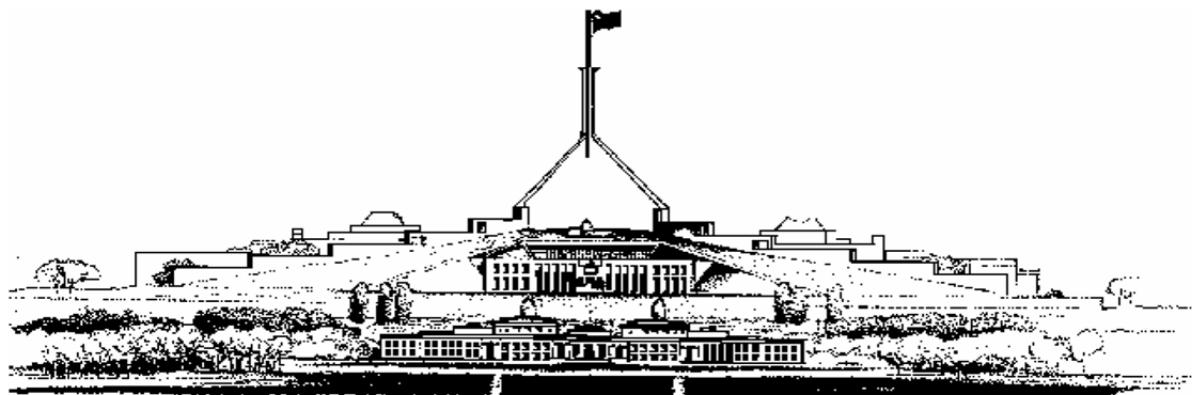




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



House of Representatives

Official Hansard

No. 159, 1988
Tuesday, 16 February 1988

THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SECOND PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION—SECOND PERIOD

Governor-General

His Excellency the Right Honourable Sir Ninian Martin Stephen, a Member of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, Knight of the Order of Australia, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George, Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order, Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Force.

House of Representatives Officeholders

Speaker—The Honourable Joan Child

Chairman of Committees—Mr Leo Boyce McLeay

Deputy Chairmen of Committees—Mr Cecil Allen Blanchard,

Mr David Bruce Cowan, Mrs Elaine Elizabeth Darling,

the Honourable James Donald Mathieson Dobie, Mr Ronald Frederick Edwards,

Mr John Barry Mildren, Mr Percival Clarence Millar,

Mr John Graham Mountford, Mr Allen Charles Rocher and Mr Philip Maxwell Ruddock

Leader of the House—The Honourable Kim Christian Beazley

Leader of the Opposition—The Honourable John Winston Howard

Deputy Leader of the Opposition—The Honourable Andrew Sharp Peacock

Manager of Opposition Business—The Honourable Wallace Clyde Fife

House of Representatives Party Leaders

Leader of the Australian Labor Party—The Honourable Robert James Lee Hawke, AC

Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party—The Honourable Lionel Frost Bowen

Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia—The Honourable John Winston Howard

Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia—The Honourable Andrew Sharp Peacock

Leader of the National Party of Australia—The Right Honourable Ian McCahon Sinclair

Deputy Leader of the National Party of Australia—Mr Bruce Lloyd

Members of the House of Representatives

Member	Division	Party	Member	Division	Party
Adermann, Hon. Albert	Evan Fairfax, Qld	NP	Gayler, John	Leichhardt, Qld	ALP
Aldred, Kenneth James	Bruce, Vic.	LP	Gear, George	Canning, WA	ALP
Andrew, John Neil	Wakefield, SA	LP	Goodluck, Bruce	Franklin, Tas.	LP
Baldwin, Peter Jeremy	Sydney, NSW	ALP	Gorman, Russell Neville	Greenway, NSW	ALP
Beale, Julian Howard	Deakin, Vic.	LP	Joseph		
Beazley, Hon. Kim Christian	Swan, WA	ALP	Grace, Edward Laurence	Fowler, NSW	ALP
Beddall, David Peter	Rankin, Qld	ALP	Griffiths, Alan Gordon	Maribyrnong, Vic.	ALP
Bilney, Gordon Neil	Kingston, SA	ALP	Hall, Raymond Steele	Boothby, SA	LP
Blanchard, Cecil Allen	Moore, WA	ALP	Halverson, Robert George,	Casey, Vic.	LP
Blewett, Hon. Neal	Bonython, SA	ALP	OBE		
Blunt, Charles William	Richmond, NSW	NP	Hand, Hon. Gerard Leslie	Melbourne, Vic.	ALP
Bowen, Hon. Lionel Frost	Kingsford-Smith, NSW	ALP	Harvey, Elizabeth Robyn	Hawker, SA	ALP
Braithwaite, Raymond Allen	Dawson, Qld	NP	Hawke, Hon. Robert James	Wills, Vic.	ALP
Brown, Hon. John Joseph	Parramatta, NSW	ALP	Lee, AC		
Brown, Hon. Neil Anthony, QC	Menzies, Vic.	LP	Hawker, David Peter		
Brown, Robert James	Charlton, NSW	ALP	Maxwell	Wannon, Vic.	LP
Brumby, John Mansfield	Bendigo, Vic.	ALP	Hayden, Hon. William	Oxley, Qld	ALP
Burr, Maxwell Arthur	Lyons, Tas.	LP	George		
Cadman, Alan Glyndwr	Mitchell, NSW	LP	Hewson, Dr John Robert	Wentworth, NSW	LP
Cameron, Donald Milner	Moreton, Qld	LP	Hicks, Noel Jeffrey	Riverina-Darling, NSW	NP
Cameron, Ewen Colin	Indi, Vic.	LP	Holding, Hon. Allan Clyde	Melbourne Ports, Vic.	ALP
Cameron, Ian Milne Dixon	Maranoa, Qld	NP	Hollis, Colin	Throsby, NSW	ALP
Campbell, Graeme	Kalgoorlie, WA	ALP	Howard, Hon. John Winston	Bennelong, NSW	LP
Carlton, Hon. James Joseph	Mackellar, NSW	LP	Howe, Hon. Brian Leslie	Batman, Vic.	ALP
Charles, David Ernest	Isaacs, Vic.	ALP	Humphreys, Hon. Benjamin	Griffith, Qld	ALP
Charlesworth, Dr Richard Ian	Perth, WA	ALP	Charles		
Child, Hon. Joan	Henty, Vic.	ALP	Hunt, Hon. Ralph James	Gwydir, NSW	NP
Chynoweth, Robert Leslie	Dunkley, Vic.	ALP	Dunnet		
Cleeland, Peter Robert	McEwen, Vic.	ALP	Jakobsen, Carolyn Anne	Cowan, WA	ALP
Cobb, Michael Roy	Parkes, NSW	NP	Jenkins, Henry Alfred	Scullin, Vic.	ALP
Cohen, Hon. Barry	Robertson, NSW	ALP	Johns, Gary Thomas	Petrie, Qld	ALP
Connolly, David Miles	Bradfield, NSW	LP	Jones, Hon. Barry Owen	Lalor, Vic.	ALP
Courtice, Brian William	Hinkler, Qld	ALP	Jull, David Francis	Fadden, Qld	LP
Cowan, David Bruce	Lyne, NSW	NP	Katter, Hon. Robert Cummin	Kennedy, Qld	NP
Crawford, Mary Catherine	Forde, Qld	ALP	Keating, Hon. Paul John	Blaxland, NSW	ALP
Cross, Manfred Douglas	Brisbane, Qld	ALP	Kelly, Hon. Roslyn Joan	Canberra, ACT	ALP
Cunningham, Barry Thomas	McMillan, Vic.	ALP	Kent, Lewis	Hotham, Vic.	ALP
Darling, Elaine Elizabeth	Lilley, Qld	ALP	Kerin, Hon. John Charles	Werriwa, NSW	ALP
Dawkins, Hon. John Sydney	Fremantle, WA	ALP	Kerr, Duncan James	Denison, Tas.	ALP
Dobie, Hon. James Donald Mathieson	Cook, NSW	LP	Klugman, Dr Richard Emanuel	Prospect, NSW	ALP
Downer, Alexander John Gosse	Mayo, SA	LP	Lamb, Anthony Hamilton	Streeton, Vic.	ALP
Dubois, Stephen Cairfield	St George, NSW	ALP	Langmore, John Vance	Fraser, ACT	ALP
Duffy, Hon. Michael John	Holt, Vic.	ALP	Lavarch, Michael Hugh	Fisher, Qld	ALP
Duncan, Hon. Peter	Makin, SA	ALP	Lee, Michael John	Dobell, NSW	ALP
Edwards, Dr Harold Raymond	Berowra, NSW	LP	Lindsay, Eamon John, RFD	Herbert, Qld	ALP
Edwards, Ronald Frederick	Stirling, WA	ALP	Lloyd, Bruce	Murray, Vic.	NP
Fatin, Wendy Frances	Brand, WA	ALP	McArthur, Fergus Stewart	Corangamite, Vic.	LP
Fife, Hon. Wallace Clyde	Hume, NSW	LP	McGauran, Peter John	Gippsland, Vic.	NP
Fischer, Timothy Andrew	Farrer, NSW	NP	McHugh, Jeannette	Phillip, NSW	ALP
Fisher, Peter Stanley	Mallee, Vic.	NP	MacKellar, Hon. Michael	Warringah, NSW	LP
Fitzgibbon, Eric John	Hunter, NSW	ALP	John Randal		
Free, Ross Vincent	Lindsay, NSW	ALP	McLeay, Leo Boyce	Grayndler, NSW	ALP
			McVeigh, Hon. Daniel	Groom, Qld	NP
			Thomas		



Members of the House of Representatives—*continued*

Member	Division	Party	Member	Division	Party
Macphee, Hon. Ian Malcolm	Goldstein, Vic.	LP	Shack, Peter Donald	Tangney, WA	LP
Martin, Stephen Paul	Macarthur, NSW	ALP	Sharp, John Randall	Gilmore, NSW	NP
Mildren, John Barry	Ballarat, Vic.	ALP	Shipton, Roger Francis	Higgins, Vic.	LP
Miles, Christopher Gordon	Braddon, Tas.	LP	Simmons, David William	Calare, NSW	ALP
Millar, Percival Clarence	Wide Bay, Qld	NP	Sinclair, Rt Hon. Ian	New England, NSW	NP
Milton, Peter	La Trobe, Vic.	ALP	McMahon		
Moore, Hon. John Colinton	Ryan, Qld	LP	Smith, Warwick Leslie	Bass, Tas.	LP
Morris, Allan Agapitos	Newcastle, NSW	ALP	Snow, James Henry	Eden-Monaro, NSW	ALP
Morris, Hon. Peter Frederick	Shortland, NSW	ALP	Snowdon, Warren Edward	Northern Territory	ALP
Mountford, John Graham	Banks, NSW	ALP	Spender, John Michael, QC	North Sydney, NSW	LP
Nehl, Garry Barr	Cowper, NSW	NP	Staples, Hon. Peter Richard	Jagajaga, Vic.	ALP
O'Keefe, Neil Patrick	Burke, Vic.	ALP	Sullivan, Kathryn Jean	Moncrieff, Qld	LP
O'Neil, Lloyd Reginald	Grey, SA	ALP	Theophanous, Dr Andrew	Calwell, Vic.	ALP
Terrance			Charles		
Peacock, Hon. Andrew Sharp	Kooyong, Vic.	LP	Tickner, Robert Edward	Hughes, NSW	ALP
Porter, James Robert	Barker, SA	LP	Tuckey, Charles Wilson	O'Connor, WA	LP
Pratt, Mike Philip	Adelaide, SA	LP	Uren, Hon. Thomas	Reid, NSW	ALP
Price, Leo Roger Spurway	Chifley, NSW	ALP	Webster, Alasdair Paine	Macquarie, NSW	LP
Prosser, Geoffrey Daniel	Forrest, WA	LP	West, Hon. Stewart John	Cunningham, NSW	ALP
Punch, Hon. Gary Francis	Barton, NSW	ALP	White, Peter Nicholson	McPherson, Qld	LP
Reith, Peter Keaston	Flinders, Vic.	LP	Duckett, MC		
Robinson, Hon. Ian Louis	Page, NSW	NP	Willis, Hon. Ralph	Gellibrand, Vic.	ALP
Rocher, Allan Charles	Curtin, WA	LP	Wilson, Hon. Ian Bonython	Sturt, SA	LP
Ruddock, Philip Maxwell	Dundas, NSW	LP	Cameron		
Saunderson, John	Aston, Vic.	ALP	Woods, Dr Robert Leslie	Lowe, NSW	LP
Scholes, Hon. Gordon Glen	Corio, Vic.	ALP	Wooldridge, Dr Michael	Chisholm, Vic.	LP
Denton			Richard Lewis		
Sciaccia, Con	Bowman, Qld	ALP	Wright, Keith Webb	Capricornia, Qld	ALP
Scott, John Lyden	Hindmarsh, SA	ALP			

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NP—National Party of Australia

Third Hawke Ministry

*Prime Minister	The Honourable Robert James Lee Hawke, AC
*Deputy Prime Minister, Attorney-General and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Commonwealth-State Relations	The Honourable Lionel Frost Bowen
*Leader of the Government in the Senate and Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce	Senator the Honourable John Norman Button
*Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Minister for Transport and Communications	Senator the Honourable Gareth John Evans, QC
*Treasurer	
*Minister for Finance	The Honourable Paul John Keating
*Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade	Senator the Honourable Peter Alexander Walsh
*Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Public Service Matters	The Honourable William George Hayden The Honourable Ralph Willis
*Minister for Employment, Education and Training	The Honourable John Sydney Dawkins
*Minister for Defence, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the House	The Honourable Kim Christian Beazley
*Minister for Primary Industries and Energy	
*Minister for Social Security	The Honourable John Charles Kerin
*Minister for Administrative Services	The Honourable Brian Leslie Howe
*Minister for Community Services and Health	The Honourable Stewart John West
*Minister for Trade Negotiations, Minister Assisting the Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce and Minister Assisting the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy	The Honourable Neal Blewett The Honourable Michael John Duffy
*Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories	
*Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Multicultural Affairs	Senator the Honourable Graham Frederick Richardson
Minister for Transport and Communications Support, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister and Minister Assisting the Treasurer	The Honourable Allan Clyde Holding
Minister for Justice	
Minister for Science, Customs and Small Business	The Honourable Peter Frederick Morris
Minister for Veterans' Affairs	
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs	Senator the Honourable Michael Carter Tate
Minister for Home Affairs, Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport and Communications and Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate	The Honourable Barry Owen Jones
Minister for Housing and Aged Care	
Minister for Employment and Education Services	The Honourable Benjamin Charles Humphreys
Minister for Defence Science and Personnel	The Honourable Gerard Leslie Hand
Minister for Local Government and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women	Senator the Honourable Robert Francis Ray
Minister for Resources	
Minister for the Arts and Territories	The Honourable Peter Richard Staples
Minister for Consumer Affairs and Minister Assisting the Treasurer for Prices	The Honourable Peter Duncan
*Minister in the Cabinet	The Honourable Roslyn Joan Kelly Senator the Honourable Margaret Reynolds
	Senator the Honourable Peter Francis Salmon Cook
	The Honourable Gary Francis Punch
	Senator the Honourable Nick Bolkus

THE COMMITTEES OF THE SESSION

FIRST SESSION: SECOND PERIOD

STANDING COMMITTEES

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS—Mr Blanchard (*Chairman*), Mr Andrew, Mr I. M. D. Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Connolly, Mr Cross, Mr Gayler, Mr Hollis, Mr Miles, Mr Snowden and Mr Tickner.

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS—Mr O'Keeffe (*Chairman*), Mr Blunt, Mr Cadman, Mr Connolly, Mr Dubois, Ms Fatin, Mrs Harvey, Mr Johns, Mr Katter, Ms McHugh, Mr Sciacca and Mr Wilson (Mr T. A. Fisher to serve on committee during consideration of inquiry into counselling for Vietnam veterans).

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING—Mr Brumby (*Chairman*), Mr Cowan, Ms Fatin, Mr Free, Mr Gear, Ms Jakobsen, Mr Price, Mr Prosser, Mr Robinson, Mrs Sullivan and Dr Woods.

ENVIRONMENT, RECREATION AND THE ARTS—Mr Milton (*Chairman*), Dr Charlesworth, Mr Chynoweth, Mr Dobie, Mr R. F. Edwards, Mr P. S. Fisher, Mr Jenkins, Mr Lamb, Ms McHugh, Mr MacKellar, Mr Sharp and Mr Webster.

FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION—Mr Martin (*Chairman*), Mr Braithwaite, Dr Charlesworth, Mr Cobb, Mr Courtice, Mr Gear, Dr Hewson, Mr Jenkins, Mr McArthur, Mr Saunderson, Mr Simmons and Mr Wilson.

HOUSE—Madam Speaker, Mr Goodluck, Mr Hollis, Mr Katter, Mr Martin, Mr Price and Mrs Sullivan.

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY—Mr Beddall (*Chairman*), Mr Baldwin, Mr Cunningham, Mr Grace, Mr Hawker, Mr Hunt, Mr Lloyd, Mr McArthur, Mr Mildren, Mr A. A. Morris, Dr Theophanous and Dr Wooldridge.

LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS—Mr Griffiths (*Chairman*), Mr Adermann, Mr Charles, Mr Cleeland, Mr Kerr, Mr McGauran, Mr Moore, Mr Reith, Mr Ruddock, Mr Scholes and Mr Tickner.

LIBRARY—Madam Speaker, Mr Cross, Ms Jakobsen, Mr Pratt, Mr Robinson, Mr Smith and Mr Wright.

MEMBERS' INTERESTS—Dr Klugman (*Chairman*), Mr Adermann, Mr D. M. Cameron, Mr Kent, Mr Lindsay, Mr Ruddock and Mr Scott.

PRIVILEGES—Mr Gear (*Chairman*), the Leader of the House or his nominee, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition or his nominee, Mr N. A. Brown, Mr D. M. Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Cleeland, Mr Kerr, Mr Millar, Mr Reith and Mr Tickner.

PROCEDURE—Mr Mountford (*Chairman*), Mr D. M. Cameron, Mr E. C. Cameron, Mr R. F. Edwards, Mr Lamb, Mr Lindsay, Mr Millar and Mr Scholes.

PUBLICATIONS—Mr Jenkins (*Chairman*), Mr Blanchard, Mr Brumby, Dr H. R. Edwards, Mr Nehl, Mr Sawford and Mr Taylor.

SELECTION COMMITTEE—Mr McLeay (*Chairman*), Mr D. M. Cameron, Mr E. C. Cameron, Mr Cunningham, Mr Hicks, Mr Lamb, Mr MacKellar, Mr Millar, Mr Mountford, Mr Snowdon and Mr Tickner.

TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE—Mr Saunderson (*Chairman*), Mr Blunt, Mr N. A. Brown, Mr Downer, Mr T. A. Fischer, Mr Gorman, Mr Halverson, Mr Hollis, Mr Langmore, Mr O'Neil, Mr Price and Mr Scott (Mr Snow to serve on committee during consideration of any inquiry into proposals for modification or variation of the plan of layout of the city of Canberra and its environs).

JOINT STATUTORY COMMITTEES

BROADCASTING OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS—Madam Speaker (*Chairman*), the President, Senators Michael Baume and Childs, and Mr R. F. Edwards, Mrs Harvey, Mr Hicks, Mr Jull and Mr Scott.

NATIONAL CRIME AUTHORITY—Mr Cleeland (*Chairman*), Senators Alston, Hill, Jones, Macklin and Morris, and Mr Dubois, Mr MacKellar, Mr McGauran and Mr O'Keeffe.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS—Mr Tickner (*Chairman*), Senators Bishop, Gietzelt, Giles, McKiernan and Watson, and Mr Aldred, Mr R. J. Brown, Mr Fitzgibbon, Dr Hewson, Mr Martin, Mr Nehl, Mr Ruddock and Mr Scholes.

PUBLIC WORKS—Mr Hollis (*Chairman*), Senators Burns, Devereux and Sheil, and Mr Burr, Mr Gear, Mr Halverson, Mr Millar and Mr Mountford.

JOINT COMMITTEES

ELECTORAL MATTERS—Mr Lee (*Chairman*), Senators Beahan, Coulter, Harradine, Schacht and Short, and Mr Blunt, Ms Jakobsen, Mr Lavarch and Dr Wooldridge.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE—Mr Bilney (*Chairman*), Senators Childs, Crichton-Browne, Hill, Jones, MacGibbon, Macklin, Maguire, Morris, Schacht, Tambling and Valentine, and Mr Baldwin, Mr Campbell, Mr Charles, Mr Cross, Mr Halverson, Mr Hicks, Mr Jull, Mr Katter, Mr Kent, Dr Klugman, Mr Langmore, Mr Lindsay, Mr MacKellar, Mr Nehl, Mr Ruddock, Mr Scott, Mr Shipton and Dr Theophanous.

NEW PARLIAMENTARY HOUSE—The President and Madam Speaker (*Joint Chairmen*), the Minister for Administrative Services, Senators Michael Baume, Colston, Devlin, MacGibbon, Reid and Schacht, and Mr Dobie, Mr Dubois, Mr Hunt, Mr Lee, Mr McLeay and Mrs Sullivan.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE

VIDEO MATERIAL—Dr Klugman (*Chairman*), Senators Collins, Harradine, Jenkins, Walters and Zakharov, and Mr Adermann, Mr Charles, Ms Crawford, Ms Jakobsen and Mr Jull.

PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS

SENATE

Clerk of the Senate—H. Evans

Deputy Clerk of the Senate—A. Lynch

Acting Clerk-Assistant (Table)—T. J. Brown

Acting Clerk-Assistant (Management)—C. J. C. Elliot

Clerk-Assistant (Procedure)—J. Vander Wyk

Acting Clerk-Assistant (Committees)—R. J. Diamond

Usher of the Black Rod—R. Alison

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Clerk of the House—A. R. Browning

Deputy Clerk of the House—L. M. Barlin

First Clerk Assistant—I. C. Harris

Clerk Assistant (Procedure)—B. C. Wright

Clerk Assistant (Committees)—J. W. Pender

Clerk Assistant (Table)—I. C. Cochran

Clerk Assistant (Administration)—M. W. Salkeld

Serjeant-at-Arms—B. L. Simons

PARLIAMENTARY REPORTING STAFF

Principal Parliamentary Reporter—J. M. Campbell

Assistant Principal Parliamentary Reporter—B. A. Harris

Leader of Staff (Committees)—K. Shearwood

Leader of Staff (Senate)—M. A. R. McGregor

Leader of Staff (House of Representatives)—K. B. Ryder

LIBRARY

Parliamentary Librarian—H. de S. C. MacLean

JOINT HOUSE

Secretary—M. W. Bolton

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Hansard

1988

FIRST SESSION OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
(SECOND PERIOD)

Pursuant to the Resolution of the House of Representatives passed on 10 December 1987, the House of Representatives met on Tuesday, 16 February 1988, at 2 p.m.

Tuesday, 16 February 1988

Madam SPEAKER (Hon. Joan Child) took the chair at 2 p.m., and read prayers.

RESIGNATION OF HON. C. J. HURFORD

Madam SPEAKER—I formally inform the House that on 31 December 1987 I received a letter from the Hon. Christopher John Hurford, resigning his seat as the member for the electoral division of Adelaide. I issued a writ on 4 January 1988 for the election of a member to serve for the electoral division of Adelaide in the State of South Australia to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Mr Hurford. The dates in connection with the by-election were fixed as follows:

Close of rolls, Monday, 11 January 1988; nomination, Friday, 15 January 1988; polling day, Saturday, 6 February 1988; return of writ, on or before Wednesday, 13 April 1988.

RESIGNATION OF HON. M. J. YOUNG

Madam SPEAKER—I inform the House that on 8 February 1988 I received a letter from the Hon. Michael Jerome Young, resigning his seat as the member for the electoral division of Port Adelaide. Consideration is being given to the date of the by-election.

ELECTORAL DIVISION OF ADELAIDE

Return to Writ

Madam SPEAKER—I have now received the return to the writ for the election of a member to serve for the electoral division of Adelaide. By the endorsement on the writ it is certified that Mike Pratt has been elected.

New Member Sworn

Mr Mike Philip Pratt made and subscribed the oath of allegiance as member for the division of Adelaide.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr HAWKE (Wills—Prime Minister)—I wish to inform the House of the ministerial arrangements following the resignations from the Ministry of the former Special Minister of State, Senator Susan Ryan, on 19 January 1988; the former Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories, John Brown, on 17 December 1987; and the former Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, Mick Young, on 9 February 1988.

Of the Cabinet positions, I inform the House that Mr Michael Duffy replaced Senator Ryan in the Cabinet, retaining his appointment as Minister for Trade Negotiations. Senator Graham Richardson has been appointed Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories and takes the position John Brown had in the Cabinet. Mr Clyde Holding has been

appointed as Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Like his predecessor Mr Young, Mr Holding will be a member of Cabinet. The Minister for Defence, Mr Beazley takes over as Leader of the House and becomes the Vice-President of the Executive Council in place of Mr Young.

The following new Ministers have joined the Ministry: Senator Peter Cook has been appointed Minister for Resources in Mr Kerin's Primary Industries and Energy portfolio, assuming the position previously occupied by Mr Peter Morris. Mr Gary Punch has been appointed Minister for the Arts and Territories, in Senator Richardson's portfolio. Senator Nick Bolkus has been appointed as Minister for Consumer Affairs under the Attorney-General. He will also be the Minister Assisting the Treasurer for Prices.

There have been some other changes consequential on these appointments. Mr Peter Morris has been appointed as Minister for Transport and Communications Support, in which capacity he will assist Senator Evans, the Minister for Transport and Communications, and have specific responsibilities for particular areas of the portfolio, including road and rail transport. Mr Morris is also Minister Assisting the Prime Minister, with particular responsibility for the Bicentenary, but also assisting me generally in my portfolio. Mr Morris will also be Minister Assisting the Treasurer, in place of Mr Holding. Because of the very heavy workload in the Transport and Communications portfolio, I have also appointed Senator Robert Ray as Minister assisting Senator Evans. He will retain his primary duties as Minister for Home Affairs in the Administrative Services portfolio. Senator Ray will assist the Minister for Transport and Communications in specific areas of the portfolio referred to him from time to time, such as shipping and waterfront matters. Mr Peter Duncan has been appointed as Minister for Employment and Education Services. He has responsibility within Mr Dawkins's Employment, Education

and Training portfolio for a range of employment and training programs, Commonwealth Employment Service operations, the Youth Bureau and student allowance delivery.

Mr Staples has been appointed as Minister for Housing and Aged Care in Dr Blewett's Community Services and Health portfolio. He will assist Dr Blewett generally in the portfolio and have primary responsibility for housing programs, residential programs for the aged, the home and community care program, the Office for the Aged, pharmaceutical benefits and therapeutic goods. Senator Reynolds replaced Susan Ryan as Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women. She undertakes these duties in addition to her responsibilities as Minister for Local Government. Aboriginal Affairs, including the Department, the Aboriginal Development Commission and other statutory bodies, has moved to Mr Dawkins's portfolio with Mr Hand as Minister. Mr Hand is now also responsible for those aspects of the Aboriginal employment development program administered by Mr Dawkins's Department and other appropriate Aboriginal education programs, as Minister assisting Mr Dawkins. This change in ministerial arrangements reflects the Government's belief that education and employment programs are of central importance to improving the position of Aboriginal Australians.

I believe that the changes I have announced today take account of the considerable talents of all my ministerial team, and maximise the great contributions which all my Ministers, both the old and the new, are providing in continuing our record of efficient, stable and enlightened government for this country. I seek leave to incorporate in *Hansard* the details of the Ministry, including representational arrangements, together with a more detailed listing of the division of ministerial responsibilities within portfolios where there is more than one Minister. This list may be subject to some further adjustment following discussion between Ministers concerned.

Leave granted.

The document read as follows—

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT

Third Hawke Ministry

Portfolio	Minister	Representation in other Chamber	Department administered
*Prime Minister	The Hon. R. J. L. Hawke, AC, MP	Senator Button	Prime Minister and Cabinet
*Attorney-General and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Commonwealth-State Relations	The Hon. Lionel Bowen, MP (Deputy Prime Minister)	Senator Tate	Attorney-General's

Portfolio	Minister	Representation in other Chamber	Department administered
Minister for Justice	Senator the Hon. Michael Tate	Mr Bowen	Attorney-General's
Minister for Consumer Affairs and Minister Assisting the Treasurer for Prices	Senator the Hon. Nick Bolkus	Mr Bowen Mr Keating	Attorney-General's
*Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce	Senator the Hon. John Button (Leader of the Government in the Senate)	Mr Jones	Industry, Technology, and Commerce
Minister for Science, Customs and Small Business	The Hon. Barry O. Jones, MP	Senator Button	Industry, Technology, and Commerce
*Minister for Transport and Communications	Senator the Hon. Gareth Evans, QC (Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate and Manager of Government Business in the Senate)	Mr Morris	Transport and Communications
Minister for Transport and Communications Support, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister and Minister Assisting the Treasurer	The Hon. Peter Morris, MP	Senator Evans Senator Button Senator Walsh	Transport and Communications
*Treasurer	The Hon. P. J. Keating, MP	Senator Walsh	Treasury
*Minister for Finance	Senator the Hon. Peter Walsh	Mr Dawkins	Finance
*Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade	The Hon. Bill Hayden, MP	Senator Evans	Foreign Affairs and Trade
*Minister for Trade Negotiations, Minister Assisting the Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy	The Hon. Michael Duffy, MP	Senator Evans Senator Button Senator Cook	Foreign Affairs and Trade
*Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Public Service Matters	The Hon. Ralph Willis, MP	Senator Button Senator Button	Industrial Relations
*Minister for Employment, Education and Training	The Hon. J. S. Dawkins, MP	Senator Walsh	Employment, Education and Training; Aboriginal Affairs
Minister for Employment and Education Services	The Hon. Peter Duncan, MP	Senator Walsh	Employment, Education and Training
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs	The Hon. Gerard L. Hand, MP	Senator Tate	Aboriginal Affairs
*Minister for Defence	The Hon. Kim C. Beazley, MP (Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the House)	Senator Ray	Defence
Minister for Defence Science and Personnel	The Hon. Ros Kelly, MP	Senator Ray	Defence
*Minister for Primary Industries and Energy	The Hon. John Kerin, MP	Senator Cook	Primary Industries and Energy
Minister for Resources	Senator the Hon. Peter Cook	Mr Kerin	Primary Industries and Energy
*Minister for Social Security	The Hon. Brian Howe, MP	Senator Richardson	Social Security
*Minister for Administrative Services	The Hon. Stewart West, MP	Senator Ray	Administrative Services
Minister for Home Affairs and Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport and Communications	Senator the Hon. Robert Ray (Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate)	Mr West Mr Morris	Administrative Services
*Minister for Community Services and Health	The Hon. Neal Blewett, MP	Senator Cook	Community Services and Health; Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Housing and Aged Care	The Hon. Peter Staples, MP	Senator Cook	Community Services and Health
Minister for Veterans' Affairs	The Hon. Ben Humphreys, MP	Senator Reynolds	Veterans' Affairs

Portfolio	Minister	Representation in other Chamber	Department administered
*Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories Minister for the Arts and Territories	Senator the Hon. Graham Richardson The Hon. Gary Punch, MP	Mr Punch Senator Richardson	Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories
*Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Multicultural Affairs Minister for Local Government, and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women	The Hon. Clyde Holding, MP Senator the Hon. Margaret Reynolds	Senator Reynolds Senator Reynolds	Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs
		Mr Holding Mr Hawke	Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs

* Minister in the Cabinet

DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN PORTFOLIOS

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

(The Hon. Lionel Bowen, MP)
Minister for Justice
(Senator the Hon. Michael Tate)

Bankruptcy;

policy and administrative responsibility for legal aid and financial assistance, including carriage of negotiations with the States on new legal aid agreements (but with the Attorney-General retaining overall responsibility for the negotiations with the States);

remissions of fines and penalties;

prisoners;

marriage celebrants;

policy and police liaison including membership of appropriate Commonwealth-State committees;

Protective Services Coordination Centre;

Territories matters coming within the Attorney-General's portfolio (other than the matters involving the ACT);

Criminology, including youth and crime;

Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bills.

Minister for Consumer Affairs
(Senator the Hon. Nick Bolkus)

Responsibility for all consumer affairs matters (including relevant statutory responsibilities under the Trade Practices Act) and representation of the Government on Commonwealth-State ministerial committees related to consumer affairs. Senator Bolkus also assists the Treasurer in relation to prices.

MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY, TECHNOLOGY AND COMMERCE

(Senator the Hon. John Button)

Minister for Science, Customs, and Small Business
(The Hon. Barry O. Jones, MP)

Science policy and activities including CSIRO and the Australian Institute of Marine Science, and the encouragement of effective linkages between the research community and industry;

Policy in relation to small business;

Management and day-to-day decision making in connection with the Customs Service;

Day-to-day administrative matters associated with the building industry.

The two Ministers will work together in such areas as the National Industry Extension Service, the Management Investment Companies program, and policy in relation to the information industries.

MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

(Senator the Hon. Gareth Evans, QC)

Minister for Transport and Communications Support
(The Hon. Peter Morris, MP)

General assistance in the administration of the portfolio;

Specific responsibilities for particular areas of the portfolio including road and rail transport.

Mr Morris is also Minister Assisting the Prime Minister, with particular responsibility for the Bicentenary, and assists generally in the portfolio.

He also assists the Treasurer in a range of matters referred to him, including taxation, foreign investment, loan raising and debt management, and functions of an administrative nature.

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

(The Hon. Bill Hayden, MP)

Minister for Trade Negotiations
(The Hon. Michael Duffy, MP)

Within the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio, day-to-day responsibility for the administration and implementation of Australia's bilateral and multilateral trade policy and negotiations, including relevant Ministerial meetings and diplomatic contacts;

Coordination and conduct of Australia's position in the "Uruguay Round" of multilateral trade negotiations—and more generally the promotion of a more equitable international trading environment;

Administration and implementation of the agreement on Closer Economic Relations with New Zealand;

Implementing Australia's relations with UNCTAD;

Responsible for operations of trade related councils involving the Australian business community.

Mr Duffy also assists the Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce and the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy in relation to major commodity negotiations and export promotion.

MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

(The Hon. J. S. Dawkins, MP)

Minister for Employment and Education Services
(The Hon. Peter Duncan, MP)

Employment and Training—Adult Training Program, Youth Training Program, Community Employment Program, including New Enterprise Incentive Scheme, JOB-START, Mobility Assistance (Relocation Assistance Schemes and Fares Assistance Scheme), existing programs of Industry and Regional Employment Assistance, Community Youth Support Scheme, Community Training Program, including Information Technology Centres and Community Volunteer Program;

Commonwealth Employment Service—network operations, including responsibilities under Unemployment Benefit and Job Search Allowance arrangements, youth access centres, and job search training;

Youth Bureau;

Student allowances delivery.

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
(The Hon. Gerard L. Hand, MP)

Administration of Commonwealth Aboriginal affairs responsibilities. This will include the development of the new Commission to replace the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal Development Commission.

Mr Hand also assists Mr Dawkins in relation to those aspects of the Aboriginal Employment Development Program administered by Mr Dawkins' department and other appropriate Aboriginal education programs.

MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
(The Hon. Kim C. Beazley, MP)

Minister for Defence Science and Personnel
(The Hon. Ros Kelly, MP)

Defence Science and Technology, including development of policies and programs for the marketing of products;

Oversight and administration of service personnel policies relating to members and ex-members of the Australian Defence Force and their families;

Defence Housing Authority;

Some categories of Australian Defence Force assistance to the civil community;

Community matters arising from, and in conjunction with, Australian Defence Force operational training activities;

Development of a strategy to ameliorate the difficulties created for Service personnel on postings arising from differing States laws and requirements relating to education, transport etc.

MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND ENERGY

(The Hon. John Kerin, MP)

Minister for Resources
(Senator the Hon. Peter Cook)

Mineral commodities—Bureau of Mineral Resources;

Petroleum, energy matters—Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority;

Natural resource management—Murray-Darling Basin Commission; Forestry matters;

Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service;
Corporate Services.

MINISTER FOR ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

(The Hon. Stewart West, MP)

Minister for Home Affairs
(Senator the Hon. Robert Ray)

Electoral matters;

Parliamentary and ministerial services (including the New Parliament House Executive Wing, the National Media Liaison Service and Ministerial Press Pool);

Information coordination;

National Archives;

Honours and national symbols policy.

Senator Ray also assists the Minister for Transport and Communications in relation to specific matters referred to him from time to time such as shipping and waterfront matters.

MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND HEALTH

(The Hon. Neal Blewett, MP)

Minister for Housing and Aged Care
(The Hon. Peter Staples, MP)

Housing assistance functions, including the Supported Accommodation Assistance program;

The Office for the Aged;

Aged Residential Care;

Home and Community Care program;

Therapeutic goods and the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories Commission;

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs
(The Hon. Ben Humphreys, MP)

Administration and policy development of services to veterans. (Mr Humphreys also assists Dr Blewett generally across the Community Services and Health portfolio.)

MINISTER FOR THE ARTS, SPORT, THE ENVIRONMENT, TOURISM AND TERRITORIES

(Senator the Hon. Graham Richardson)

Minister for the Arts and Territories
(The Hon. Gary Punch, MP)

The ACT Administration;

Other Territories excluding Antarctica;

Cultural affairs.

MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ETHNIC AFFAIRS

(The Hon. A. C. Holding, MP)

Minister for Local Government

(Senator the Hon. Margaret Reynolds)

Local Government and regional development.

Mr Holding and Senator Reynolds also assist the Prime Minister in relation to Multicultural Affairs and the Status of Women respectively.

Within the portfolios not covered in the above list, other Ministers have not been appointed.

Mr HAWKE—Madam Speaker, I inform the House as a matter of courtesy that the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Hayden, left Australia on 29 January on Government business overseas. He will return to Australia on 28 February and in his absence the Minister for Trade Negotiations, Mr Duffy, is the Acting Minister.

I also inform the House as a courtesy that the Minister for Transport and Communications Support, Mr Morris, is on sick leave for the remainder of this week. Questions which would normally be addressed to Mr Morris should be directed to the Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, Mr Holding.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

MINISTER FOR JUSTICE

Mr HOWARD—My question is directed to the Prime Minister. For his benefit, I recall the terms of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's letter to the Governor-General recommending the dismissal of the late Rex Connor. It said:

I took this course in order to uphold a precise and fundamental principle of parliamentary government. The principle is that Parliament must be able to accept assurances given to it by a Minister and if those assurances prove to be misleading, the Minister concerned must be held responsible.

Does the Prime Minister agree with that statement of ministerial principle made by his predecessor? If so, what possible basis is there for Senator Tate, who has patently and clearly misled the Senate, remaining a member of his Ministry?

Mr HAWKE—I do not need to resort to, rely upon or take into account anything that has been said by either my Labor or Liberal predecessors because this Government has established and maintained a proper record of high standards and propriety in the conduct of Government business. That is a judgment which was fortunately confirmed by the electorate as a whole in 1984 and thunderously confirmed on the last occasion that the electorate had the opportunity of making a decision between me as

Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. On that point I need go no further than the statement made by the President of the Liberal Party who, quite properly, said recently that the Leader of the Opposition did not deserve to be in government or to be Prime Minister. That is an accurate assessment by the President of the honourable member's own Party of his total incompetence and irrelevance.

On the question of Senator Tate, there is no ground or reason for seeking his resignation. Senator Tate will make a personal explanation on this matter in the Senate. However, it is clear from what the Minister has already said that the circumstances of his case are different from those of Mr Brown's case. Senator Tate did not give incorrect information to the Parliament. Let me say parenthetically on this matter that as far as Mr Brown is concerned there was no malicious intent on his part, as I have said publicly before. In quoting advice from the police, Senator Tate was required for reasons of confidentiality to summarise part of that advice. Nothing that he said to the Senate was contrary to or different from the documents he had. He was prepared to provide and did provide the Opposition spokesman on justice with a confidential section of that police report. So that the Opposition can be satisfied, I understand that Senator Tate will give a full and accurate account to the Senate and I am confident that the Senate—or at least the majority of its members—will be satisfied.

FAMILY ALLOWANCE SUPPLEMENT

Mr BRUMBY—Can the Minister for Social Security advise the House on the take-up rate of the family allowance supplement following the holiday period?

Mr HOWE—I thank the honourable member for his question. The latest figures indicate that we will be paying the family allowance supplement to 100,000 families by early March. That is the halfway mark on the estimated population in the relevant income range. As of 5 February, 80,000 applications were approved and 22,000 claims were waiting to be processed. In respect of the electorate of Bendigo, there are now more than 1,000 families benefiting from the family allowance supplement. We are currently receiving 7,000 applications a week. I will just say a word about the profile of recipients. The typical recipient is aged 25 to 39 with a very young family. There are already more than 200,000 children in families on the family allowance supplement. That means that there are more than one million children in families benefiting from the family package overall. The overwhelming

majority of children are under the age of 13 years. The average payments—this will be of interest to all honourable members—are in the range of \$40 to \$60 per week, which is a very substantial contribution to the disposable income of low income families. For those families who have already taken up the payment, it comes at a time when children are returning to school, with all the expenses associated with that period.

In terms of the progress that we have made in implementing the Prime Minister's commitment with respect to child poverty, in terms of the commitment now benefiting one million children within Australia from the lowest income families, one has to draw a contrast between that concrete record of achievement, of providing at a time of severe economic restraint a very substantial boost to the incomes of low income families and of being prepared to take on the very difficult issue of child poverty, against what we have been hearing from the Opposition, particularly in its opportunistic route into the by-election situation. In the middle of June last year the Leader of the Opposition said:

A Liberal Government expects the incentive effect of Liberal tax cuts to ease poverty, rather than any direct action.

He was saying that a Liberal government would not be prepared to tackle directly this kind of issue. In November the Leader of the Opposition confirmed what he had said earlier—that a Liberal government would look to achieve \$11 billion worth of spending cuts. It is simply not possible to suggest as the honourable member for Bradfield has suggested, that there is concern and compassion on the part of the Liberal Party of Australia on the other hand, to talk about \$11 billion of cuts, of which it might reasonably be expected that about \$3 billion would come out of the social security budget.

