to the cost of the 1993 survey. The 1991 survey was listed in the report itself as costing \$20,000. Why did we not publish the cost this time?

Ms Follett: Why did you not ask me?

MRS CARNELL: How much did it cost, Chief Minister? In the 1991 survey of ratepayers and Housing Trust tenants, it seems that the ACT Government did not like many of the comments it received from the community about services; so much so that it did not make the same mistake this time around by letting Canberrans have too much to say - unless you call ticking a box consultation.

I would like to look briefly at topics surveyed and compare them with the Follett Government's latest effort in community consultation, and consultation where it really counts, and that is the ACT budget. Like that awful game show *Family Feud*, it seems that, when it comes to consultation, what you want ain't necessarily what you get, especially with this Government. In the area of the housing survey, we found that eight out of every 10 dwellings were probably owner occupied. "Well", thought Ms Follett, "that is good. Now we will put up rates. This is going to be a great revenue raising exercise". So up go rates by 9 per cent, or \$55 per year. Is there anything in the budget or in any of the documents Ms Follett has put forward of recent days that actually helps these people? No, just things to cost them more.

In the area of energy use, the report said that electricity was the most popular source of energy. Were there any questions about diesel fuel use? No, there were no questions about diesel fuel use.

Mr De Domenico: But no-one uses diesel fuel, according to the Chief Minister.

MRS CARNELL: Obviously the Chief Minister did not want to know that. What happens in the budget? Up goes the price, off comes the exemption for diesel fuel, specially for home heating, and 3,000 homes in Canberra end up with an extra bill of up to \$140 per year. On the subject of water use, the survey said that Canberrans have a high use of water per head of population. So what happens? We squeeze ACTEW for another \$5m per year. That obviously has to be a good, sensible way to go.

The questions on ACTION buses were some of the most interesting you could imagine. It was interesting to see how you could interpret survey results in such a remarkable way, how you could suggest by the questions in this document that 60 per cent of households used ACTION buses. That is certainly the truth, but it did not say how often.

Mr Westende: Once a year.

MRS CARNELL: Once a year. How useful can that sort of survey question be, Madam Speaker? It is absolutely useless. What response do we see from the Government to this supposed high use - and I say "supposed" - of ACTION buses? What happens in the mini-budget? Up go ACTION bus fares by nearly 6 per cent. Up goes the cost of vehicle registration by 3 per cent. It is on the subject of health services that I found some of the most interesting figures. I know that this must have hurt Mr Berry greatly, but it was very interesting to see these results. It was interesting particularly to compare Calvary Hospital and Woden Valley Hospital. The survey results suggested that for patients at Woden - - -

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Mrs Carnell, it is 9.30 pm. I propose the question:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Petrol Levy

MR HUMPHRIES (9.30): Members opposite seem to have convinced themselves that when the Liberal Party moved last Wednesday the disallowance motion dealing with the increase in the petrol levy the ACT was going to lose \$26m a year. I know that it is a good story and I hate to shatter their lovely line, but I would direct members' attention to the Subordinate Laws Act, section 6, subsection (9), which states:

Where -

- (a) a subordinate law or a provision of a subordinate law ... ceases to have effect under this section -

that is, it is disallowed -

and

- (b) the relevant law repealed, in whole or in part, a previous law that was in force immediately before the relevant law commenced -

in other words, exactly the situation where an increase in the petrol levy was being disallowed -

the previous law is revived from and including the date on which the relevant law ceased to have effect, as if the relevant law had not been made.

I can see that those opposite are very disappointed in me for having said that. I have given you a week to have some fun. I hope that you have enjoyed the last week.

Mr George Snow

MR LAMONT (9.32): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on the matter of the recent resignation and imminent departure of that erstwhile economic adviser to the ACT Government, Mr Snow, who has made criticisms about what he says has been the Government's failure to listen to his advice. Let me say quite honestly that I come not to praise Mr Snow but, indeed, to bury him. Mr Snow is chair of the ACT Chamber of Commerce.

Mr Humphries: No; wrong.

Mr De Domenico: Canberra Business Council.

MR LAMONT: I am pleased that at least the Liberal Party are unaware, as are most of the rest of Canberra, about the history of Mr Snow. If you go back before the Business Council was operating in the ACT, Mr Snow was a very active member of that organisation.

Mr Humphries: You said that he was president.