In terms of meeting our commitment to abolish child poverty, this Government is working towards a policy of achieving a more responsible society. A responsible society requires responsible government. What we hear from the Opposition are not responsible statements. What we hear is the careless use of figures—

Mr Tuckey—I take a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Minister answered the question in a few words at the beginning. He is now delivering a statement to the Parliament, which he has other opportunities under the Standing Orders to do.

Madam SPEAKER—The Minister is in order.

Mr Tuckey—Well, he is abusing Parliament.

Madam SPEAKER—The honourable member will resume his seat. I suggest to him that that is for the Chair to decide.

Mr HOWE—Having outlined the responsible way in which we are seeking to meet our commitment to abolish child poverty, at a cost in a full year of about \$500m, I am simply contrasting that with the empty but dangerous promise from the Opposition of \$11 billion in expenditure cuts, and recognising that, over and above our record of addressing a problem which, after all, arose out of the massive unemployment which was a feature particularly of the latter years of the previous Government, we have sought to address that problem not only in terms of assistance to people in the social security system but also in terms of a very significant boost to low income working families. Along with our policy of getting Australians back to work, we are assisting those families least able to bear the severe restraint with which necessarily the Government has had to administer its economic policies.

MINISTER FOR JUSTICE

Mr HOWARD—I ask the Prime Minister: Has he read the document made available by Senator Tate to his opposite number on the Opposition front bench, the honourable member for Flinders? If not, how can he give the categorical assurance that he gave just a moment ago?

Mr HAWKE—I have not seen the document that Senator Tate—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr HAWKE—Let me say that I can do it on the clear basis—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr HAWKE—Madam Speaker, I will answer the question when they—

Madam SPEAKER—Order!

Mr HAWKE—I have satisfied myself on this issue.

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS: SURVEY OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr MARTIN—Can the Prime Minister outline to the House the results of the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) survey on unemployment? I ask him to elaborate specifically on the relative performance of New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania.

Mr HAWKE—The latest ABS figures reveal that since April 1983 under this Government there has been the creation of one million new

jobs in this country. This is a milestone of which, I hope, even honourable members opposite would be proud. Employment growth under the Australian Labor Party has been twice the rate of the rest of the Western industrialised world. As a matter of comparative record, the rate of employment growth under this Government has been four times the rate of employment growth under our conservative predecessors. I emphasise that 80 per cent of these new jobs have been in the private sector.

In this outstanding, by previous Australian standards and by world standards, performance the performance of New South Wales itself has been absolutely outstanding—over half of the new jobs in the last year having been created in New South Wales. The unemployment rate in New South Wales is 7½ per cent compared, I might say, with 9.6 per cent in Queensland and 9.1 per cent in Tasmania. It is quite clear, on the basis of employment and other key economic statistics, that New South Wales has been an engine-room of the Australian economy—an engine-room of growth. The States in which conservative governments have had responsibility for economic management have been a stifling factor on the overall economic performance.

MR JOHN BROWN: RETURN TO MINISTRY

Mr HOWARD—I refer the Prime Minister to his statement yesterday indicating that the honourable member for Parramatta might well return to the Ministry. I ask the Prime Minister how he justifies indicating the possible return of the honourable member for Parramatta to his Ministry without either he or the honourable member giving the Parliament a full account of why the honourable member for Parramatta misled this House.

Mr HAWKE—With respect to the honourable member for Parramatta, then the Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories, I have made it quite clear that there was an acceptance first of all of the decision which the Minister made. I want to make it quite clear that my respect for the institution of parliament is very great indeed. I regard the misleading of parliament as a very serious offence.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr HAWKE—I am quite happy to wait as long as honourable members opposite like, Madam Speaker. I want to make it clear that the comments I made yesterday do not in any way weaken or reflect any weakening of the commitment that I and my Government have to

this principle. As I said last night, as I said at the time and as I repeat in this House now, I am satisfied that there was no malicious or deliberate intent on the part of Mr Brown to mislead the House. I have said that he was sloppy in not having made clear to the House the nature of his recollection.

May I, for the sake of the record, as I think it is important, refer to a memo of 13 March 1987. In that memo this is noted:

9. Mr Klein said that the Minister's understanding was that public servants were not to be involved in decision making on the theatre proposals and that their role in the committee proceedings was simply to see that correct purchasing procedures were followed.

I shall repeat that. It is important that, in the easy attempt to blacken the name and reputation of a man who has made an enormous contribution to the development of this country, there be a clear understanding of what was in the then Minister's mind on this issue. I repeat that Mr Klein said that the Minister's understanding was that public servants were not to be involved in decision making on the theatre proposals and that their role in the committee proceedings was simply to see that correct purchasing procedures were followed.

It is perfectly evident, reading from that notation, which I remind you, Madam Speaker, and the House, is of 13 March 1987, some nine months before the incident and proceedings in this House, that as far as the then Minister was concerned, in his mind the role of the public servants was to be there to see that correct purchasing procedures were followed and that they were not involved in the decision making. Whether the Minister was right or wrong in terms of whether that was in fact their entitlement, it is perfectly clear that it is noted that that was his feeling, his understanding, of what their role was.

I do not retract in any way from the point that I believe the then Minister was sloppy, and he has been told that. He was sloppy and his staff were sloppy in not ensuring that, after he made the statement in the form he did, there was a clarification made to this House. I think the Minister was the unfortunate victim of the fact that it was the last day of the sitting of the House of Representatives. If the House of Representatives had been going on, if he and his staff had had the opportunity of refreshing their memories on this document, and if he had come into the House and made it clear—saying, 'In my mind, the important votes are those of the artistic members and that is what I was referring

to when I was talking about a tied vote', which this document of March 1987 clearly indicates was his state of mind—the subsequent events would not have occurred. But they did occur, and it is the case that the honourable member for Parramatta himself made the judgment that, in those circumstances prevailing at the time, he had misled the House. John Brown made that judgment, and he then honourably followed through on the judgment he made. He accepted its implications and he took the course of action that was necessary. I said at the time, and I repeat, that this event is something that is very much to be regretted.

I want to say this about John Brown: I and the Government, and I believe the people of Australia, owe John Brown a very considerable debt of gratitude. In the discharge of his obligations, particularly in the area of tourism and sport, he was responsible for very major achievements which we in this House and we in this country should not forget. I certainly pay tribute, unqualifiedly, to the achievements of John Brown in the area of tourism and sport. I say in this House, as I have said to him personally, that I regret the degree of sloppiness that took place regarding that episode. He took the consequences of that sloppiness manfully. I said yesterday that I hope that one day we might all again benefit from his energy and enthusiasm, but it is not something which is for the immediate future.

DEFENCE EQUIPMENT

Mr BILNEY—My question is addressed to the Minister for Defence. I very much hope that Mick Young is listening to the answer. Is the Minister aware of suggestions from the honourable member for McPherson that Australia will inevitably acquire an aircraft carrier? Is the Government intending to purchase an aircraft carrier? What would the purchase of an aircraft carrier mean for the capital equipment program of the Australian defence forces and in particular for the submarine replacement program?

Opposition members interjecting—

Madam SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for O'Connor will not interject again. Did the honourable member for O'Connor hear the Chair? I suggest that he not interject again.

Mr BEAZLEY—One thing of which I am absolutely convinced—whatever answer I am able to give here—is that Mick Young has a great deal more sense than to be listening to these proceedings. I have seen the propositions put forward by the Opposition defence spokesman

on the inevitability of the purchase of an aircraft carrier. I remind the House that the correct decision to abandon the purchase of an aircraft carrier was not taken by us but by the previous Government. In addition, when the previous Government contemplated an aircraft carrier, it decided that it would have an aircraft carrier without fixed wing aircraft on it. All the relevant decisions that were taken in regard to the aircraft carrier were taken by the previous Government.

The interesting feature of this question is that the promise, or indication, given by the Opposition defence spokesman is in line with a number presented by him over a period and is in keeping with the way in which policy is being devolved on the other side of the House—that is, the Opposition will make any promise at all, with any ticket on it, without any consideration of what it will mean for what it is supposed to be saying about the rest of its budgetary policy.

An aircraft carrier, with a full complement of fixed wing aircraft, plus the other accoutrements on it, would cost about \$3 billion. There would be a way of doing that if, in the future, we chose to do so. To achieve that sort of money, we could abandon the submarine program and pay out a certain penalty to the people who have set up manufacturing facilities to undertake it. Alternatively, we could abandon the light patrol frigate program, although we would not then know what would escort the aircraft carrier. If we did that it would be good news for the people of Newcastle! Those options would be available to the Government.

Given that the Opposition has not indicated that it intends to do either of those things, it has promised, for its next term of government, a \$3 billion expenditure. That \$3 billion expenditure would come on top of \$11 billion worth of cuts. What the Opposition has to start to do in this place—we, and no doubt the Press Gallery, will require this of it—is to outline exactly where its policies of Budget cuts stand. Where will the \$11 billion come from? What is the status of all the promises that are coming forward in defence, education and other areas of public expenditure about which its spokesmen from time to time pronounce policy? There is no relationship between what its spokesmen are saying and what its leader is saying and detailing in terms of the cuts he would make. He cannot run for three years on attacks on us. He will be obliged to state where that \$11 billion will come from and he will be obliged to discipline his shadow def-

ence spokesman to work out how the Opposition's programs will be costed.

NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT: ALLEGED POLITICAL INTERFERENCE

Mr REITH—I ask the Attorney-General whether he is aware of an Australian Federal Police minute dated April 1985 in which a Federal police officer states:

During the proceedings against Tina Wong, I became aware of political interference. This was brought to my attention through prior conversations that I had with Tina Wong before the committal commencing.

In light of the fact that this case concerned the importation of 28 kilograms of No. 4 heroin, will the Attorney-General inform the House what investigations the Federal Police have conducted into these allegations of political interference from within the New South Wales Government?

Mr LIONEL BOWEN—I note that the matter refers to 1985. I am not aware of it. I will have inquiries made and advise the House further.

TAX REFORM

Mr RONALD EDWARDS—My question relates to an area of outstanding achievement by this Government—that is, the area of taxation—by comparison with the record of the Opposition. Will the Prime Minister explain the Government's approach to tax reform?

Mr HAWKE—I thank the honourable member for his question. As the House is aware, the Government has already completed a major reform of the Australian taxation system to make it fairer and more efficient. We have provided considerable tax cuts that have been fully funded out of the discipline we have exercised on Government outlays. A review of business taxation is currently under way; as has been announced, and the Government will be making decisions in the light of the outcome of that review. Quite clearly, this will have implications for personal tax.

Our credentials are well established in the area of tax reform. We inherited a top rate of 60c in the dollar after 7½ years of conservative government. We have brought that rate down from 60c to 49c and there have been significant reductions elsewhere, properly, in the personal tax rate. We have done that by making the country's tax system more efficient and certainly more equitable. I put on the record that our credentials are well established while the Leader of the Opposition continues to demonstrate his inability to develop any alternative tax policy.

On Monday, the Leader of the Opposition promised the coalition's detailed tax policy would be out by August—we think August of 1988!

When talking about promises and indications about tax reform it is appropriate that we remember the recent record of the Leader of the Opposition and his prevarication on this matter. On 27 November 1987 he was asked:

What precise figures do you put on spending cuts through to the mid-1990s?

He said:

Well there were extrapolations of \$11 and \$13 billion . . .

That's the order of magnitude that in a medium term we think is necessary.

The question was put:

But in terms of round figures?

His answer was:

They—

that is, the \$11 billion and \$13 billion—

are within the ball park of what was mentioned in the Press this morning, yes.

Yet, having said that, having acknowledged the reality, the relevance, of \$11 billion to \$13 billion on 27 November, what did he say on 4 February, this month, in response to Vincent Smith's question? He was asked:

You said they are within the ball park of what was mentioned this morning, that's 11 to 13?

He said:

I've never used a figure of 11 billion. That is a complete Labor lie, it's been fabricated by the Labor Party.

In November the Leader of the Opposition conceded the relevance of the \$11 billion, then, in line with his normal political opportunism, within a matter of three months, he denies that he has ever used the figure. In three months the Leader of the Opposition has totally contradicted himself.

As distinct from this Government's commitment to detailed, rational and relevant consideration of taxation policy, it looks as though, in 1988, the people of this country will be treated to a re-run of the complete irresponsibility and prevarication that characterised the Leader of the Opposition on tax in 1987 and as a result of which he was thunderously repudiated by the people of this country.

RESIGNATION OF MR YOUNG

Mr HOWARD—I ask the Prime Minister what explanation the former Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs provided to him, including comments relating to

the Harris-Daishowa (Australia) Pty Ltd donation to the Australian Labor Party, prior to his sudden and unexpected resignation from the Hawke Ministry in relation to that resignation.

Mr HAWKE—If the Leader of the Opposition believes that I am going to tell him the contents of a private conversation with the former member for Port Adelaide about the reasons and the considerations that led the honourable member to take the decision that he did, all I can say is that the Leader of the Opposition has another think coming.

KAKADU NATIONAL PARK: CORONATION HILL LEASES

Mr SNOWDON—Can the Minister for Administrative Services inform the House of the situation regarding the Broken Hill Proprietary Co. Ltd (BHP) joint venture activity at Coronation Hill in the conservation zone in Stage 3 of Kakadu National Park?

Mr WEST—Firstly, I am aware of statements which have been made by the Wilderness Society and others about activities undertaken by BHP joint venturers in the conservation zone in Kakadu National Park. BHP holds three mineral leases at Coronation Hill that were issued by the Northern Territory Administration before self-government. On the basis of advice currently at hand, we do not accept claims by the Wilderness Society that the existing leases at Coronation Hill are illegal. However, to clarify the matter, we will issue an access authority under the Lands Acquisition Act. This will remove any doubt at all as to the rights of BHP to continue exploration activities presently being undertaken within its leases at Coronation Hill.

Before the Government makes a decision on whether a mine will proceed or not, it will need to consider an environmental impact statement for the Coronation Hill project. BHP has been directed to prepare this statement. The joint venturer has undertaken some engineering and environmental studies outside its existing leases for the preparation of the feasibility study, the mine plan and the environmental impact statement. Completion of these documents is essential if we are to make an informed decision on the future of the Kakadu National Park conservation zone and the Coronation Hill project. Activities outside existing leases undertaken in preparation of an environmental impact statement, the feasibility study and the mine plan were done with the knowledge of Commonwealth departments.

I have requested my Department to formalise these arrangements as soon as possible and issue an access licence under the Lands Acquisition Act. This licence will have strict environmental conditions. I have also sought BHP's assurance that no further work will be undertaken outside its existing lease areas at Coronation Hill until this formal licence has been issued by myself under the relevant Act, that is, the Lands Acquisition Act. In the meantime, the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, as manager of the conservation zone, and the Office of the Supervising Scientist for the Alligator Rivers Region have been monitoring activities at Coronation Hill, and this Government will ensure that all the environmental conditions are faithfully observed.

RESIGNATION OF MR YOUNG

Mr SINCLAIR—I refer the Prime Minister to the statement made by the Secretary of the New South Wales Labor Party, Mr Stephen Loosley, in the presence of the media and, of course, before Senator Graham Richardson, that Mr Loosley had received both the cheque and the letter and to the Prime Minister's subsequent statement that Mr Young had thereby been exonerated of any wrongdoing in the Harris-Daishowa (Australia) Pty Ltd matter. I ask: On what advice, and from whom, did the Prime Minister base his statement? Why did the Prime Minister's statement pre-empt the police report into this matter? Had the Prime Minister received any preliminary report from the police? If not, upon what did he base his statement? In view of Mr Young's obvious involvement in the diversion of funds contrary to the provisions of the Electoral Act, why did the Prime Minister fail so totally to require Mr Young to stand down until the completion of the police inquiries?

Mr HAWKE—I based the statement I made and the position I took on accepting the validity of the statement made by Mr Loosley that the document in question had been found in the files of the New South Wales branch of the Labor Party. I had no reason to believe that Mr Loosley, a man that I know, would fabricate the view and get up and say, 'Look, I found this letter', when in fact he had not found it. The finding of that letter there exonerated completely Mr Young. That is the answer to the first part of the right honourable gentleman's question.

The second part of his question was: Did I thereby pre-empt the police inquiry? Obviously I did not pre-empt the police inquiry. The answer to that question is provided by the fact that the police inquiries proceeded. So the facts

are self-evident and should be evident even to the gentleman who asked the question. I obviously did not pre-empt the inquiry. In no way could that be suggested. I had no preliminary advice from anyone else. I based my public statement on the public statement of Mr Loosley. It was perfectly apparent to me—if, unfortunately, not quite so apparent to some other people who did not want to see it—that, once that letter was found, Mr Young was completely exonerated. That, I believe, is clearly the case and will emerge in a formal sense once the report of the police is made available to the Director of Public Prosecutions and the DPP makes his decision.

AGRICULTURE: COMMONWEALTH-STATE RELATIONS

Mr SIMMONS—My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy. I ask the Minister whether he can advise the House of recent and possible future developments in Commonwealth-State relations affecting the agricultural sector.

Mr KERIN—In terms of the formulation and administration of agricultural policy in this country, there is a need for a lot of Commonwealth-State co-operation. We see evidence of that, for example, in the administration of the brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication campaign; we see it in matters such as the Murray-Darling Basin Commission and the fact that four governments are working together there; and we see it in respect of the administration of the dairy industry. Through all those areas, no matter which political parties we have in office, there is some sort of consistency and some sort of understanding of general agricultural policy.

What is different about this, of course, is the document recently put out by the New South Wales Opposition. I call upon the Leader of the Liberal Party particularly in that State to withdraw this stupid document before he makes a laughing stock of himself. The document is the greatest bit of garbage I have ever seen. It is occasionally grammatical, it is inconsistent, and it is dangerous nonsense. It is so bad that I think the Leader of the National Party here must have helped Mr Armstrong write it. I wish to take just one of the classics. It says:

The rights of owners consigning sheep to sale yards to come under suspicion of carrying ovine foot rot will be clarified.

The implication of that sentence is that the owners of the sheep themselves have footrot; what is more, they are going to manage the State's ticks!

To get on to the more serious parts of this document, the centrepiece is that the New South Wales Opposition is to set up some special division in the Department of Agriculture which would dispose of agriculture and fisheries products. The words 'dispose' or 'disposal' appear seven times in the document. It gets back to the old hackneyed colonial mentality that what governments have to do is to dispose of what farmers produce. I would have thought that by now the National Party in this country would understand that farmers are businessmen and that they are on to the concept of marketing. The document talks about free enterprise and grower controlled statutory marketing authorities, yet the New South Wales Opposition intends to scrap the New South Wales Meat Industry Authority and impose further restrictions on the poultry and fishing industries. It is going to set up a system of local committees with the fishing industry and manage that industry with no boundaries unless they are warranted on biological, ecological or economic grounds. I would have thought that by now the New South Wales Opposition could have figured that those are the reasons why we set up boundaries for fishing zones.

The New South Wales Opposition is to set up three systems of guarantees for the New South Wales wine industry. How the heck will that work with the other States? It is going to educate farm leaders because it thinks farm leaders cannot cope with businessmen and bureaucrats. Again, I would have thought that by now it would have understood that farmers are themselves businessmen. I point out another thing. The document says that farmers have massive responsibilities in supporting the infrastructure and that they have a responsibility for good farming, for our flora and fauna and for our marine ecology. This means that farmers are responsible for roads, Telecom Australia, our flora and fauna and our fish.

The document is an absolute nonsense. I call upon the Leader of the New South Wales Liberal Party to withdraw this document, to get one that is a little sensible, and to make some sense in terms of the administration of policy formation in Australian agriculture.

RESIGNATION OF MR YOUNG

Mr HOWARD—I ask the Prime Minister: In view of his claim in his previous answer that the finding of the Harris letter by Mr Loosley exonerated Mr Young, does that mean that Mr Young gave to him a satisfactory account of his dealings with Mr Loosley regarding disposition

of the cheque and letter? If so, what was that account?

Mr HAWKE—Of course I was satisfied, from my conversations with Mr Young, that he had acted properly and honourably in this matter. I will say something to the Leader of the Opposition about the conversation. Obviously I will not go into the whole of the conversation.

Mr Howard—Why not?

Mr HAWKE—It would take a very long time because it was a very long conversation. But seriously, Madam Speaker, I want to make this point: until Mr Loosley had in fact made his statement, the correct description, I believe, of Mr Young's state of mind in regard to this matter is that it was one of bewilderment. As far as his recollection was concerned, the letter would have gone. But in the initial stages that did not seem to be the case. The New South Wales people did not have it. So he was in a state of bewilderment as to what had happened. He believed, as he said to me, that he had acted appropriately in this matter and had handed it across. When Mr Loosley discovered the document the matter was, as I said, absolutely resolved in my mind. It was not as though I had been faced with some prevarication on the part of Mr Young on this issue. May I say, Madam Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition has now raised this matter again: if there is anyone who emerges from this incident concerning Mr Young with any discredit, it is not Mr Young.

Mr Howard—Ha!

Mr HAWKE—It is this giggling——

Madam Speaker—Order! The Prime Minister will address the honourable member as the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr HAWKE—It is the Leader of the Opposition who emerges with the most extreme discredit in this matter. Madam Speaker, I know that we will hear the giggles but these unfortunate giggles are no answer to the facts, facts which damn the Leader of the Opposition. The facts are simple. Mr Young was completely exonerated in the emergence of the facts. He had passed over the letter, he had passed over the cheque and every reasonable person in this country accepted that proposition. May I say, Madam Speaker, that this included people on the other side of this place. A number of them have spoken to me and indicated not only their regret at the loss of Mr Young from this place but also their total acceptance of the integrity of Mr Young.

Unfortunately, the decency of several people on the other side of this House in regard to Mr Young on this issue has not been reflected in the statements and the behaviour of the Leader of the Opposition, who, in one of the more despicable statements in the political history of this country, said in regard to this man who had clearly been exonerated, 'Have you looked through his shredder; have you looked through the shredder in Mick Young's office?'. Whatever you say about Young, he was entitled on this issue, once Loosley had made his statement, to be totally exonerated in the mind of every reasonable person in this country. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that fortunately he has behind him a number of people who in that respect are decent. It is a great misfortune that he has not matched them. All I can say is that the smallness of his mind is matched only by the meanness of his spirit.

THIRD WORLD DEBT

Mr LANGMORE—Is the Treasurer aware of the World Bank report on the Third World debt crisis which was released last month? Did the report conclude that the problem has grown acute since 1982 and that urgent solutions are needed to prevent a breakdown of North-South relations? Does the Treasurer agree with Henry Kissinger's remark at the meeting of Nobel laureates in Paris in January that if the Latin American debt burden is not relieved 'within one year several democracies will be in insoluble difficulties'? What solutions is the Government advocating at present in international forums to this desperately serious problem? Does the Government support the recent agreement between the United States and Mexican governments, which includes accepting the principle of trading in debt at a discount on its face value?

Mr KEATING—Over a number of years the Australian Government has made the point in discussing the debt problem with these bodies, in particular the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, that the principal problem in the world has been the absence of sufficient levels of aggregate world growth and, with the slower growth, the impact upon commodity prices, from which Australia itself is suffering. While Australia may be a developed country, it remains with an export profile—thanks to the 30 years of coalition government—or simply a developing country by relying principally upon agricultural commodities, et cetera.

On a number of occasions I have made the point that the Northern Hemisphere, whilst congratulating itself on its low inflation rate, has

broken the back of inflation by breaking the back of the terms of trade. In other words, the flip side of the loss of national income by the developing world has been the lower inflation rate or cheaper commodities which have subsidised the living standards of the developed world. That is why, in the case of Australia, when we have had a very large depreciation, our inflation rate has risen because the depreciation has not been masked by falls in commodity prices, as has been the case in the United States of America, which is now going through a very large depreciation but has not had the same upside of inflation because, at the same time, it has had the cover of lower and falling commodity prices. Principally, we have seen a complete paralysis of structural change, particularly in Europe and the United States. Broadly, in the Northern Hemisphere, apart from Britain and perhaps Canada, there has been a complete paralysis of structural change. That is why one has to laugh when one hears remarks from the Opposition about the pace of structural change in Australia. The pace of structural change in Australia is unprecedented amongst Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries and it is this paralysis in structural change which is threatening these low growth rates, particularly in western Europe and, to a lesser extent, in the United States and Japan. It is that which has borne down heavily on commodity prices and cut the capacity of indebted countries to pay their debts or to service them. Of course, at different times, with higher interest rates in the Western world, those higher interest rates have borne very heavily on indebted countries. One of the reasons why the Central Reserve Bank of the United States, the Federal Reserve, is currently continuing to maintain lower interest rates in the United States—indeed, there is a recognition amongst the G5 group of countries that interest rates around the world need to be lower—is an understanding of the problems of indebted countries in relation to their debt.

The latter part of the honourable gentleman's question related to debt rescheduling, much of which has gone on but, in the end, much of that debt—rescheduled or otherwise—will be written off. One may have noticed that a number of the major New York city banks have been writing off debt over the last year and, in fact, I think Citibank Ltd was the first to make massive provision for losses on sovereign debt, particularly in South America over the last 12 months. Again, the debt issue is not simple. There are countries indebted to Australia, particularly in relation to grains, amongst other things, which are not in

the same category as those with the sovereign debt of the South American or the sub-Saharan African variety. Hence, one cannot take a simple or uniform posture to debt.

There are initiatives—one promoted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in Britain—to write off some debt in national terms. But most of this debt is undertaken by private banks, and it is the private banks who recognise that they will not be repaid and who are making provision for that debt. I can say only that in international fora Australia has taken the most sympathetic attitude it possibly can to the debt question and to the international indebtedness of these Third World countries. In particular, it has continually stressed the need for the world economy to grow faster and for national incomes to rise, thereby giving those countries the capacity not only to service their debt but also essentially to wind back their debt.

MINISTERIAL RESIGNATIONS

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Mr HOWARD (Bennelong—Leader of the Opposition) (3.01)—I move:

That so much of the Standing and Sessional Orders be suspended as would prevent:

- (a) the Prime Minister making a statement to the House forthwith regarding the resignation of the former Leader of the House, Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs and honourable member for Port Adelaide; and
- (b) the former Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories, now honourable member for Parramatta, from providing the House with a full explanation of why he misled the Parliament during the censure debate against him on 10 December 1987.

During the concluding portions of Question Time, the Prime Minister (Mr Hawke), having first said to the Parliament, 'If you lot think you are going to get an explanation from me about my conversation with Mick Young, you have another think coming', thought better of that contemptuous attitude to the Parliament and said, 'I will say something to you about the conversation'. When we called out, 'What about the lot?', he said, 'It was a very long conversation; it is going to take a very long time'. Well, this motion from the Opposition gives the Prime Minister the opportunity to give an account to the Parliament of his discussion with the former Leader of the House and Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs. The Prime Minister can walk out of the Parliament and during divisions those opposite can use the brute force of their numbers, but the bar of

Australian public opinion will know very well that this Prime Minister has failed to uphold the standards of ministerial behaviour and ministerial conduct that were laid down so very succinctly by his Australian Labor Party predecessor, Mr Gough Whitlam.

It is worth reminding the House of what Gough Whitlam—a former Labor Prime Minister whom the present Treasurer (Mr Keating) and those who gather around him in the Labor Party want the Labor movement and the Australian public to forget—had to say. One thing we can say about Gough Whitlam is that he had a far greater respect for ministerial propriety and for the institution of Parliament than has the present Prime Minister. The present Prime Minister has a supreme contempt for the institution of Parliament. At Question Time today he was prepared to stand and defend a Minister, Senator Tate, who, on his own admission—not on our allegation—misled the Parliament. When I asked the Prime Minister, 'Have you read the document that was provided by Senator Tate to the honourable member for Flinders?'—in other words, 'Have you exercised your responsibility as Prime Minister to examine the claim made by Senator Tate and are you happy, as the ultimate custodian of ministerial propriety, that Senator Tate has done the right thing?'—what was the prime ministerial response? The prime ministerial response was, 'I have not read the document. I just relied on the word of the Minister'.

That is not good enough for the Opposition, it is not good enough for the Parliament and it is not good enough for the Australian people. When we have had a resignation as sudden, as bewildering, as unexplained and as unexpected as the resignation of the former honourable member for Port Adelaide—a resignation which has taken his own Party by surprise probably more than it has other people in the Australian community—it is simply not good enough for the Prime Minister to treat the Parliament with contempt. Despite the fact that he has had a marathon conversation with the former Minister, this Parliament is entitled to have the benefit of the Prime Minister's knowledge of the circumstances of Mick Young's resignation. It is for that reason that we have brought forward this motion as it relates to the former Leader of the House and former Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs.

That brings me to the question of the honourable member for Parramatta (Mr John Brown). I ask honourable members to remember that the former Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environ-

ment, Tourism and Territories stood up here on 10 December in reply to the censure motion moved so very ably by the honourable member for Menzies (Mr N. A. Brown). That censure motion laid down very clearly the Opposition's indictment of that Minister. That Minister got up and cold-bloodedly misled this Parliament. It would have been inevitable that when he left the chamber at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon of 10 December his permanent head and office staff would have come to him and said, 'Minister, you have a problem; the record shows that you have misled the Parliament'.

The nub of the claim against the honourable member for Parramatta is: if he really expects the Parliament to believe that he inadvertently misled it, why did he not then immediately come back into the House that very day and apologise for having misled the Parliament? I do not believe that there is any permanent head, any senior private secretary or any senior departmental officer worth his salt who would not have gone to the honourable member for Parramatta straight away and said, 'Minister, you have a problem; you have misled the Parliament. You had better go back in there and correct it; otherwise, if anything gets out they will have your head'. I will bet that he received that advice. If he did not receive that advice, he had the most incompetent permanent head and the most incompetent senior private secretary that any Minister ever had.

The honourable member for Parramatta knew that he had misled the Parliament, but he decided to sit it out and to sweat it out in the hope that nothing would come out. Inevitably, something did come out, and he had to resign. So, far from it being an honest mistake—that is the Australian Labor Party's excuse when one gets caught—the Minister must have known on the afternoon of 10 December, probably while this Parliament was still sitting, that he had misled the Parliament. He had a clear and open duty to come into this chamber and explain why he misled the Parliament. He has the opportunity to do so now. We invite him to do it.

This is all the more important because now the Prime Minister says that he wants his golfing mate back. It would be a slightly different matter if the Prime Minister had not paraded mateship before duty yesterday; if the Prime Minister had not said, 'I want my friend back. I want to have the honourable member for Parramatta back in the Ministry'. But now the Prime Minister has told the Parliament that he is going to 'bring Brown back'. I wonder whether

he will be able to hold the right wing faction on that exercise. If yesterday is any demonstration, I do not think he will. Who can blame a few right wingers for wanting the honourable member for Kingston (Mr Bilney) instead of Senator Bolokus?

I return to the subject. The honourable member for Parramatta has an opportunity now to come into the Parliament and to get up on his hind legs and explain to us and the Australian people why he misled the Parliament. He has an obligation: he has an opportunity; he has a duty. It is all the more pressing and all the more onerous because the Prime Minister has said that he is going to bring him back into the Ministry. If the Prime Minister had not said that, it might not be quite so onerous.

Therefore, on two counts there is an obligation cast on this Government. The Prime Minister said at Question Time that he has a deep and reverential respect for the principle of ministerial responsibility. Apparently, one gets six months if one leaks national security information in a car park and two or three months if one lies to the Parliament. That is the standard of ministerial conduct that is accepted. The Prime Minister's standards of ministerial conduct fall far short of those enforced by Gough Whitlam. One may well remember the Labor Party's slogan, Bill Hayden's slogan, in the 1980 campaign: 'Raise the standard'. The standard that needs to be raised in this Parliament and in the Labor Party is the standard of ministerial propriety and ministerial conduct. If this Prime Minister and this Government are to retain any skerrick of credibility on the question of ministerial responsibility, the Prime Minister will get in here and explain what Mick Young told him, and the honourable member for Parramatta will have the courage to come into this Parliament and give a full account of why he deliberately misled the Parliament of this country on 10 September 1987.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Leo McLeay)—Order! The Leader of the Opposition should withdraw the word 'deliberately'.

Mr HOWARD—On what basis, Mr Deputy Speaker?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—The forms of the House are that, while it is probably unfortunate to say that people have misled the House, it has, as I understand it, always been held that the only way one can impute motives such as deliberately misleading the House is to do so by way of substantive motion. The Leader of the Op-

position does not have before the House at present a substantive motion in that form.

Mr HOWARD—Mr Deputy Speaker, I am inviting him to make an explanation as to why he misled the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—I am not wishing to quarrel with the Leader of the Opposition. The word 'deliberate' is all that it is necessary—

Mr HOWARD—What is your ruling, Mr Deputy Speaker?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—I am calling upon the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw the word 'deliberate'—

Mr HOWARD—Are you requiring me—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—I am asking the Leader to withdraw the—

Mr HOWARD—I am not prepared to withdraw it. I will move dissent from your ruling. I am not prepared to withdraw it.

Mr Holding—I raise a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition may well have overlooked the fact that the censure motion was subject to a judgment by the House. I am referring to the censure motion that was moved—

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The point that I was deliberately making to the House was that in a censure motion against an individual it is quite proper to use the term. In a motion calling for information, as the present motion does, it is not proper to use that term. However, if the Leader of the Opposition thinks that I will use this as an excuse to put him out on the first day of the session—

Mr HOWARD—I did not say that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—I am asking him just to withdraw the word 'deliberate' and then we can get on with the debate.

Mr HOWARD—With very great respect, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am simply not prepared to withdraw it. I move dissent from the Deputy Speaker's ruling that I be required to withdraw a statement that the honourable member for Parramatta deliberately misled the House. It is a very narrow and a very short point, but let us recall what happened. Somebody has resigned from the Parliament. He has admitted that he has misled the House. Can we get some guidance? Fancy getting guidance from Leo. We must really be hard up.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat for a moment.

Mr HOWARD—On what basis?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—I will finish what I was saying. I asked the Leader to withdraw as it is the normal form of the House for these sorts of allegations to be made in a substantive motion. That is just the form of the House. The Leader of the Opposition says he will not withdraw. In a sense that is fine with me. However, it means that we will accept that that will become a standard. I do not think that is necessarily a good standard. If the Leader of the Opposition thinks that it is not too bad a standard, I am quite willing, at this stage, to let it go. We can then hear the seconder of the motion. The Leader of the Opposition ought to be aware that he is now asking us to accept a standard that may be a little lower than that which has applied in this House in the past. I now call—

Mr HOWARD—Mr Deputy Speaker, with your indulgence: before we proceed to hear from the seconder of the motion—and I note that you have withdrawn your ruling—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—No. I have not made a ruling at all. I asked you to withdraw.

Mr HOWARD—The point that I simply wish to make is that I do not accept—I do this with respect for your position—that the Standing Orders, the practices, the usages and the convention of this House require me to withdraw or suggest that I have improperly used an expression in the context of the debate that is now in progress. I remind you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and the House that the Minister resigned after, on his own admission, he found out that he had misled the House. I also remind you, Mr Deputy Speaker—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The Leader of the Opposition has made his point.

Mr HOWARD—Mr Deputy Speaker, with great respect, you have cast an aspersion. You have suggested that I will be responsible for a different and, by inference, lower standard of conduct. I say to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that I will not accept that reprimand from you. I will not accept that attempt by you or by anybody in the Government which has been responsible for some abysmal language standards in this Parliament. If anybody in the Labor Party thinks that he can get away with that, he—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! I think the Leader of the Opposition has made his point.

Before I call the seconder of the motion I draw the honourable members' attention to page 460 of *House of Representatives Practice*.

Mr Howard—Mr Deputy Speaker, I have an entitlement, as a member of this House, irrespective of my position as Leader of the Opposition, to require you—to ask you; I withdraw 'require'—whether you are saying that, because of what has transpired, I will personally, in some way, be responsible for lower standards of conduct in this Parliament. If that is the case, I ask you to explain to me why that is so. If it is not the case, I ask you to apologise to me.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—I think we are going a little too far on this. Is the motion seconded?

Mr Sinclair—On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: we are still on the point of order with respect to the inferences you made against the Leader of the Opposition. Our Standing Orders require very clearly that no aspersions be cast on any member of this place other than by way of substantive motion. As I understood the ruling which I believe you made a while ago with respect to the statement by the Leader of the Opposition, it was made on the basis of that very standing order. I suggest, Mr Deputy Speaker, that in your position you—more than anybody else in this place—should not cast an aspersion on any member. You have suggested deliberately that henceforth there is to be a lessening of the standards in this Parliament simply because of the words used by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! This is getting a little bit out of hand.

Mr Sinclair—Mr Deputy Speaker, the solution is in your hands. I suggest that if you withdraw the inference made against the Leader of the Opposition—if you withdraw your remarks—the proceedings of this House—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! If the Leader of the Opposition thinks that I am casting aspersions on him he is wrong. I draw the House's attention to the *House of Representatives Practice*, which states:

The practice of the House, based on that of the House of Commons, is that a Member cannot direct a charge against another Member nor reflect upon his character or conduct unless he does so upon a substantive motion which admits of a distinct vote of the House.

As I understand it, in the past it has been the practice that to say a person has deliberately misled the House normally attracts that type of substantive motion. Today we have before us a

motion seeking information relating to a number of matters. I now call upon the seconder.

Mr Howard—I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I say, with the very greatest respect: Are you prepared to withdraw your aspersions?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—I said that if you believe that I have reflected upon you——

Mr Howard—Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not given that liberty when I am asked to withdraw something. Is the withdrawal unconditional or not?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—I do not believe that I have reflected upon the Leader of the Opposition. However, if the Leader of the Opposition thinks I have, I have no problem with withdrawing that reflection. I say that although I do not believe I have reflected upon you. I now call upon the seconder of the motion.

Mr SINCLAIR (New England—Leader of the National Party of Australia) (3.21)—I rise to second the motion on one of the least auspicious occasions for this country in our bicentennial year. All honourable members know that this afternoon, at the commencement of the proceedings, the Prime Minister (Mr Hawke) read a three-page statement in the House about ministerial arrangements. To the statement were attached eight pages of appendices. Clearly, when the Prime Minister goes to the Governor-General, he swears in a government under his name. Each of the members of that Government is a Minister and those Ministers have as their first responsibility to advise and consult with the Prime Minister, to tell the Prime Minister of the basis on which any actions, particularly actions out of the ordinary, are taken on their behalf or he should have from them an explanation as to why normal standards of ministerial propriety have not been met. If it is thought that anyone other than the Prime Minister is not in a position where he is custodian, as it were, of his Ministers, it should have emerged from that statement made this afternoon.

In the instance of the two Ministers—one former Minister having left the Parliament and the other former Minister now sitting on the back bench, we are told, is about to be the subject of some sort of restoration to the Ministry—very serious questions are outstanding. The first is: Why is not the former member for Port Adelaide in the House this afternoon? If the Prime Minister exonerates him, why was he not prepared, at least as a member of the Parliament, to come in here and tell us why he is

innocent? Equally, if he is innocent, why is the Federal Police inquiry still continuing?

Why has the Prime Minister sought to usurp the responsibilities of the Federal Police by telling us all that he has passed his own judgment? Is the Prime Minister trying to exercise in some untoward way, bearing upon the Federal Police, telling them that he has read the story and do not worry about it; it is okay? I suggest that the behaviour of the Prime Minister is certainly irresponsible and certainly not the manner or actions that one would expect from a person who is genuinely concerned about Parliament and ministerial propriety.

We have moved the suspension of Standing Orders so that the House and the people of Australia—outside those private gatherings in the Lodge, away from whatever the golfing mates might have said around the nineteenth hole—can be told why two previous Ministers have been guilty in each instance; one for misleading the House and the other, although we are told he has been exonerated, for feeling that he is no longer able to continue even as a member of the Parliament.

These are very serious matters. Mr Young was the ninth Minister to leave the Hawke Government. We know of the disputes and squabbles between the factions in trying to determine who should be his successor. We read in this morning's paper that Caucus is about to debate another proposition that before any member of the Australian Labor Party resigns from the Parliament, he must consult with Caucus first. Why is it that the Prime Minister is running scared? Why are not he and the honourable member for Parramatta prepared to tell the House if they are innocent? It is nothing to be ashamed of! They are not guilty! Why are they not prepared to explain their case in the House, and, in the instance of the honourable member for Parramatta, apologise?

It is quite clear why Barrie Unsworth is running scared—the smell of impropriety, the smell of a government no longer in touch with people, the uncertainty of how men ought to behave in more proper circumstances.

Mr Beazley—Mr Deputy Speaker, I take a point of order.

Mr SINCLAIR—A government bereft of principle, failing propriety—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Leo McLeay)—Order! The Leader of the National Party will resume his seat. I call the Leader of the House on a point of order.

Mr Beazley—My point of order is that quite clearly the material being put forward by the Leader of the National Party is not in order. This is a motion to make an argument for suspending Standing Orders to consider two quite specific subjects. One of the two specific subjects is to ask the Prime Minister to talk about, explain or give us a bit of a chat on the subject of the resignation of those two Ministers. The situation in New South Wales, the possibility of an election of a new New South Wales government, clearly has absolutely nothing to do with the subject that is before the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—There has been rather a wide-ranging debate on this issue. There—

Mr SINCLAIR—Mr Deputy Speaker—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The Leader of the National Party will resume his seat. The time of the Leader of the National Party has expired and the time for the debate has expired.

Question put:

That the motion (Mr Howard's) be agreed to.

The House divided.

(Mr Deputy Speaker—Mr Leo McLeay)

Ayes	58
Noes	79
Majority	21

AYES

Adermann, A. E.
Aldred, K. J.
Andrew, J. N. (Teller)
Beale, J. H.
Blunt, C. W.
Braithwaite, R. A.
Brown, N. A.
Burr, M. A.
Cadman, A. G.
Cameron, Donald
Cameron, Ewen
Cameron, Ian
Carlton, J. J.
Cobb, M. R.
Connolly, D. M.
Cowan, D. B.
Downer, A. J. G.
Edwards, Harry
Fife, W. C.
Fischer, Tim
Fisher, Peter
Goodluck, B. J.
Hall, Steele
Hawker, D. P. M.
Hewson, J. R.
Hicks, N. J. (Teller)
Howard, J. W.
Hunt, R. J. D.
Katter, R. C.