MR LAMONT: My understanding is that he was. I am prepared to stand corrected on that matter. I could also understand why you would not want him. Mr Snow is a member of the EPACT committee, a millionaire sailor and equestrian devotee - Mr Snow, the Liberal Party's man of the people. This is the same Mr Snow who believed that the ACT should savagely cut its welfare spending. Mr Snow was apparently unhappy with the life of the millionaire in Canberra and will now spend much of his time in Sydney. Mr Snow has snubbed those opposite. None of them, as far as I know, owns a yacht or an aeroplane or their own golf course. Plato said, "Wealth is the parent of luxury and indolence".

In Sydney, one presumes, Mr Snow will feel more at home with the members of his millionaire set, who pontificate about the plight of the poor in between the smoked salmon and the Bollinger.

Mr Westende: What is wrong with being a millionaire?

MR LAMONT: It may well be that the poet Horace was thinking of Mr Snow when he wrote those immortal lines, "Magnus inter opes inops" - a pauper in the midst of wealth. Typically, the Chief Minister, in my view, has been too polite about Mr Snow. I do not think the ACT Government, or the people in the ACT, will miss Mr Snow's advice. It was the same economic bilge that earlier this year was resoundingly rejected by the people not only of this country but specifically of this city.

I say farewell to George. I say farewell to Mr Snow. I say farewell to Mr Snow, with his home at Point Piper. I say farewell to Mr Snow, with his outdoor house and his indoor harbour. I say farewell to Mr Snow when he launches *Brindabella II*, for a not inconsiderable amount of money. Above all, I say farewell to Mr Snow, who leaves Canberra an extremely wealthy man, a man who has operated his business in the economic circumstances that prevail in this town, and has the audacity, almost on the day he leaves, to say, "I have had enough. I am going to spit the dummy and now I am going to walk out".

That does not apply to the Capital Property Group. A number of comments were passed in the article in the *Canberra Times* about the Capital Property Group. I am pleased to have received from Mr T.M. Snow the following letter:

It was of great concern to me to read, in this morning's paper, comments made by my brother concerning your administration.

My concern stems from the fact that the comments he made are his own personal comments and not the views of Capital Property Trust, its manager or Trustee. George is not the managing director of Capital Property Management Limited or, indeed, a shareholder and his views are not necessarily those of the management company, the Trust or Trustee.

If we have any position or views we wish to put to you, as the management company or the Trust, I will be the person doing it and I won't convey those views to you through the *Canberra Times*.

Would that George Snow had the tenacity of his brother.

Mr George Snow

MRS CARNELL (Leader of the Opposition) (9.37): Madam Speaker, I feel it necessary, very briefly, to make a comment. It is really unfortunate that a personal attack has been made on somebody who has made a lot of money in Canberra, but has also created a lot of jobs in this city.

Mr Westende: And paid a lot of taxes.

MRS CARNELL: As Mr Westende said, he has paid a lot of taxes in this city. To take this opportunity to make those sorts of comments on the basis of a letter is very unfortunate.

Mr George Snow

MR MOORE (9.38): Madam Speaker, I feel that it is appropriate to make a small comment on an interjection earlier from Mr Westende, "What is wrong with being a millionaire?". There is nothing wrong with being a millionaire, of course, and I do not think anybody would find a problem with somebody being a millionaire or working towards it. That actually indicated a lack of understanding of what Mr Lamont was going on about. The thing that was wrong was not the hard work and the entrepreneurship and all those positive things about our society, where somebody has been able to make a great deal of money through hard work and good business. That is a positive thing. The difficult thing is when somebody who has got to that position and used the way this society operates turns round and says, from a position of that kind of power or privilege, that, effectively, we ought to be putting more taxes on poorer people, or we ought to be pulling money out of poorer people and delivering it to the wealthier. That is what is wrong with that situation, although Mr Lamont did not put it in those words.

The letter he tabled the other day, which I read and which was effectively reported in the *Canberra Times* the following day, indicated quite clearly that what was desired by this millionaire was a transfer of money out of the government pocket into his pocket, for example, by removing payroll tax. The exact effect of removing payroll tax is that revenue, instead of being spread evenly and used, is put back into the pockets of those who are already wealthy. That is the point in what is being said this evening. It is not a case of what is wrong with being a millionaire. There is absolutely nothing wrong with being a millionaire, and there is nothing at all wrong with the notion of people working hard to do well in their own business. That is something I admire. I feel very positively about people who are prepared to do the kind of work necessary to be successful in business. It is something that we all accept as a normal part of the way our society operates.