NOES

Baldwin, P. J.
Beazley, K. C.
Beddall, D. P.
Bilney, G. N.

NOES

Blanchard, C. A.
Blewett, N.
Bowen, Lionel
Brown, John
Brown, Robert
Brumby, J. M.
Campbell, G.
Charles, D. E.
Charlesworth, R. I.
Chynoweth, R. L.
Cleeland, P. R.
Cohen, B.
Courtice, B. W.
Crawford, M. C.
Cross, M. D.
Cunningham, B. T. (Teller)
Darling, E. E.
Dawkins, J. S.
Dubois, S. C.
Duffy, M. J.
Duncan, P.
Edwards, Ronald
Fatin, W. F.
Fitzgibbon, E. J.
Free, R. V.
Gayler, J.
Gear, G.
Gorman, R. N. J.
Grace, E. L.
Griffiths, A. G.
Hand, G. L.
Harvey, E. R.
Hawke, R. J. L.
Holding, A. C.
Hollis, C.
Howe, B. L.

Jones, Barry
Keating, P. J.
Kelly, R. J.
Kent, L.
Kerin, J. C.
Kligman, R. E.
Lamb, A. H. (Teller)
Langmore, J. V.
Lavarach, M. H.
Lee, M. J.
Lindsay, E. J.
McHugh, J.
Martin, S. P.
Mildren, J. B.
Milton, P.
Morris, Allan
Mountford, J. G.
O'Keefe, N. P.
O'Neil, L. R. T.
Price, L. R. S.
Punch, G. F.
Saunderson, J.
Scholes, G. G. D.
Sciaccia, C.
Scott, J. L.
Simmons, D. W.
Snow, J. H.
Snowdon, W. E.
Staples, P. R.
Theophanous, A. C.
Tickner, R. E.
Uren, T.
West, S. J.
Willis, R.
Wright, K. W.

Question so resolved in the negative.

PAPERS

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Motion (by Mr Beazley)—by leave—agreed to:

That so much of the Standing and Sessional Orders be suspended as would prevent one motion being moved that the House take note of certain papers presented this day and that the resumption of the debate on the motion to take note of each of the papers be separate orders of the day on the Notice Paper.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

Mr BEAZLEY (Swan—Leader of the House)—Honourable members will be aware of the resolution adopted by the House at the end of the last sittings relating to the tabling of papers. This formed part of a number of measures to streamline procedures and leave more time available for other business. In accordance with the resolution of the House of 9 December 1987, papers are tabled as listed on the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of those papers will be recorded in *Hansard* and in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

The schedule read as follows—

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PROPOSED PRESENTATION OF PAPERS
TUESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 1988**

#1. Commonwealth Ombudsman and Defence Force Ombudsman—Annual Reports 1986-87—Pursuant to sub-section 19 (4) of the Ombudsman Act 1976.

#2. Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984—consultants engaged under Section 4 of the act—Annual Report 1986-87—pursuant to section 31 of the members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984.

#3. Construction of bus shelters—proposal for work in the parliamentary zone—pursuant to section 5 of the Parliament Act 1974.

#4. Government response to the report of the Joint Committee of Publications—review of the cost and distribution of the Parliamentary papers series.

#5. Special Broadcasting Service—Annual Report 1986-87—together with the Auditor-General's Report—pursuant to section 79ZH of the Broadcasting Act 1942.

#6. Australian Broadcasting Tribunal Annual Report 1986-87—pursuant to section 28 of the Broadcasting Act 1942.

#7. Australian Meat and Live-Stock Industry Policy Council—Annual Report 1986-87—pursuant to Section 22 of the Australian Meat and Live-Stock Industry Policy Council Act 1984.

#8. Australian Trade Commission—Annual Report 1986-87—together with the Auditor-General's Report—pursuant to Section 92 of the Australian Trade Commission Act 1985 and section 63H of the Audit Act 1901.

#9. Australian Institute of Criminology—Annual Report 1986-87—pursuant to section 33 of the Criminology Research Act 1971.

#10. Criminology Research Council—Annual Report 1986-87.

#11. Department of Territories—Annual Report 1986-87—pursuant to sub-section 25 (8) of the Public Service Act 1922.

#12. National Crime Authority—Annual Report 1986-87—together with comments by the Inter-Governmental Committee on the NCA Report—pursuant to sub-section 61 (6) of the National Crime Authority Act 1984.

#13. Operation Silo—National Crime Authority Report of the Investigation—Pursuant to sub-section 59 (6) of the National Crime Authority Act 1984.

#14. Department of Transport—Annual Report 1986-87—Pursuant to sub-section 25 (8) of the Public Service Act 1922.

#15. Department of Communications—Annual Report 1986-87—Pursuant to sub-section 25 (8) of the Public Service Act 1922.

#16. Department of Aviation—Annual Report 1986-87—Pursuant to sub-section 25 (8) of the Public Service Act 1922.

#17. Pork Promotion Committee—Annual Report 1986-87—Together with the Auditor-General's Report—Pursuant to section 63M of the Audit Act 1901.

#18. Education and National Needs—Australian Science and Technology Council Report—Pursuant to sec-

tion 6 of the Australian Science and Technology Council Act 1978.

#19. Wealth from Skills—Measures to raise the Skills of the Workforce—Australian Science and Technology Council Report—Pursuant to section 6 of the Australian Science and Technology Council Act 1978.

#20. Returns of Senate Ministers' Private Interests—Submitted to the Prime Minister in 1987.

#21. Attorney-General's Department—Office of Parliamentary Counsel—Annual Reports 1986-87—Supplement: Portfolio FOI Statements 1987—Pursuant to section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 1982.

#22. Defence Service Homes Corporation—Annual Report 1986-87—Pursuant to section 50B of the Defence Service Homes Act 1918.

#23. Computerised Assistants: New Tools for Society—Australian Science and Technology Council Report—Pursuant to section 6 of the Australian Science and Technology Council Act 1978.

#24. Legal Aid Commission (ACT)—Annual Report 1986-87—Together with the Auditor-General's Report—Pursuant to section 97 of the Legal Aid Ordinance 1977 and the Seat of Government (Administration) Act.

#25. Australian National Airlines Commission—Annual Report 1986-87—Together with the Auditor-General's Report—Pursuant to sub-section 40 (3) of the Australian National Airlines Act 1945.

#26. Duty Free Concessions at Kingsford-Smith Airport, Sydney—Report.

*#27. Anglo-Australian Telescope Board—Annual Report 1986-87—Together with the Auditor-General's Report—Pursuant to sub-section 19 (2) of the Anglo-Australian Telescope Agreement Act 1970.

+ 28. Housing Loans Insurance Corporation—Annual Report 1986-87—Together with the Auditor-General's Report—Pursuant to section 39 of the Housing Loans Insurance Act 1965.

*#29. The Tasmanian Rail System—An Assessment of Costs and Benefits—Federal Bureau of Transport Economics Report 62.

*#30. Australian Honey Board—Annual Report 1986-87—Together with the Auditor-General's Report—Pursuant to section 30 of the Honey Industry Act 1962.

*#31. Grain Legumes Research Council—Annual Report 1986-87—Pursuant to section 30 of the Rural Industries Research Act 1985.

*#32. Grape and Wine Research Council—Annual Report 1986-87—Pursuant to section 30 of the Rural Industries Research Act 1985.

*#33. Barley Research Council—Annual Report 1986-87—Pursuant to section 30 of the Rural Industries Research Act 1985.

*#34. Dairy Research Council—Annual Report 1986-87—Pursuant to section 30 of the Rural Industries Research Act 1985.

*#35. The Customs and Excise Bond Systems—Industries Assistance Commission Report.

+ 36. Australian Dried Fruits Corporation—Annual Report 1986-87—Together with the Auditor-General's

Report—Pursuant to section 36 of the Australian Dried Fruits Corporation Act 1978.

*37. Commonwealth Serum Laboratories—Annual Report 1986-87—Together with the Auditor-General's Report—Pursuant to section 44 of the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories ACT 1961.

*38. Management and Investment Companies Licensing Board—Annual Report 1986-87—Pursuant to sub-section 46 (3) of the Management and Investment Companies Act 1983.

+39. Advance Australia Foundation—Annual Report 1986-87—Pursuant to section 18 of the Advance Australia Logo Protection Act 1984.

+40. Chicken Meat Research Council—Annual Report 1986-87—Pursuant to section 30 of the Rural Industries Research Act 1985.

+41. Australian Trade Union Training Authority—Annual Report 1986-87—Pursuant to sub-section 58 (4) of the Trade Union Training Act 1975.

+42. Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority—Annual Report 1986-87—Together with the Auditor-General's Report—Pursuant to section 60 of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975.

+43. Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service—Annual Report 1986-87—Together with the Auditor-General's Report—Pursuant to section 52 of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975.

+44. Australian Bicentennial Road Development Program—Annual Report 1986-87—Pursuant to section 27 of the Australian Bicentennial Road Development Trust Fund 1982.

Tabled in the Senate and made available to all Honourable Members

* Circulated during the parliamentary adjournment

+ Not available prior to tabling

Mr BEAZLEY—The Government wants to make available to the Opposition an opportunity for discussion of any of the reports it wants to debate. I therefore move:

That the House take note of the following papers presented this day:

Australian Bicentennial Road Development Program—Annual Report.

Australian Broadcasting Tribunal—Annual Report.

Australian Meat and Live-Stock Industry Policy Council—Annual Report.

Commonwealth Ombudsman and Defence Force Ombudsman—Annual Reports.

Defence Service Homes Corporation—Annual Report.

Department of Aviation—Annual Report.

National Crime Authority—Annual Report, together with comments by the Inter-governmental Committee on the NCA Report.

Special Broadcasting Service—Annual Report, together with the Auditor-General's Report.

Duty-Free Concessions at Kingsford-Smith Airport, Sydney—Report.

Education and National Needs—Australian Science and Technology Council Report.

Operation Silo—National Crime Authority Report of investigation.

Debate (on motion by Mr Fife) adjourned.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr BRAITHWAITE (Dawson)—Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Leo McLeay)—Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr BRAITHWAITE—I do.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—The honourable member may proceed.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—On 21 December, Mr John Haddad, Managing Director of Federal Hotels, circulated a statement to all members and senators concerning matters raised by me and also by the honourable member for Bruce (Mr Aldred) in this House. His statement was later reported in the *Australian* of 22 January 1988. My research into Federal Hotels and the Christmas Island casino has been entirely independent from any done by the honourable member for Bruce, although I obviously read his speech on this subject before I made my address to the House in the grievance debate. I have no desire to harm Federals or the Christmas Island casino project, which I have supported in the past.

Given the Government's refusal to table the Australian Federal Police (AFP) report on Federal Hotels, my intention was to ensure that certain matters had been addressed. I felt it was best to do this while the project was being delayed. The principal issue I raised concerned Dr Stanley Ho's association with Federals. Mr Haddad said that I had inferred that Dr Ho was a less than desirable person. I refer him to the AFP minute of 25 May 1987, which states in part:

... according to Territories, Mr Haddad of Federals has indicated that the 7% shareholding in Federals by Dr Stanley Ho, of Macau fame, is about to be, or has been, terminated. The reason for this is to allegedly remove any stigma which may have been attached because of Dr Ho's dubious financial background.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—I ask the honourable member for Dawson to come to where he has been misrepresented. I think he is going a bit wide.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—That is one aspect which Mr Haddad raised. He said that I had

inferred that Dr Ho was less than a desirable person. I am supporting that by—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—But you have to say where you personally have been misrepresented, not where something you said might have been questioned.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—Could I just go on to other aspects of this matter. Mr Haddad also deprecated my suggestion that Dr Ho might still have some stake in Federal's parent company and my informant's claim that a condition of the AFP clearance of Federal was that Dr Ho divest his shares in TAL Holdings Ltd. He directed members to an answer given by the Justice Minister on 14 December 1987, describing—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Unless the honourable member for Dawson comes to the point where he was misrepresented, I think it would be best if he resumed his seat.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—Mr Deputy Speaker, a statement was circulated in which Mr Haddad referred to some material which I had placed before the House during a grievance debate. I have been misrepresented in that he said that by inferring that Dr Ho was less than a desirable person I was attacking Federal Hotels in some way. Not only did I not do that, but I also supported the casino project. I was bringing to the attention of the Australian Federal Police matters that should have been addressed in the report to which Mr Haddad responded.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—I think the honourable member has adequately clarified where he was misrepresented. I think that probably might be the end of it.

Mr BRAITHWAITE—I think the matter has been corrected in that there has been an admission by Senator Tate that he misled the Senate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! I think the honourable member is dealing with something that is a long way removed from what should be happening at present.

PETITIONS

The Clerk—Petitions have been lodged for presentation as follows and copies will be referred to the appropriate Ministers:

Public Order and Safety: Australian Capital Territory

To the Honourable the Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The petition of the undersigned shows that:

There is widespread concern at the increasing breakdown of public order in the A.C.T.

This breakdown is shown by the recent increase in reports of violent assault—one of which concerned the tragic death of a young man at a school fete.

The involvement of groups of youths in some of these assaults causes particular concern.

Such behaviour is affected by the ready availability, to young people, of alcohol and video and films which depict extreme violence.

Your petitioners therefore ask the Parliament to:

Make unlawful the creation of a public nuisance by loitering.

Ensure the enforcement of laws which prohibit the public consumption of alcohol by under-age persons, and

Legislate to restrict the production, distribution and sale of material which depicts extreme violence.

by **Mr Beale, Mr John Brown, Mr Carlton, Mr Tim Fischer, Mr Howard, Mrs Kelly, Mr Leo McLeay and Mr Spender.**

Food Irradiation

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The petition of the undersigned respectfully showeth. We most strongly oppose the process of Food Irradiation by radioactive Cobalt 60 or any other radioactive substance.

We oppose the introduction of regulations that will facilitate the food irradiation process by State Governments. We express our deep concern at this attempt to extend that use of radioactive substances and exposure of workers to radiation.

We call on the Government to immediately ban the importation of radioactive Cobalt 60 or other radioactive substances and to immediately disallow the regulations that permit the irradiation of food here in Australia.

by **Mr Beale, Mr Holding, Mr Kent, Mr Lamb, Mr McArthur, Mr Milton, Mr Scholes and Mr Snow.**

Food Irradiation

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The petition of the undersigned respectfully showeth:

That there is widespread community concern about the proposal to Irradiate Food in Australia

Your petitioners most humbly pray that the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled should:

1. Block the introduction of foods irradiation into Australia and

2. Ban the import of Cobalt-60 and Caesium-137 and Caesium-134 to be used to irradiate food products.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by **Mr Wright.**

Bans on Smoking

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of Parliament assembled. We the undersigned citizens, respectfully showeth:

1. That we are totally opposed to the Government's discriminatory Anti-Smoking legislation in the workplace bans and on Domestic Airline travel.

2. Note that so called Environmental Tobacco smoke has not been proved as a major pollutant either in the workplace or on aircraft.

3. This legislation will discriminate against thirty per cent of the citizens of Australia, and

4. Call upon the Government to lift all bans and not proceed with any discriminatory smoking legislation.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

by Mr Beale, Mr Free, Mr Kerin and Mr Moore.

Proposed Identity Card

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The petition of certain citizens respectfully sheweth that:

The Hawke Labor Government's I.D. card proposal is the most far reaching and intrusive piece of Australian legislation yet introduced, and that on all the evidence available it will not tackle in the most cost-efficient and effective manner tax and social security fraud.

Your petitioners humbly pray that the House of Representatives, Parliament assembled, urge the Government to: Reject Labor's I.D. card proposal to prevent a gross waste of taxpayers' money and a significant infringement of civil liberties.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Cadman, Mr Howard and Mr Webster.

Proposed Identity Card

To the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled, your humble petition sheweth:

1. The proposed Australia Card will have a dramatic impact on the lives of all Australians.

2. Therefore your petitioners request a national referendum on the Australia Card Bill before the proposal is resubmitted to Parliament.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

by Mr Ewen Cameron, Mr Howard and Mr Ruddock.

Proposed Telecom Charges

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully sheweth:

That Telecom Australia's proposal to time-charge local telephone calls is unlikely to benefit the general public in the way outlined by Telecom in recent news releases;

That low-income families, pensioners, social security recipients and people suffering physical and mental infirmities need telephone access without time limitations;

That such people would be severely affected under the proposed changes;

That such people would be unlikely to use the phone in off-peak hours, when lower rates would apply;

That the operations of voluntary community help agencies would be severely disadvantaged under the proposed changes;

That private subscribers should not be penalised for the over-use of Telecom facilities by businesses using facsimile machines and computers.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Federal Government will reject Telecom's proposals to time-charge local calls.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

by Mr Robert Brown and Mr Peter Morris.

Proposed Telecom Charges

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament Assembled. The petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully sheweth:

The introduction of time-charging for local telephone calls by Telecom Australia would isolate many elderly and disabled people who depend on telephone services for communication and social contact

That the greatest effect will be on isolated people and communities and will add to their disadvantages in that it will restrict social contact

The lifestyle of many people will be downgraded to facilitate business abuse of a technological device.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the House of Representatives, in Parliament assembled, urge the Government to: Totally reject plans by Telecom for time-charge local calls as a serious impost on house-bound and isolated members of the community and the general public.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Tim Fischer.

Child Pornography

The Honourable the Speaker, and Members of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Australia assembled. We, the undersigned, being appalled that the Government has set no penalty for importing unclassified child pornography, do ask that Parliament urgently legislate to:

make the importation of child pornography, and the possession of child pornography, and all tapes and goods banned by Customs, to be a criminal offence, with deterrent penalties, and

close the Customs barriers to pornography in the A.C.T., in respect of X-rated videos, (and ER) and end the shameful Canberra trade, and the Mafia connections.

Because 98% of Australians in other States have banned X-rated videos.

Because the trade is still flourishing, and its availability escalates sexual crime.

Because importers of child pornography face only a fine for lying.

Because child pornography pedlars are safe if they cross a border, and cannot be extradited for a summary offence.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that you will give this matter earnest consideration.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Cadman and Mr Webster.

National Flag

To the Honourable the Speaker, and Members of the House of Representatives in parliament assembled. The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia sheweth that whereas:

1. They are completely satisfied with the design of the existing Australian National Flag,

2. They are aware it properly reflects the immutable characteristics of Australia, namely:

- (a) The Union Jack, itself the creation of three Christian Crosses, represents the Nation's historical origin and the source of its language and law;
- (b) The Southern Cross on an azure blue background signifying its geographical location on this planet Earth;
- (c) The large star depicting the advent of Federation in 1901.

3. They know the Flag has been a source of inspiration to generations of Australians in peace and war.

4. They recall that millions of native-born Australian and newcomers to these shores from other parts of the world have become united under its proud symbolism.

5. They are certain that any change to the Flag will produce division in the Australian community.

Your petitioners therefore pray that your honourable House will: Propose and pass a motion that "the existing Australian National Flag be changed only with the approval of the Nation as expressed in a Referendum".

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Cunningham and Mr Peacock.

X-rated Videos

The Honourable the Speaker, and Members of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Australia in parliament assembled:

The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully sheweth concern:

about the evil caused by the fact that x-rated videos, with their depiction of unnatural sex and often horrible violence, are allowed to circulate around Australia from Canberra.

And your petitioners, therefore humbly pray that such circulation be prevented.

The laws regarding obscenity in the media should also be revived and enforced.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Dubois and Mr Duncan.

Human Embryo Experimentation

The Honourable the Speaker, and Members of the House of Representatives of the Parliament assembled. The petition of the undersigned expresses concern that some scientists in Australia are intent on undertaking destructive experimentation on human embryos. This subject was examined exhaustively by the 1985-1986 Senate Select Committee on Senator Harradine's Human Embryo Experimentation Bill which received 270 submissions and more than 2,000 pages of evidence. The report of the Senate Committee recommended in October 1986 that the Commonwealth Government make unlawful any destructive experiment which frustrated the development of the human embryo.

Your petitioners therefore request the House of Representatives and the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia to: Implement without delay the major recommendation of the Senate Select Committee to outlaw destructive experiments on human embryos.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Howard and Mr Spender.

Defence Service Home Loan Scheme

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully shows:

That we consider the replacement of the \$25,000 Defence Service Homes Loan with a grant of \$10,000 to be a serious erosion of an established condition of service and the Government has induced an unnecessary penalty on all serving and ex members of the Australian Defence Forces in order to help balance the September 87 Budget.

We believe that the reorganisation of this scheme will create a resignation rate that will accelerate the already depleting level of expertise in the ADF. We strongly oppose the Government's actions on this matter but unlike the public sector unions we are unable to defend ourselves against this blatant disregard for our welfare.

Your petitioners therefore strongly urge the Government to consider the following options.

1. Extend the termination date of the loan to June 88 to enable long serving members to avail themselves of this benefit.
2. Retain the scheme in full to allow eligible personnel who enlisted prior to May 85 to continue to apply for what we believed was a condition of service on enlistment.
3. Increase the amount of loan to encourage retention of personnel.

Your petitioners humbly pray that the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled, urge the Government to consider the options before a final decision is made.

by Mr Barry Jones and Mrs Kelly.

Private Psychologist Services

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of the undersigned citizens respectfully sheweth that:

They call on the House of Representatives and the Government of the Commonwealth to include private psychologists services in Medicare, when those services are conducted by clinical psychologists recognised as qualified by the Clinical Board of the Australian Psychological Society.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.
by Mr John Brown.

Fringe Benefits Tax

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives. The petition of the undersigned respectfully showeth that the Fringe Benefits Tax is an iniquitous and unjust impost which will further damage the Australian economy and further increase costs to employers.

The tax will:

- (1) further increase the level of unemployment;
- (2) increase the administrative costs and overheads for business and Government;
- (3) particularly disadvantage small business and farmers; and
- (4) act as a disincentive to those who are the most productive and skilled;

and we the undersigned call upon the Government to immediately repeal the Fringe Benefits Tax.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Cadman.

Closure of Post Office Agencies

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives assembled. The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully showeth:

That we strenuously object to the proposal that many Post Office Agencies are to be closed. They provide a network of offices with postal and agency services to residential areas and small communities.

They serve a community need and we would be seriously inconvenienced if forced to travel further to purchase postal items or collect parcels. It would be an unnecessary expense particularly for pensioners without their own transport.

We maintain that the purpose of Post Offices should be to serve the public for the variety of services they offer. They are a community centre particularly in country areas and if necessary they should be subsidised to retain them.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the House should take all possible steps to prevent the closure of Post Office Agencies and that the network should be extended, with the Agency services they offer expanded.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.
by Mr Cadman.

Proposed Telecom Charges

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled: The petition of certain citizens of Australia shows—

We object to the proposal of Telecom to charge for each three minutes of a local call, as we feel this would disadvantage the elderly and people who are unable to leave their homes.

The telephone is often the only contact relatives can have to check on the safety and well-being of those they care for.

The inordinate time span which elapses between connection to a business premises and speaking, as the caller holds the line or is transferred between departments, would also disadvantage subscribers who can ill afford it.

Your petitioners therefore pray that Telecom abandons the proposal to time charge local telephone calls as we believe that the charges Telecom makes at the moment are quite adequate.

by Mrs Darling.

Gymea Bay Post Office, New South Wales

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled: The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully showeth:

That we strenuously object to the proposal that the Post Office at Gymea Bay be closed. The Post Office serves a community need and we would be seriously inconvenienced by having to travel to another centre for our postal requirements, or even to collect registered letters and parcels, cash Pension cheques and transact banking. Many of us are Pensioners and the cost of such travel would be an unnecessary imposition. The nearest Post Office is 2.3 kms away with no convenient transport.

We maintain that the purpose of the Post Offices should be to serve the public for the variety of services they offer, and that they should not be closed merely to save money or help Australia Post make a profit.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the House should take all possible steps to prevent the closure of Gymea Bay Post Office.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.
by Mr Dobie.

National Identification Numbering System

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. This petition of undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully showeth that we strongly oppose the introduction of the 'Australia card' or any other form of National Identification Numbering System.

We believe the introduction of a National Identification Numbering System is not only totally unnecessary but is a severe threat to our civil liberties and privacy. We condemn the Government's actions on this matter, particularly as no reasonable nor responsible justifications for the proposal have been forthcoming from the Government.

We humbly pray that the House of Representatives, in Parliament assembled, should reject any proposal for a National Identification Numbering System.

by Mr Howard.

Superannuation

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully showeth:

That we consider the 2 per cent discounting of Commonwealth Occupational Superannuation Scheme pension adjustments on 10 Oct 86 to be a serious breach of trust by the Government. The Commonwealth has reneged on an established commitment as incorporated in Commonwealth legislation and benefit promise pensions are not being paid in full. In particular we resent the long-term effect of the discounting. The pension loss is compounded throughout the life of a pensioner and surviving dependants—into the 21st century for many. We consider this Government—induced penalty to be out of all proportion to the short-term “extraordinary circumstances of the economy” given as the reason for the discounting.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Government:

1. Limit the pension discounting effect of the Superannuation and Other Benefits Legislation Amendment Act 1986 to the period 10 Oct 86 to 1 July 87 so that pensions are restored to the 9 Oct 86 level as a base for the 1987 pension adjustment; and

2. consult with organisations representing pensioners before changing the terms and conditions of Commonwealth Occupational Superannuation Schemes.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Howard.

Proposed Telecom Charges

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled. The petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully showeth that:

1. We are totally opposed to any move by the government to allow local telephone calls to be charged on a time basis.

2. This measure would discriminate against the aged and disabled who rely on the telephone as their main form of communication.

3. The Government should investigate other means of eliminating the misuse of the Telecom system by computer operators.

We the undersigned call upon the Government to pledge to maintain the current system of charging for local telephone calls.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Humphreys.

Proposed Wealth Tax

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully showeth that:

An \$8m wealth inquiry will give the Hawke Labor Government the information it needs for a wealth tax and the reintroduction of death duties.

Your petitioners humbly pray that the House of Representatives, in Parliament assembled, urge the Government to: Reject any wealth inquiry or new wealth taxes or death duties on the Australian people and businesses already struggling under 16 new Hawke Labor Government taxes.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray. by Mr Hunt.

Proposed Telecom Charges

To the Honourable the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the honourable members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled. The humble petition of the undersigned electors of the Commonwealth of Australia respectfully showeth that:

1. Australian families are highly dependent upon telephone communications.

2. The Australian community needs an extensive and reasonably priced telephone system.

3. For many Australians, especially the aged and infirm, the telephone provides a ready means of communication especially at times of illness.

Your petitioners therefore pray that your honourable House of Representatives will take measures to ensure that the aged, infirm, and other fixed-income groups that are dependent on telephone communication are in no way disadvantaged by any changes to the system of charging for local telephone calls.

by Mr Johns.

North Queensland Rainforests

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled. The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully showeth:

That we strenuously object to the proposed nomination of Wet Tropical Rainforests of North Queensland to the World Heritage List. The listing as a World Heritage of such a vast area, including areas of State Forest scheduled for Timber Harvesting on a sustained yield basis, will have a detrimental effect on the Timber and Allied industries and on the citizens and economy of North Queensland.

The listing as a World Heritage of such a vast area will inhibit the future development of North Queensland on a broad economic base.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the House should take all possible steps to prevent the listing of Wet Tropical Rainforests of North Queensland as a World Heritage.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Katter.

Catholic Secondary School: Isabella Plains, Australian Capital Territory

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled. The petition of the undersigned shows that:

1. They are concerned that in the Tuggeranong Valley area of the ACT, no non-government schools have Year 11 and 12 places.

2. They want the new Catholic secondary school to be built at Isabella Plains to go to Year 12.

The petitioners request that the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled ensure that adequate resources are provided by the Government to allow year 11 and 12 places to be provided at the Catholic Secondary School at Isabella Plains in accordance with the Government's commitment to a dual system of education and greater school retention to Year 12.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.
by Mrs Kelly.

Superannuation

To the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully sheweth:

That we consider the 2% discounting of Commonwealth Occupational Superannuation Scheme pension adjustments on 10 October 1986 to be a serious breach of trust by the Government.

This cut has reduced the base for future adjustments. The Government has promised to restore the base as soon as economic circumstances permit.

Having regard to the state of the economy as portrayed by members of the Government in recent months and the interaction between Social Security pensions and the above mentioned adjustment, your petitioners most humbly pray that the House of Representatives, in Parliament assembled, should urge the Government to restore the pension base for the calculation of future adjustments and that the restoration be effected in conjunction with the Social Security adjustments in November 1987.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Langmore.

Sale of Violent Videos, Books and Toys of Violence

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully sheweth:

The sale of violent videos, books glorifying violence, and toys of violence encourages violence in the community, and has a deleterious effect on the more vulnerable members of the community who are easily influenced.

Your petitioners humbly pray that the House of Representatives, in Parliament assembled, urge the Government to: Ban the sale of violent videos, books and toys of violence, in an effort to put an end to the increasing number of violent crimes committed in this country.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr McArthur.

National Flag

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully sheweth that whereas:

1. They are completely satisfied with the design of the existing Australian National Flag.

2. They are aware it properly reflects the immutable characteristics of Australia, namely:

- (a) The Union Jack, itself the creation of three Christian Crosses, represents the nation's historical origin and the source of its language and law;
- (b) The Southern Cross on an azure blue background signifying its geographical location on this planet Earth;
- (c) The large star depicting the advent of Federation in 1901.

3. They know the flag has been a source of inspiration to generations of Australians in peace and war.

4. They recall that millions of native-born Australians and newcomers to these shores from other parts of the world have become united under its proud symbolism.

5. They are certain that any change to the flag will produce division in the Australian community.

Your petitioners therefore pray that your honourable House will: Give a speedy passage to the Flags Act Amendment Bill which provides that the Australian National Flag can only be changed by a referendum.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Milton.

Tax Evasion and Fraudulent Practices

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. We, the undersigned citizens, respectfully sheweth:

that we are totally opposed to the introduction of the Labor Government's Identity Card;

that this form of national and compulsory identification will be intrusive, costly for taxpayers and business and will not be effective in combating tax evasion, illegal immigration or social security fraud;

that we are deeply concerned at the Labor Government's inability to provide effective and efficient methods to combat tax evasion and social security fraud without resorting to expensive, ineffective and authoritarian measures which are alien to the Australian way of life;

that we call upon the Labor Government to improve management systems within the Australian Tax Office and other Departments to crack down on tax evasion and fraudulent practices.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.
by Mr Porter.

1988 Jack High Bowling Tournament

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully sheweth that:

1. The decision by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation not to televise the Jack High Bowling Tournament in 1988 is cause for distress to the 500,000 bowlers and many non bowlers who, for years, have enjoyed this interesting programme on television.

2. The unilateral decision was taken after verbal assurances had been given that the 1988 event would be televised. This action is deplored and we feel should be reversed by the Parliament in the interests of your many constituents.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.
by Mr Reith.

1988 Jack High Bowling Tournament

To the Honourable Speaker and members of the House of Representatives assembled in parliament. The petition of electors in the division of Wills, draws to the attention of the House, that we would desire the Minister to provide coverage of the lawn bowls competition known as Jack High, as was previously telecast on the National Channel.

Your petitioners pray that serious consideration be given to allowing this most popular program to be provided for the benefit of the thousands of players and supporters who viewed this instructive and enjoyable telecast.

by Mr Hawke.

Funding of Local Government Road Works

To the Honourable the Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of certain citizens of Australia respectfully showeth.

That there is a general dissatisfaction in the community at the levels of road funding made available by the Federal Government.

While noting the commitment of the Government to maintain a high standard of roads in Australia, we are specifically concerned at the real cutbacks for roadfunding in the Local Government area.

We especially note that roadworks are a labour intensive industry and cutbacks will create unemployment and hardship in rural areas.

Your petitioners request that the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled, give due consideration to increasing the amount of funds available to Local Government authorities for roadworks.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Reith.

Department of Veterans' Affairs

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of the undersigned citizens of Australia respectfully showeth that:

Any proposals to abolish the Department of Veterans' Affairs gravely concern ex-servicemen, ex-servicewomen and their families, because they renege on clear and unequivocal commitments from various Commonwealth Governments to properly care for Australia's Veterans.

Your petitioners humbly pray that the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled, urge the Parliament to—

Ensure that the Department of Veterans' Affairs continues to exist as a separate and distinct Department of State servicing the needs of Veterans and their families.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

by Mr Ruddock.

Model Food Act and Food Standards Code

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament.

The petition of certain residents of the the Australian Capital Territory, draw to the attention of the house that citizens of the said Territory are being discriminated against in that the said Territory has sub-standard Food Legislation compared to the States of Australia.

Your petitioners therefore request that the 1986 N.H. & M.R.C. Food Act and The Food Standards Code as set forth in the Commonwealth of Australia *Gazette* No. P 27 dated 27th August 1987, be adopted as a matter of urgency.

by Mrs Kelly.

Self-government in the Australian Capital Territory

To the Honourable the Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament. The petition of certain residents or persons employed in the Australian Capital Territory points out to the House that:

it is appropriate that State and local government policy and administrative functions should be managed by persons accountable to ACT residents,

and that all Australian residents would agree that there should be no taxation without representation,

and that the Commonwealth Parliament should give just and equitable consideration to redressing the wrongs afflicting the ACT.

Your petitioners therefore request urgently that Members agree to provide the ACT with an elected form of self government which will be responsible for all the functions of the ACT Office of Administration and, in addition, for those of local law enforcement and the administration of justice.

by Mrs Kelly.

Construction of a Hotel-Motel: Akuna and Allara Streets, Australian Capital Territory

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament: This petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory shows:

That we are totally opposed to the imminent construction of a highrise hotel/motel on the parkland area between the Boulevard, Custom Credit House Building, Akuna Street and Allara Street (Block 2 Section 52).

Your petitioners therefore request that the development of this hotel/motel not proceed, as the above area is used for recreation by many people who work in and visit the area.

by Mr Langmore.

Conditions of Employment: Australian Public Service

To the Honourable the Speaker of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament: The petition of a certain resident and elector in the Australian Capital Territory draws the attendance of the House to the fact that formal requirements of fairness to employees within the Australian Public Service are in jeopardy in some cases.

I am concerned about the conditions of my own employment within the Australian Public Service.

Your petitioner therefore prays that the House should ensure that fair conditions of employment apply in my case.

And your petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray,
by Mrs Kelly.

Petitions received.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr WHITE (McPherson)—Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Leo McLeay)—Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr WHITE—Mr Deputy Speaker, I do.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—The honourable member may proceed.

Mr WHITE—Thank you. Earlier this afternoon the Minister for Defence (Mr Beazley) said that I had released a statement in which I had committed the Opposition to buying an aircraft carrier. That, again, is an entire misrepresentation of the position. On 28 January I said:

There is no doubt that the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) will one day be required to fly high performance fixed-wing aircraft. The skills required for this task must not be lost.

I also said:

In due course there is no doubt Australia will acquire a sea-going platform—

which is a far cry from an aircraft carrier—

capable of operating fixed-wing aircraft. Without such a platform our Navy is virtually confined to coastal waters in the event of major hostilities.

There is nothing there that, on my part, commits the Opposition to buying an aircraft carrier.

JOINT SITTING

Instrument

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—On behalf of the Speaker, I present an instrument by His Excellency the Governor-General convening a Joint Sitting of the Senate and the House of Representatives for the purpose of choosing a person to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the resignation of the Hon. Susan Maree Ryan.

Meeting Place of Joint Sitting

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—The following message has been received from the Senate:
Madam Speaker,

The Senate transmits to the House of Representatives the following Resolution which was agreed to by the Senate this day:

That, pursuant to the Instrument by His Excellency the Governor-General, acting with the advice of the Federal Executive Council and pursuant to subsection 44 (1) of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, convening a Joint Sitting of the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives at Parliament House, Canberra, in the Australian Capital Territory, at 8 o'clock in the evening on 16 February 1988, the place of the Joint Sitting within Parliament House be the Senate Chamber.

The Senate requests the concurrence of the House of Representatives in this Resolution.

President

The Senate,
Canberra, 16 February 1988

Ordered that the message be taken into consideration forthwith.

Motion (by Mr Beazley) agreed to:

That the House concurs in the resolution transmitted in message No. 119 of the Senate relating to the place of the Joint Sitting for the purpose of choosing a person to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the resignation of the Hon. Susan Maree Ryan.

Rules for Conduct of Business

Message received from the Senate transmitting to the House of Representatives for its information the rules adopted by the Senate for the conduct of a Joint Sitting of the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives to choose a senator pursuant to section 44 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.

Motion (by Mr Beazley)—by leave—agreed to:

(1) That the following rules be adopted for the conduct of the joint sitting of the Senate and House of Representatives to choose a Senator pursuant to section 44 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918:

Matter to be considered at Joint Sitting

1. The purpose of a Joint Sitting being to choose a person to hold the vacant place in the Senate pursuant to section 44 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, no other matter shall be considered at a Joint Sitting.

General rule for conduct of business

2. In any matter of procedure not provided for in the following rules, the Standing Orders of the Senate, in force for the time being, shall be followed as far as they can be applied.

Chairman of Joint Sitting

3. The President of the Senate or, in the absence of the President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, shall be the Chairman of a Joint Sitting.

Clerks of Joint Sitting

4. The Clerk of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives shall act as Joint Clerks of a Joint Sitting and either of them may exercise a function expressed to be exercisable by the Clerk.

Minutes of proceedings

5. Proceedings of a Joint Sitting shall be recorded by the Joint Clerks, and such records shall constitute the minutes of proceedings of a Joint Sitting and shall be signed by the Joint Clerks.

Time limit on speeches

6. No Senator or Member of the House of Representatives may speak for more than five minutes on any proposal or question before a Joint Sitting.

Objection to rulings of Chair

7. If any objection is taken to any ruling of the Chairman, such objection must be taken at once, and a motion of dissent, to be submitted in writing, moved, which, if seconded, shall be proposed to the Joint Sitting, and debate thereon shall proceed forthwith.

Entitlement to vote

8. On any question arising in a Joint Sitting each Senator and Member of the House of Representatives, including the Chairman, shall have one vote.

Voting

9. Questions arising in a Joint Sitting shall be decided by a simple majority of the Senators and Members of the House of Representatives present and voting and, if the votes are equal, the question shall be resolved in the negative.

Choice of a person to hold vacant place in the Senate

10. (a) A Senator or Member of the House of Representatives, addressing the Chair, shall propose a person to hold the vacant place in the Senate and such proposal shall be seconded. When any person is so proposed the proposer shall state that that person is willing to hold the vacant place if chosen.

(b) In proposing a person to hold the vacant place in the Senate, the proposer shall declare that that person is eligible to be chosen for the Senate and that the nomination is in accordance with the provisions of subsection 44 (3) of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.

(c) If only one person is proposed and seconded, the Chairman shall put the question that that person shall be the person to hold the place of the Senator for the Australian Capital Territory whose place has become vacant.

(d) If the question is passed, the Chairman shall declare that the person has been chosen to hold the place of the Senator for the Australian Capital Territory whose place has become vacant.

(e) If more than one person is proposed and seconded, the person to hold the vacant place shall be chosen by ballot. Before the ballot proceeds the bells shall be rung for three minutes.

(f) Before giving directions to proceed with the ballot, the Chairman shall ask if any Senator or Member of the House of Representatives desires to propose any other person to hold the vacant place, and no other person shall be proposed after the ballot is commenced.

(g) Each Senator and Member of the House of Representatives present shall be provided with a ballot-paper certified by one of the Joint Clerks, and shall vote by writing thereon the name of one of the persons duly proposed, and shall place the ballot-paper in the ballot-box.

(h) The Chairman shall appoint a person from each House to be a scrutineer. The scrutineers, with the Joint Clerks, shall ascertain the number of votes for each of the persons duly proposed, and the scrutineers shall report the result to the Chairman.

(i) No informal vote shall be taken into account.

(j) If on the first ballot no person receives an absolute majority of the votes cast, the name of the person who receives the fewest votes at the first ballot shall be excluded, and a second ballot shall be taken; but if at the first ballot the names of only two persons are submitted and the number of votes for each such person is equal, the scrutineers shall by drawing lots determine which of such persons shall be chosen to hold the vacant place, and the person whose name shall be first drawn shall be deemed to have been duly chosen.

(k) Until one of the persons proposed obtains an absolute majority of the votes cast, or (as the case may be) is chosen by lot to hold the vacant place, successive ballots shall be taken, and at each such ballot the name of the person who receives the fewest votes at the preceding ballot shall be excluded.

(l) If on any ballot it is necessary to decide which of two or more persons is to be excluded from a subsequent ballot because of the number of votes for such persons being equal, a special ballot shall be taken at which the names of only those persons shall be submitted, and the name of the person having the fewest votes at such special ballot shall be excluded; but if on any special ballot it shall be necessary to decide which of two or more persons is to be excluded from a subsequent ballot because of the number of votes for such persons being equal, scrutineers shall by drawing lots determine which of such persons shall be excluded, and the name of the person last drawn shall be excluded.

(m) If at any ballot, other than the first ballot or a special ballot, the names of only two persons are submitted and the number of votes for such persons is equal, the scrutineers shall by drawing lots determine which of those persons shall be chosen to hold the vacant place, and the person whose name is first drawn shall be deemed to have been duly chosen.

(n) As soon as any person obtains an absolute majority of the votes cast, or (as the case may be) is chosen by lot to hold the vacant place, the Chairman shall declare that such person has been chosen to hold the place of the Senator for the Australian Capital Territory whose place has become vacant.

(o) The ballot-papers shall be retained by the Clerk of the Senate, who shall be the custodian thereof.

Conclusion of Joint Sitting

11. Upon the declaration of the person chosen to fill the vacant place in the Senate, the Chairman shall announce that the President of the Senate will certify the choice to His Excellency the Governor-General, and shall then declare the Joint Sitting closed.

(2) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of the rules adopted by the House of Representatives for the conduct of a joint sitting with the Senate.