Mr George Snow

MR CORNWELL (9.40): I cannot let that pass uncommented upon, Madam Speaker. Mr Moore's statement in relation to Mr Snow is quite outrageous. I found the comment by Mr Lamont about Mr Snow being a millionaire quite offensive because it was used in a critical sense. There is no question in my mind about that. It was a classic case of envy, as the spleen was vented across this chamber against a man who has done much for this city, who has brought integrity, I might add, and some fame to the place with his yacht *Brindabella*. Mr Westende was quite correct. It is not *Brindabella II*; it is still *Brindabella*. He has sold the yacht, but he has retained the name.

Mrs Grassby: He has not sold the yacht. You got that wrong, too.

MR CORNWELL: The problem is this, Mrs Grassby: That is as inaccurate as Mr Lamont was in relation to the name of the vessel and the retention of that name. I would suggest that the rest of the information he gave us is equally incorrect. I do want to read into *Hansard* some of the comments made in Mr Snow's letter, because it has no reference at all to what Mr Moore might like to think, again venting his envy and spleen against a man who has done much for this place. I quote:

Prior to self government the Business Council prepared a "*Budget Blueprint*" paper, which established the opportunity for the ACT city state to provide a fiscal environment distinctly different from elsewhere in Australia, which would be one characterised by moderate taxation and a disciplined expenditure and low debt. Sadly, this unique opportunity is now being squandered.

A second paragraph states:

Put simply, I believe the ACT Government is hostage to various interest groups in the community who will not allow it to make any meaningful reduction in expenditure levels and prefers to force on the community an increased revenue burden and long term debt.

A third paragraph states:

I believe the Economic Priorities Advisory Committee of the ACT had the possibility of an effective role in advising Government, of improving its fiscal position, but its advice has been ignored and I see no reason why I should continue to commit time and enthusiasm to a cause that is no longer considered relevant by the present Government. Why talk if no-one listens?

This is the man Mr Moore suggests was trying to turn things to his own advantage. I think the evidence speaks for itself. He was attempting to show that this city has a better way of getting back on its feet, that the opportunities could be created here in a much better fashion if this Labor Government would stop being hostage to fortune and hostage to certain special interest groups in this community. I believe that Mr George Snow has done a service to the community by pointing this out, and I believe that his letter will live as an indictment of your Government, Chief Minister, for the next 18 months of your sojourn here.

Mr George Snow

MR WESTENDE (9.44): Madam Speaker, I was not going to speak on the adjournment, but I cannot let this opportunity go by without pointing out to those members that disagree with Mr Snow that the Snow Foundation has given hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations to worthy causes in this town. I point out to members that disagree with Mr George Snow that you can do that only if you can run a profitable operation. Mr Snow's brother is the chairman of the Capital Property Trust, and some 20,000 shareholders share in the wealth they created. When I was a very small public company and had 420 shareholders I had 420 very happy people. So have the Snows. Not only have the Snows made a lot of money, and they do not deny that, but they have shared it with those 20,000 other shareholders. It should never be forgotten that you have to have leaders. Without leaders, there are no followers. Without followers, especially followers that can make money - - -

Mr Connolly: When are you people over on that side of the house going to wake up to that?

MR WESTENDE: My dear friend, I had woken up to that long before you were even dreamt of. We had shareholders in a previous organisation that I belonged to and they were - - -

Mr Berry: Was that the Guide Dogs for the Blind - the one you and young Tony brought unstuck?

MR WESTENDE: Just a minute. That Mr Wright cannot run a company is not my fault. I resigned on the day he took over and in 18 months he sent it broke. I will tell you: When we took it over again and it was losing \$3,000 a day, I could not make donations to charity. My donation to charity was to 22 employees who would have been out on the street. Do not ever forget that.

Mr Berry: What about John Louttit? Why did you sack him? Why did you sack Mr Louttit?

MR WESTENDE: I did not sack Mr Louttit.

Mr Berry: You did sack him. Everybody knows that you sacked him.

MR WESTENDE: I did not sack Mr Louttit. I am telling you that when you are losing \$3,000 a day you cannot make donations to charity or to the Canberra Philharmonic Society or whatever. Only a profitable organisation can make those donations. I am not ashamed, nor do I resile from the fact, that I had enough faith in those 22 employees to know that they, with me, would get us out of the hole. We were a listed public company and, as such, you are always subject to takeover. We were taken over, which I regret to this very day; but at least not one of my shareholders lost any money. I once again point out to those people opposite that it is only people who make money who can share it with the less privileged, and most of them do so in one form or another.

Mr George Snow

MR BERRY (Minister for Health, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Sport) (9.48): Madam Speaker, I have a great deal of admiration for the sterling defence of George Snow that was put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. All I would say, very briefly, is that I wish that she had used the same logic in relation to her behaviour over Charles Wright. It was a shameful attack on somebody who made no attack on this Government or on the Opposition. Mrs Carnell will long be blamed and found guilty for what she did to Stan Aliprandi when he tried to help the pharmacy industry in the ACT by contributing via the Pharmacy Board. Mrs Carnell attacked him viciously. I just wish that she had used the same logic in relation to those two people.

Mr George Snow

MR DE DOMENICO (9.48): Madam Speaker, we have heard the wonderful sentiments expressed by Mr Lamont, who stood up and read a letter from Mr Terry Snow, and we heard also Mr Berry's latest comments. I can recall an evening not so long ago when Mr Berry, in his capacity as Minister for Sport, was smiling gleefully, shaking Mr George Snow by the hand and offering him a trophy or a cup. His picture was in the paper, smiling with Mr Snow, and saying, "Well done, Georgie boy; you have just won the Sydney to Hobart yacht race. There was I, Wayne Berry, running alongside you issuing instructions". That is the impression Mr Berry gave.

It was all right for Mr Berry to get the kudos from George Snow winning the Sydney to Hobart yacht race. Guess who sent a telegram on behalf of the people of the ACT. There it was; the Chief Minister: "Congratulations, Mr Snow. Well done, Georgie boy. What a wonderful thing you have done for the Canberra community".

Mr Humphries: They changed their tune, didn't they?

MR DE DOMENICO: Now tonight, they change their tune. People opposite say, "What has he done for the community?". Mr Moore said, "What has he done for the community?".

Mr Moore: No, I did not.

MR DE DOMENICO: Go and talk to the Open Family Foundation. Go and talk to all the other charities.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Perhaps if there was a bit of order, Mr De Domenico, you would not have to shout.

MR DE DOMENICO: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I like shouting when I get passionate over issues. Where were the calls of "Well done, Mr Snow" for all the money that Mr Westende alluded to that had been given and will continue to be given to literally hundreds of charities in this town? Where is the kudos for the employment of so many people in the Capital Property Group?

Mr Lamont: Congratulations, Terry! To the chairman of the trust, congratulations!

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MR DE DOMENICO: Where is the kudos for running the most successful property trust in the country? Mr Lamont says, "Congratulations, Terry". What about the times Mr Lamont has waxed lyrical in praise of Mr George Snow? He has done that plenty of times. But no, he has changed his tune tonight, has he not, because Mr Snow happened to disagree with the doings of this Government. And the doings are very easy; you can read them on the back of a postage stamp. This Government has done nothing. Mr George Snow was saying, as hundreds and hundreds of other business people are saying, "You have done nothing. You have said a lot, but you have done nothing".

For Mr Lamont to stand up here and say what he said tonight is utter humbug. He said, "On the one hand, if you can win the Sydney to Hobart yacht race for us, by gee, you are a good fellow and I will slap you on the back; but, if I happen to disagree with what you are doing in terms of the Government, I will rip you apart". That is the mentality this Government has. Anybody who is successful, anybody who is a tall poppy, rip them down. It is not okay to do anything that is good for this Territory. Rip them down.

Mr Berry: When did that happen to you, Tony?

MR DE DOMENICO: Mr Berry laughs. Okay, you can keep laughing at me; but the reality is - through you, Madam Speaker - that your comments are all humbug. The property trust and George Snow have done more to employ people in this town than you ever will. You rip them all up. All you do is make that waiting list longer and longer. You cost us money. He pays his tax bills, unlike some of the people that you stick on some of your boards. He turns up at the board meetings, unlike some of the people you stick on your boards. All you have is numbers in the left-wing caucus. You run this town. We now know why it is losing money, Mr Berry - through you, Madam Speaker. It will continue to lose money. You are a political pyromaniac. Well done, George Snow!

Adjournment Debate Speech

MS ELLIS (9.52): Madam Speaker, I would like to announce in this adjournment debate that, because of the appalling behaviour of quite a number of members of this place tonight, a speech of quite good community interest I wished to make I will make tomorrow evening. I think it is appalling.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Assembly adjourned at 9.53 pm