BILLS RETURNED FROM THE SENATE

The following Bills were returned from the Senate without amendment or requests:

Taxation Laws Amendment (No. 4) Bill 1987
Taxation Laws Amendment (Fringe Benefits and Substantiation) Bill 1987
Sales Tax (Off-shore Installations) Amendment Bill 1987
Sales Tax (Exemptions and Classifications) Amendment Bill 1987
Housing Assistance Amendment Bill 1987
Petroleum Resource Rent Tax Assessment Bill 1987
Petroleum Resource Rent Tax Bill 1987
Petroleum Resource Rent Tax (Interest on Under-payments) Bill 1987
Petroleum Resource Rent Tax (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 1987
Customs Tariff Amendment (No. 2) Bill 1987
Customs Tariff (Coal Export Duty) Amendment Bill 1987
Petroleum Excise (Prices) Bill 1987
Excise Tariff Amendment (No. 2) Bill 1987
Bass Strait Freight Adjustment Levy Amendment Bill 1987
Bass Strait Freight Adjustment Levy Collection Amendment Bill 1987
Bass Strait Freight Adjustment Trust Fund Amendment Bill 1987
River Murray Waters Amendment Bill 1987
Williamstown Dockyard Employees Bill 1987
Management and Investment Companies Legislation Amendment Bill 1987
Dairy Produce Amendment Bill 1987
Dried Fruits Export Charges Amendment Bill 1987
Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Legislation Amendment Bill 1987
Live-stock Export Charge Amendment Bill 1987
Live-stock Slaughter Levy Amendment Bill 1987
Export Inspection Charges Collection Amendment Bill 1987
Export Inspection (Establishment Registration Charges) Amendment Bill 1987
Australian Horticultural Corporation Bill 1987
Horticultural Research and Development Corporation Bill 1987
Horticultural Policy Council Bill 1987
Horticultural Levy Bill 1987

Horticultural Levy Collection Bill 1987
Horticultural Export Charge Bill 1987
Horticultural Export Charge Collection Bill 1987
Australian Horticultural Corporation (Transitional Provisions and Consequential Amendments) Bill 1987
Wheat Marketing Amendment (No. 2) Bill 1987
Wheat Tax Regulations (Validation) Bill 1987
Family Law Amendment Bill 1987
Fishing Industry Research and Development Bill 1987
Fishing Industry Research Amendment Bill 1987
Fishing Legislation Amendment Bill 1987
Fisheries Amendment Bill 1987
Commonwealth Banks Amendment Bill 1987
Asian Development Fund Bill 1987
International Fund for Agricultural Development Bill 1987
International Development Association Bill 1987

BROADCASTING AMENDMENT BILL (No. 3) 1987

Message received from the Senate returning the Broadcasting Amendment Bill (No. 3) 1987 and acquainting the House that the Senate has agreed to the Bill as amended by the House.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following Bills reported:

Radio Licence Fees Amendment (No. 2) Bill 1987
Television Licence Fees Amendment (No. 3) Bill 1987
National Health Amendment (No. 2) Bill 1987
Bankruptcy Amendment Bill 1987
Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 1987
States Grants (Education Assistance—Participation and Equity) Amendment (No. 2) Bill 1987
States Grants (Schools Assistance) Amendment (No. 2) Bill 1987
States Grants (Tertiary Education Assistance) Bill 1987
States Grants (Tertiary Education Assistance) Amendment (No. 2) Bill 1987
Student Assistance Amendment Bill 1987
Maritime College Amendment Bill 1987
Canberra College of Advanced Education Amendment Bill 1987
Australian National University Amendment Bill 1987
Overseas Students Charge Amendment Bill 1987
Social Security and Veterans' Entitlements Amendment (No. 2) Bill 1987
Health Legislation Amendment (No. 2) Bill 1987
Community Services and Health Legislation Amendment Bill 1987
Migration Amendment Bill 1987
Petroleum Resource Rent Tax Assessment Bill 1987
Petroleum Resource Rent Tax Bill 1987
Petroleum Resource Rent Tax (Interest on Under-payments) Bill 1987

Petroleum Resource Rent Tax (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 1987
 Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 1987
 Taxation Laws Amendment (No. 4) Bill 1987
 Taxation Laws Amendment (Fringe Benefits and Substantiation) Bill 1987
 Sales Tax (Off-shore Installations) Amendment Bill 1987
 Australian Tourist Commission Bill 1987
 Australian Tourist Commission (Transitional Provisions) Bill 1987
 Broadcasting Amendment (No. 4) Bill 1987
 Sales Tax (Exemptions and Classifications) Amendment Bill 1987
 Housing Assistance Amendment Bill 1987
 Customs Tariff Amendment (No. 2) Bill 1987
 Customs Tariff (Coal Export Duty) Amendment Bill 1987
 Petroleum Excise (Prices) Bill 1987
 Excise Tariff Amendment (No. 2) Bill 1987
 Bass Strait Freight Adjustment Levy Amendment Bill 1987
 Bass Strait Freight Adjustment Levy Collection Amendment Bill 1987
 Bass Strait Freight Adjustment Trust Fund Amendment Bill 1987
 River Murray Waters Amendment Bill 1987
 Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Legislation Amendment Bill 1987
 Live-stock Export Charge Amendment Bill 1987
 Live-stock Slaughter Levy Amendment Bill 1987
 Export Inspection Charges Collection Amendment Bill 1987
 Export Inspection (Establishment Registration Charges) Amendment Bill 1987
 Williamstown Dockyard Employees Bill 1987
 Dried Fruits Export Charges Amendment Bill 1987
 Dairy Produce Amendment Bill 1987
 Management and Investment Companies Legislation Amendment Bill 1987
 Australian Horticultural Corporation Bill 1987
 Australian Horticultural Corporation (Transitional Provisions and Consequential Amendments) Bill 1987
 Horticultural Research and Development Corporation Bill 1987
 Horticultural Policy Council Bill 1987
 Horticultural Levy Bill 1987
 Horticultural Levy Collection Bill 1987
 Horticultural Export Charge Bill 1987
 Horticultural Export Charge Collection Bill 1987
 Wheat Marketing Amendment (No. 2) Bill 1987
 Wheat Tax Regulations (Validation) Bill 1987
 Fishing Industry Research and Development Bill 1987

Fishing Industry Research Amendment Bill 1987
 Fishing Legislation Amendment Bill 1987
 Fisheries Amendment Bill 1987
 Asian Development Fund Bill 1987
 International Development Association Bill 1987
 International Fund for Agricultural Development Bill 1987
 Family Law Amendment Bill 1987
 Commonwealth Banks Amendment Bill 1987
 Broadcasting (Ownership and Control) (No. 2) Bill 1987
 Broadcasting Amendment (No. 3) Bill 1987

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Leo McLeay)—The Speaker has received advice from the Government Whip that he has nominated Mr Johns to be a member of the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training in place of Mr Mildren. The Speaker has also received advice from the Government Whip that he has nominated Mr Lavarch to be a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters in place of Mr Punch.

SELECTION COMMITTEE

Motion (by Mr Beazley)—by leave—agreed to:

That Mr D. M. Cameron, Mr E. C. Cameron, Mr Cunningham, Mr Hicks, Mr Lamb, Mr MacKellar, Mr Leo McLeay, Mr Millar, Mr Mountford, Mr Snowdon and Mr Tickner be members of the Selection Committee.

HAWKE GOVERNMENT

Discussion of Matter of Public Importance

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Leo McLeay)—Madam Speaker has received a letter from the Leader of the Opposition (Mr Howard) proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The total alienation of the Hawke Government from the hopes and aspirations of the majority of Australians. I call upon those members who approve of the proposed discussion to rise in their places.

More than the number of members required by the Standing Orders having risen in their places—

Motion (by Mr Beazley) put:

That the business of the day be called on.

The House divided.

(Mr Deputy Speaker—Mr Leo McLeay)

Ayes	77
Noes	57
Majority	20

AYES

Baldwin, P. J.	Humphreys, B. C.
Beazley, K. C.	Jakobsen, C. A.
Beddall, D. P.	Jenkins, H. A.
Bilney, G. N.	Johns, G. T.
Blanchard, C. A.	Jones, Barry
Blewett, N.	Kelly, R. J.
Bowen, Lionel	Kent, L.
Brown, John	Kerin, J. C.
Brown, Robert	Klugman, R. E.
Brumby, J. M.	Lamb, A. H. (Teller)
Campbell, G.	Langmore, J. V.
Charles, D. E.	Lavarch, M. H.
Charlesworth, R. I.	Lee, M. J.
Chynoweth, R. L.	Lindsay, E. J.
Cleeland, P. R.	McHugh, J.
Cohen, B.	Martin, S. P.
Courtice, B. W.	Mildren, J. B.
Crawford, M. C.	Milton, P.
Cross, M. D.	Morris, Allan
Cunningham, B. T. (Teller)	Mountford, J. G.
Darling, E. E.	O'Keefe, N. P.
Dawkins, J. S.	O'Neill, L. R. T.
Dubois, S. C.	Price, L. R. S.
Duffy, M. J.	Punch, G. F.
Duncan, P.	Saunderson, J.
Edwards, Ronald	Scholes, G. G. D.
Fatin, W. F.	Sciaccia, C.
Fitzgibbon, E. J.	Scott, J. L.
Free, R. V.	Simmons, D. W.
Gaylor, J.	Snow, J. H.
Gear, G.	Snowdon, W. E.
Gorman, R. N. J.	Staples, P. R.
Grace, E. L.	Theophanous, A. C.
Griffiths, A. G.	Tickner, R. E.
Hand, G. L.	Uren, T.
Harvey, E. R.	West, S. J.
Holding, A. C.	Willis, R.
Hollis, C.	Wright, K. W.
Howe, B. L.	



NOES

Adermann, A. E.	McArthur, F. S.
Aldred, K. J.	McGauran, P. J.
Andrew, J. N. (Teller)	MacKellar, M. J. R.
Beale, J. H.	Macphee, I. M.
Blunt, C. W.	Miles, C. G.
Braithwaite, R. A.	Miller, P. C.
Brown, N. A.	Moore, J. C.
Burr, M. A.	Nehl, G. B.
Cadman, A. G.	Peacock, A. S.
Cameron, Donald	Porter, J. R.
Cameron, Ewen	Pratt, M.
Cameron, Ian	Prosser, G. D.
Carlton, J. J.	Reith, P. K.
Cobb, M. R.	Robinson, Ian
Connolly, D. M.	Rocher, A. C.
Cowan, D. B.	Ruddock, P. M.
Downer, A. J. G.	Shack, P. D.
Edwards, Harry	Shipton, R. F.
Fife, W. C.	Sinclair, I. McC.
Fischer, Tim	Smith, W. L.
Fisher, Peter	Spender, J. M.
Goodluck, B. J.	Sullivan, K. J.
Hall, Steele	Tuckey, C. W.
Hawker, D. P. M.	Webster, A. P.
Hewson, J. R.	White, P. N. D.
Hicks, N. J. (Teller)	Wilson, I. B. C.
Hunt, R. J. D.	Woods, R. L.
Katter, R. C.	Wooldridge, M. R. L.
Lloyd, B.	

PAIRS

Kerr, D. J. C.	Halverson, R. G.
Hayden, W. G.	Dobie, J. D. M.
Morris, Peter	Jull, D. J.

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

COMMONWEALTH LEGAL AID AMENDMENT BILL 1988

Bill received from the Senate, and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr LIONEL BOWEN (Kingsford-Smith—Attorney-General) (4.02)—I move:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Bill is to provide for the replacement of the Commonwealth Legal Aid Council by two new national advisory bodies, namely, the National Legal Aid representative Council and the National Legal Aid Advisory Committee. For convenience I will refer to the bodies as 'the Council' and 'the Committee'. The Bill derives from the decision of the Government, which I announced on 19 December 1986, to establish a new national structure to administer, co-ordinate and provide advice to the Government on legal aid. The structure comprises three elements—the Council, the Committee and an Office of Legal Aid Administration in the Attorney-General's Department.

The Council and the Committee will advise the Government on the full range of legal aid issues including needs, funding, organisation and delivery methods, on a national basis. The Office of Legal Aid Administration, which was established in December 1986, has brought together in an identifiable unit all aspects of the management of legal aid policy and funding within the Department. It has substantially improved the management of national legal aid policy and the expenditure of Commonwealth legal aid funds, which comprise by far the greatest single component of the total funds available for legal aid in Australia. In 1986-87 input to legal aid services from Commonwealth and State sources, other than Aboriginal legal services and State-funded community legal centres, was \$129.6m, of which the Commonwealth provided \$77.8m or 60 per cent. In the 1987-88 Budget, the Commonwealth has allocated a total of \$101.1m for legal aid expenditure. This includes \$14.1m for Aboriginal legal aid. Before deciding on the new advisory structure the Government considered various options and adopted the present approach with a view to reconciling the aim of providing a streamlined, economical body with the need to provide an appropriate forum for

the views of the major interest groups in legal aid to be heard at the national level.

The history of this legislation began with its enactment in 1977 and the establishment in 1978 of the Commonwealth Legal Aid Commission. The function of the Commission was to fulfil an overall advisory, co-ordinating and monitoring role in relation to the need for and provision of legal aid in Australia. It had executive as well as advisory responsibilities. In 1981 the Commission was superseded by the Commonwealth Legal Aid Council, as one of a series of measures carried out by the then coalition government which, it said, were to reduce administrative costs and increase efficiency. In June 1985 the Council ceased to exist when the terms of the then members expired. The Government considered that the Council was an inappropriate mechanism to be effective in the operation of legal aid. In particular, the Government felt that there was a need substantially to improve the efficiency of the delivery of legal aid services through the State and Territory commissions, and that a reorganisation of the national legal aid structure was required in order to do this.

In seeking to achieve this goal the Commonwealth has taken a fresh approach to the basis on which funds are provided to the States, under Commonwealth-State agreements, in relation to the operation of the legal aid commissions in those States. In April 1987 an agreement with the New South Wales Government regarding the funding of legal aid in that State came into effect. This agreement is seen as a model for renegotiations which have commenced with the four other States where legal aid commissions currently exist and agreements have been in place for some time. Negotiations with the Tasmanian Government will be proposed on the same model. Under the agreement made with New South Wales, the Commonwealth and the State provide fixed proportions of the net operating costs of the legal aid commission in that State. These steps are part of the Commonwealth's overall strategy of continuing its involvement in the funding of legal aid while at the same time ensuring that the States make an equitable contribution towards the total cost of legal aid services and the efficiency, economy and effectiveness of those services.

It is basic to the Government's policy that the provision of legal aid throughout Australia should be such as to ensure that there is uniform access to legal aid, and thus to the judicial system, and that the nature and quality of legal aid services provided do not put assisted persons at a disad-

vantage because of the particular State or Territory in which they reside. It is envisaged that the two new advisory bodies, which were established in September 1987 on an administrative basis, pending the passage of this legislation, will play a key role in analysing the important issues in the legal aid field and, particularly in the present economic climate, will seek ways of providing legal aid more effectively and economically. They can also be expected to examine alternative means of reducing the demand for legal aid by appropriate changes to substantive law and legal procedures.

The Bill provides for the Council to consist of 20 members appointed on the basis of the position they hold, or on the nomination of one of the major legal aid interest groups. Because of its size and nature, the Council will normally meet only once a year. The membership is as follows:

the chairperson and director of each State or Territory legal aid commission;

the Chairman of the National Legal Aid Advisory Committee;

two representatives of the private legal profession;

two representatives of the community legal centres;

a representative of the Australian Council of Social Service;

a representative of the Australian Legal Aid Office; and

a representative of the Office of Legal Aid Administration.

Where appropriate, the appointments will be made after consultation with the relevant bodies.

The Bill establishes the Committee as a body comprising seven members appointed on the basis of their knowledge of, or experience in, legal assistance or in matters related to the Commonwealth's involvement in legal assistance. Such related matters include financial and management expertise. Although the backgrounds and experience of the individual members should desirably represent a reasonable spread of areas relevant to the provision of legal aid, the Committee would not be directly representative of any areas, organisations or groups. The Committee will be able to raise issues on its own initiative and will also be available to provide advice to the Government on specific areas of legal aid which require attention. The Committee will meet regularly. The number and timing of its meetings will be a matter for it to determine,

although it will be required to meet at least twice each year.

The Council and the Committee, which have already been established administratively pending enactment of this legislation, may advise and make recommendations to the Minister on:

the extent of the need for legal assistance in Australia and cost effective ways of meeting that need;

the effectiveness of delivery methods;

reforms to substantive law or other changes which may affect the cost of legal assistance;

the level of Commonwealth funds provided for legal assistance;

the effectiveness of the arrangements for the application of Commonwealth funds towards the provision of legal assistance;

the funding of community legal centres;

community legal education; and

any other matter relating to the provision of legal assistance.

The differences between the two bodies are essentially those of their nature and orientation: the Council will provide a forum for the major interest groups to express their views once a year whereas the Committee will be primarily a working party which has an essentially practical role. The possibility of efforts of the respective bodies in relation to particular projects being duplicated should be minimised by the presence on the Council of the Chairman of the Committee. Both bodies will prepare an annual report for tabling in the Parliament.

The impact of the establishment of these bodies on Government expenditure is expected to be minimal—in a full year \$80,000 for the meetings and approximately \$100,000 for engaging two consultants, one of whom will have expertise in finance or management. The work of the Committee and the Council is expected to lead to greater efficiency and economy in the delivery of legal aid services. The decision to provide funds for the consultants was made in the context of the views of the Committee expressed at its initial meeting late last year.

The Minister for Justice (Senator Tate) has recently sought the co-operation of State and Territory Attorneys-General to ensure that, as is the case with Commonwealth officers, any State officer who is appointed to either body will be paid his or her normal salary and the appropriate travel allowance but no sitting fee in relation to meetings of the relevant advisory body. This has been done to avoid any 'double dipping'

taking place. Two State Attorneys-General have already responded positively to this request.

The establishment of the Office of Legal Aid Administration within the Attorney-General's Department has created a focus for the management, co-ordination and evaluation of the Commonwealth's legal aid policy and funding. The Office also administers the various schemes under which the Attorney-General may grant financial assistance in respect of legal and quasi-judicial proceedings. The Office will provide the necessary secretariat support services, and arrange for and monitor the work of research consultants for the advisory bodies. The creation of the new advisory bodies as an integral part of the national legal aid structure should contribute substantially to improving and making more cost effective the use of available resources for the provision of legal aid services.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to place on record my appreciation of the work of the successive chairmen of the Commonwealth Legal Aid Council, Mr Justice Rae Else-Mitchell and Mr Rowland Ball, those who were members of the Council and those officers of the Attorney-General's Department who worked to the Council for their commitment and conscientiousness in carrying out the work of the Council during the four years of its existence. I present the explanatory memorandum to the Bill and commend the Bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Mr Reith) adjourned.

CHILD SUPPORT BILL 1987

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 9 December 1987, on motion by Mr Howe:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr CONNOLLY (Bradfield) (4.11)—It is particularly appropriate that we should be debating a very significant piece of social legislation on the opening day of this new session of parliament, coming so soon after the Government's very notable defeat in the by-election in Adelaide. That defeat demonstrated very clearly that the Australian people, by and large, are no longer prepared to believe the rhetoric of this Government on the one hand as distinct from its actions on the other and they are particularly concerned about the impact of its social and economic policies on the development of the Australian community as a whole.

The Child Support Bill has been described in the second reading speech by the Minister for Social Security (Mr Howe) as a 'centrepiece of

the Government's child support scheme'. In fairness to the Government and to the Minister, a very serious attempt has been made over the last year or so to try to overcome some of the problems which have been manifestly obvious for the last five years of the Hawke Government and which, regrettably, have been ignored for far too long. It is precisely for that reason that the Opposition supports in principle the Child Support Bill and the establishment of a child support agency. In so doing, however, we are concerned about the impact it can have on that not inconsiderable number—probably about 30 per cent of non-custodial parents—who are currently the subject of mutually agreed arrangements between the ex-husband and wife in relation to the protection and financial support of their children. Therefore, for that particular reason, on behalf of the Opposition, I move the following amendment:

That all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:

'whilst not declining to give the Bill a second reading, the House wishes to ensure the protection of the rights of non-custodial parents who have entered into maintenance arrangements to share in the cost of supporting their children at no extra cost to the Commonwealth, by not requiring these agreements to be registered with the Child Support Agency, except in the event that maintenance arrangements are not honoured'.

The significance of this legislation cannot be overestimated. For far too long in Australia we have seen an inexorable rise in the divorce rate, with the result that year after year some 55,000 more children are subject to the economic and social dislocation caused by the break-up of their families. In fact, the majority, some 85 per cent of sole parents, are divorced or separated. Only 4 per cent of all supporting parents are, in fact, teenagers. The average current duration for the receipt of benefits is 2.2 years for men and 2.8 years for women. This is significant because it demonstrates that, while the level of divorce in Australia is extremely high, equally, the proportion of people who then enter into new relationships of either a de facto or de jure nature is also substantial.

Nevertheless, in Australia we are aware that there are some 800,000 children living in poverty. It is not by any means a subject outside the responsibility of this Parliament to note that, according to investigations into this matter by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, half of those children—some 400,000—are in the care of sole parents following separation of the parents. Consequently, the whole issue of mainte-

nance and the way in which it is administered is of profound importance to us today.

Over the years the Commonwealth has seen its responsibilities in this area grow. According to the Minister, it is anticipated that the scheme will in fact save, in social security terms, an estimated \$200m in 1988-89. I hope to see this, but I must say that I am not sanguine about it because, as the Minister no doubt would appreciate, the actual implementation of these proposals will be very difficult because of the number of people who, for one reason or another, may not wish to co-operate. That is in no sense an excuse for not attempting to solve what has become a very major social problem in Australia today.

I will now comment on the substance of the Bill. It should be noted that its purpose is to draw a distinction between arrangements relating to parents—ex-nuptial parents or others in de facto or de jure relationships who have entered into agreements prior to the passage of this legislation—and arrangements that will follow after the introduction of this law. It appears, from what the Minister said previously and in documentation on this subject, it is not proposed that the legislation be all-embracing. The reason given is essentially one of cost and also the related very major problem that we do not have in the Australian court system, at present, the capability to carry a significant increase in the number of appeals which, no doubt, could flow from this legislation.

For that reason it was determined that mutually agreed arrangements which involved no payment of Commonwealth social security benefits to the custodial parent could remain in place, subject only to the proviso that when they were later reviewed or amended they would then become subject to the child support agency. It also follows that persons who are recipients of benefits, whether they are on the basis of shared maintenance and benefits on the one hand or no maintenance and all benefits on the other hand, will automatically come within the purview of the legislation, even though those arrangements are in place today.

The problem we faced, however, was in deciding whether there was adequate protection given in the Bill to that not insignificant number—as I said earlier, probably as high as 30 per cent—of non-custodial parents who have voluntarily entered into agreements through the courts or otherwise and whose children are not beneficiaries of social security payments. As the Bill currently stands, there is a considerable degree

of freedom given to those people to opt out of the system, provided they advise the agency within 14 days of the passage through the court of the maintenance arrangements of their desire not to be part of the system. That is fair enough. The problem, however, arises when these people still have their agreements registered with the agency even though effectively they will not be subject to it.

I think this question needs to be asked: should those people who have entered into voluntary agreements and who have voluntary agreements in place, for which they are meeting their commitments, be treated the same as people who may not have met their commitments? The Parties which I represent decided that was a distinction which ought to be made. The Liberal Party of Australia and the National Party of Australia are firmly of the view that the basis for the Australian legal system has always been that one is innocent until proven guilty. While the Minister may think that I am drawing a long bow in this particular case—his laughter would suggest that he does—this question can quite legitimately be asked: why, if one is a non-custodial parent and has had a satisfactory arrangement with one's ex-wife following the break-up of the marriage and one's ex-wife is not a recipient of social security benefits, should one be identified along with others who may well have not either met the determinations of the court or, by one means or another, totally ignored their filial responsibilities?

We believe, and no doubt the Minister believes, that the purpose of this legislation is to ensure that parents accept their fundamental responsibilities. When I use the word 'parents' I use it in the widest sense of the term, whether they be in de jure relationships, in de facto relationships or in ex-nuptial relationships. One of the significant elements of this legislation is that for the first time in Commonwealth law, as a result of changes made in the last session to the Family Law Act, ex nuptial relationships relating to people living in those States which have agreed to the introduction of this new agency are going to be given equal status.

The important point, is this: The essential ingredient of this legislation is that we are attempting to assist children. Regrettably, I find that many people make value judgments as to who is responsible for what result in relation to the breakdown of a marriage. We all know that time and time again it is the children who ultimately have to carry both the economic and social dislocation and costs resulting from the

marriage breakup. The whole purpose of this Bill, therefore, is to say to people who have brought children into this world, mothers and fathers alike, that as far as the state is concerned they have no right to pass on their financial responsibilities to the community. This legislation will insert a mechanism which establishes once and for all not only that fundamental responsibility but also the means by which people who are non-custodial parents will be required to make a financial contribution in accordance with their means.

As I said initially, this is a very sensitive and difficult area. It is the first time in Australia's history that legislation of this nature has been on the statute books. No doubt amendments will be required from time to time as the agency comes into operation and we see how the agency works. I am concerned that time and time again I detect, in comments made by the Minister and others, that while he refers to the legislation as being the centrepiece of the Government's child support scheme, there seems to be more than a strong assertion creeping in that the main purpose of the exercise is to save money. I can strengthen that criticism by making the point that, according to the information provided by the Department of Social Security, in conjunction with social security amendments it is anticipated that \$192m will be saved in the 1988-89 financial year. With the passage of time that figure is becoming less and less likely because this legislation may not be on the statute books before May, in which case the year will have virtually passed. I would be delighted if the Minister in his closing remarks could explain to us how the Government has determined that there will be a reduction in the numbers of pensioners and beneficiaries. He guesses in this regard. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that there will be a cumulative community saving because funds which would have previously gone to the social security system to one extent or another will be paid by the non-custodial parents. That again, as I said, is something we strongly support.

There are a number of other matters which need to be referred to. For example, there is some concern among employers that the proposal to apply what is in effect an extension of the pay as you earn tax system will involve additional work for them. On the basis of the rather scant information supplied in the Minister's second reading speech and in the explanatory memorandum, I think their fears are justified. The questions that need to be raised are the extent to which they will be involved and the extent to which discussions have taken

place. I gather from the major employer organisations that discussions have not taken place between organisations representing employers and the Minister and his Department as to the requirements they will have to meet. For example, clause 47 of the Bill refers to a form which employers must use to make the deductions. The Government has pledged that the system will be introduced with a minimum cost to business. However, as I have said, neither I representing the Opposition nor the business community have sighted the form or been consulted as to what it will involve. Despite the Government's commitment to consultation, I am sceptical that the ultimate form will tend to meet the needs of the Commissioner of Taxation, who, incidentally, in this case will be the Registrar of the agency, rather than the needs and the day to day administrative arrangements of employers.

The Bill makes the point that it does not wish to discriminate between those who will be subject to the agency and those who will not. It makes the point that employers will be in breach of the law if they discriminate between people in both categories in terms of employment opportunities. We support that concept. Nevertheless, it will be a major exercise right across Australia in community support, employer support and, above all, non-custodial parent support to see whether it is possible to put in place a system which is more effective than the shambles we have had for far too long.

The Family Law Act, which was the subject of major amendments in the closing weeks of the last session, made one very important change of great relevance to this package. It took from the courts the authority to take account of the level of social security benefits which may be payable in addition to the level of maintenance that should be provided. Over the years the judiciary has tended to apply a simple formula of expecting the maximum degree of social security benefits and the minimum degree of maintenance, with the result that the cost to the community has risen enormously. I am pleased to say that that situation is about to change. Clearly, the judicial process from now on will have to make judgments on the merits of the case in relation to the assets of the non-custodial parent and the ability to meet what should be an adequate level of maintenance. In turn, that will determine the extent to which social security benefits will be required, especially in those cases where the level of maintenance will not be adequate to meet the income and assets limitations under the social security legislation.

I should like to make some general comments about poverty in relation to sole parents because it is something that too many people tend to ignore. Some 60 per cent of sole parents on the widow's pension or supporting parent's benefit, are living below the poverty line. The Minister no doubt will make the observation that as a result of the family allowance supplement (FAS) and so forth which was introduced in the last Budget steps are being taken to overcome that problem. I hasten to add that, on the commitment he made to me in this House, we have seen only stage 1 of the FAS and that stage 2 is yet to be seen. I sincerely hope that in the next Budget we will see the reality of stage 2 and that it will be closely linked to the whole question of poverty in relation to single parents and in particular their children.

Some 90 per cent of sole parents are women and they have very limited labour market opportunities. Even those who are employed receive on average some 20 per cent less per annum than married couples where only one parent is employed. This is particularly relevant because a significant percentage of single parents are women of an age at which normally they would expect to be in the work force if their circumstances were more beneficial. The vast majority tend to be left with children, often of a young age, and that quite clearly limits their capacity to enter the work force because of problems of child care and matters such as that, which is a daily problem women face. It is an issue to which again I trust the Government, in its efforts towards overcoming poverty in the community, will give very serious consideration in the future.

Statistics from the Australian Institute of Family Studies in 1986 show that in the average case where the woman was the sole parent and the man was living alone, the man was \$175 a week better off than the woman, even after payment of tax and payment of maintenance—in the case of those who did pay maintenance. This significant fall in the sole parent's standard of living obviously flows on to the child in his or her care. One of the issues which needs to be considered in this case is that, while it is clear that the objective of the legislation is to ensure that those who have a financial responsibility to their children should meet that responsibility, we are still left with the fundamental problem that there is a not insignificant number of children of women who have no husbands, either because of death or because they cannot be found, for whom for one reason or another no further maintenance payments will be made. No doubt the

Minister has given consideration to that. What it means is that the Government is creating a division, shall we say, in the poverty base between those with access to, it is hoped, an enhanced level of income, together with a threshold which allows an additional sum of money to be gained before loss of pension and the not insignificant group of women and their children who have no access to additional income or benefits, no access to maintenance and, therefore, are totally dependent on the pension. It is an issue which I think is worthy of some consideration by the Government.

The data from the 1981-82 income and housing survey shows that some 56.2 per cent of female sole-parent income units, were in the lowest decile class of income units yet only 3.5 per cent of married couples with children were in the lowest decile class. What that emphasises, if there is any doubt about the issue, is that while there is a considerable degree of poverty among two-parent families in that lower decile, the fact of the matter is that single-parent families are in an even lower and more hopeless situation. It is now claimed that over 24 million Australians live below the poverty line and, quite clearly, those women and their children must be given very serious consideration in the development of social welfare policy.

The increasing number of single-parent families, their poverty and the growth in government expenditure mean that the public and the private roles in providing support have to be re-examined. That is one of the fundamental reasons why the legislation is before the House. As a proportion of all families in Australia, sole-parent families rose from 9 per cent in the mid-1970s to the current figure of 14 per cent. That increase is due, in part, to a divorce rate which had stretched to 39,417 cases in 1986. The proportion of sole-parent families on social security has also risen and some 85 per cent, or 250,000 people, are now on pensions or benefits.

In the 1987-88 Budget the expenditure estimate for the class A widows pension was \$1,011.5m and the supporting parents benefit figure rose to \$1,509.8m, totalling \$2,521.3m—a very substantial amount of money. The supporting parent's benefit was introduced in 1974 at a cost of \$40.6m. It is worth noting the incredible increase that has taken place in what is a relatively short period. At the same time, the number of payments has escalated from 26,000 in 1974 to approximately 180,000 today. Quite clearly, the community has a right to cry out for reform and to say that those who bring children

into the world must be required to accept their responsibilities for so doing.

It has been said to me that one of the weaknesses of the legislation is that, apart from the related fact that the courts may take action against people for contempt of court in cases where maintenance agreements are not met, there is no provision whatsoever which sets out what the Commonwealth's capacity will be to face up to the undoubtedly problem that some people will simply refuse to pay anything. We are facing that very sensitive issue of maintenance on the one hand and access on the other. In the developing of the legislation the Minister has made the point, and I support him, that it is very important that we do not allow those two issues to become too closely intertwined. The question of access is essentially one for the courts to determine. We all know, from our dealings with constituents, the difficulties and complexities of human interrelationships faced in that very sad area. Nevertheless, if we allow ourselves to be put in the position where people say, 'I do not have access; therefore, I refuse to pay', we are opening up yet another Pandora's box, the key to which, regrettably, somebody threw away many years ago.

The fundamental point we must support in this context is that the legislation is directed at maintenance and not access. The question of whether a person has access or not does not in any sense overcome the primary reality that the non-custodial parent is the father or mother of the child. That is a fundamental reality. The whole social system based on the family, to a large degree, has shown evidence of breaking down in recent years, probably because we have been too lax and, in a sense, too soft. It is not adequate for people, as they do in the Bronx area of New York in the United States of America, claiming that they have had five generations without any paternal relationship or responsibility; in other words, for five generations the responsibility for bringing up children has been left entirely to women. Often there has not been a job among them for generations and they have all been on social security benefits in one form or another.

This is a very sensitive and difficult area. We are still a relatively young country. As we debate this very important legislation in our bicentennial year, let us hope that the purpose of the exercise is to try to give those children—the hundreds and thousands of them—who through no fault of their own have found themselves in a very difficult situation at least a reasonable

chance of enjoying a standard of living which will enable them to pull themselves out of what will otherwise remain, undoubtedly for many, a social security based existence—that is all it is: it is not living; it is an existence—for many years. The evidence is quite clear: people who start off with bad opportunities in education, health, welfare, housing and so forth tend to be, throughout most of their lives, that part of the community which is ultimately a major cost to social security and consequently a major cost to every taxpayer in Australia. Therefore, all of us have a commitment and an interest, in terms of both the welfare of children and acceptance of responsibilities by parents, to ensure that the community at large knows what to expect in this very difficult area.

May I finalise my observations by referring to the actual size of maintenance. A discussion paper entitled 'Child Support', which was prepared and put out by the Government in October 1986, contains some quite worrying information as to the actual level of payments. Page 12 of the paper states that, according to Department of Social Security data, most payments received by sole parents on pensions or benefits are between \$10 a week and \$30 a week and that two-thirds of payments are less than \$31 a week. It is worth noting that the Institute of Family Studies made the point quite recently that the cost of maintaining a child is more like \$47 a week. The difficulty we face is that until now maintenance payments have been relatively low, notwithstanding the accessibility of pensions. Therefore, the overall threshold needs to be reviewed from time to time.

The other difficulty which we will face is that of non-custodial parents' attitude towards the very real probability that the size of their maintenance payments will increase. That will cause difficulties. One will have to be very sensitive as to the way in which that area of policy comes into effect. I think the biggest danger will be the case where a non-custodial parent remarries and has a second or, in some cases, third family. Again, there has been some division in the community as to the responsibilities of a non-custodial parent in relation to his first, second, third or subsequent family. If logic means anything in this case in terms of the principle of the legislation, which is the protection of all children, surely it follows that we cannot make a distinction between the number of times a person marries and the resulting progeny of those relationships. In other words, it would not be adequate to say that the children of the first marriage should get priority over children of a

subsequent marriage, because that would put the latter in an even worse and more invidious position than the former. There is a need to try to average out the system. Having said that in a somewhat theoretical mode, standing in this Parliament, there is not the slightest doubt that those of us who will in future have to adjudicate on and participate in the complex discussions around this legislation and its implementation have many problems ahead of us.

As I said earlier, the actual management of the agency will be in the hands of the Commissioner of Taxation. The Opposition supports that approach because the Commissioner of Taxation, because of his database and so forth, is clearly in a better position than the Department of Social Security to be the initial point of contact. There has been some concern in the Opposition as to whether it is appropriate that the legal responsibility should be taken from the parents and vested in the Commonwealth. Again, that is a point which the Minister may wish to comment on in his closing remarks. It is an issue, because if one accepts the fundamental requirement of the parents taking responsibility for their children, it can equally be argued that if one is transferring the legal or financial responsibility to a third party—in this case the agency or the Commonwealth—there could be a diminution in the actual emotional relationship between a parent and the non-custodial children. These are subtle but nevertheless very significant issues, which will determine to a large degree the success or otherwise of this legislation.

On behalf of the Opposition, I wish to compliment the Minister and those who drafted this Bill. I am well aware of the years of effort involved. I finalise my remarks by also complimenting my colleague the honourable member for Dundas (Mr Ruddock) who was Chairman of the Parliament's committee back in 1980 that first put forward the proposal that an agency should be put in place. I should also note, if the honourable member does not, but I am sure that he will if he gets the opportunity, that the proposals that committee put up are not in any sense identical to what has finally come through, but that is one of the realities of committee life in this Parliament. One puts forward ideas but one rarely sees them come out exactly as one plans them. Nevertheless, since 1980 we have been working slowly and inexorably—with emphasis on the word 'slowly'—towards the ultimate overcoming of this fundamental problem.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mountford)— Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Ms CRAWFORD (Forde) (4.42)—The Child Support Bill 1987 is, as the honourable member for Bradfield (Mr Connolly) has rightly pointed out, part of a package of three Bills in which the Government intends to reform Australia's current system of child maintenance. As such these Bills are part of the Government's commitment to ensuring that by 1990 no child need live in poverty. That commitment is very much part of our Government's social justice strategy and, hence, it is extraordinary to hear a speaker from the Opposition discuss our having no social conscience and having lost out in terms of the kinds of people whom we were supposed to set out to help. This is very much part of our commitment to social justice and very much part of the Government's philosophy of looking after the marginalised in our society.

Marriages do break down and governments can do very little about that. However, what governments can do and what this particular Government is doing is attempting to alleviate the circumstances in which very many of our children find themselves after those marriages have broken up; in particular, the very straitened financial circumstances in which spouses and children of marriage breakdowns find themselves.

The main features of the Bill are to ensure that non-custodial parents share the cost of supporting their children according to their capacity to pay. It is simply an acknowledgment by us, as a community, that all parents have a responsibility to the children whom they parent. Hence, their capacity to pay for the raising of those children is very much part of their commitment to their children and to this society. It is our Government's duty to ensure that that commitment and that responsibility is met by both custodial and non-custodial parents alike.

This Bill also ensures that adequate support is available for children of separated parents. Within the forces of the Bill we are hopeful that financial support and other support will be given. As well we look to Commonwealth expenditure being limited to those people for whom it is necessary to ensure that their needs be met. Let us face it, we have already pointed out that numbers of people in the community will not have the benefits of non-custodial parents. For example, widows are one group who are supporting parents and, hence, the savings that are made through the Child Support Bill will hopefully be channelled to those sorts of people and

government expenditure will be used on those people who are most in need.

We also hope by this Bill to encourage parents to participate again in the work force. As part of that strategy we have also had a program of child care places and of training programs that are aimed particularly at women who find themselves in the position of being supporting parents and who have, until recently, been unable to participate in the work force due to the demands of child raising. Child care places, more money in the home through regular maintenance payments, and training programs provided by this Government will help to ensure that they and their families will be able to participate within the economic structures of this country.

As well, the Child Support Bill will encourage the arrangements, which will be simple and flexible, and also respect personal privacy. Hence, those people on whom demands are made in the non-custodial parent area will have guarantees that their privacy will be respected.

The establishment of the Child Support Register also will mean that it is administered by the Child Support Registrar who is the Commissioner of Taxation, as has been pointed out. This will make a collection system that is not dependent on voluntary payments. Currently more than 70 per cent of non-custodial parents do not pay regular maintenance. This contributes to the reliance of their families on the social security system for support. There are now more than 250,000 sole parent families and 450,000 children in Australia who are totally reliant on pensions and benefits from our Government. Hopefully, the Child Support Bill will mean that their dependence will be reduced and that they will be able to enjoy a higher standard of living as their maintenance payments become more regular and their non-custodial spouses recognise the responsibilities that are involved in child raising.

The first stage of the new child support scheme will increase the number of sole parent families receiving regular maintenance payments and help. This will help ensure that court orders for child maintenance payments are enforced. Currently, the reality is that court orders for maintenance payments are not being enforced. The Bill will help ensure that those people who have made commitments will follow them through rather than walk away from them, as is currently the case. It will also mean that these maintenance payments are made on a regular basis. Many honourable members, in their electorate work, will know and recognise that maintenance pay-

ments, if made, often tend to be of a very erratic and irregular nature and are not able to be accommodated in the sole parents' family budgets and, hence, no reliance can be made on that in terms of quality of life or lifestyle.

The Child Support Bill also provides for a more adequate level of maintenance payments to be set in the court maintenance orders made after the start of the separation. What this will mean and what has been pointed out is that those maintenance orders will be set at a level which will not take into account social security payments and, hence, will be made in relation to the non-custodial parent's capacity to pay and that is right and true, as it should be. This is a question of justice—social justice.

Mr McGauran—Everything is social justice, isn't it?

Ms CRAWFORD—It is, indeed. We are hoping to create a very just society. It will also be of help in terms of redistribution of income, in terms of relieving the burden on taxpayers. As some have already pointed out, we are currently paying \$1,757m in support payments to families. If this situation can be alleviated, it will give the Government more income to expend on those people who are very definitely and urgently in need.

The child support scheme will also look at the new separate income list for pensions and benefits to be taken into account as the maintenance payments received are taken into account. This should also help to ensure that people's incomes will be looked at more regularly and that there will be a greater marriage between our government agencies, which are operating within the Family Court, and the social security area. This means that co-operation must be ensured between the Commonwealth and the States, between government agencies, and also between those agencies that are delivering.

It is important that we recognise and see all of this as a total package in which all of these children can hopefully be helped out of poverty. The people who will be affected are those who separate after the scheme; those who have not lived together but whose child is born after the scheme has been introduced; social security pensioners, regardless of their date of separation; and, of course, where spouse maintenance has already been collected by a State agency. The duties of that State agency will be taken over by our child support agency. I think it is important to recognise that while we are making demands on current social security pensioners, the activity test will ensure that they make reasonable effort

to obtain a court order for maintenance. If that is impossible, of course, they will maintain their full beneficiary status. We are looking for people to take responsibility for themselves.

The Department of Social Security will continue to disburse this child support payment, as employers will be required to make the necessary deductions. An Opposition member has pointed out that some employers will be unwilling to do so and/or will find themselves in a position of not knowing what their rights and duties will be. However, they too are taxpayers and will, of course, enjoy the benefits that will accrue to all of us from a very large saving in this area, not to mention the buoyancy which will come from a large group of people being removed from poverty and being able to move back, hopefully, into the work force and pursue their lives with dignity. In the long term, the Government is committed to achieving a system which is much more accessible and predictable. This will achieve results of adequate private support for children in accordance with the capacity of their parents to pay and, of course, the capacity of the Government to provide for those children who do not have private support.

Such a Bill demands changes in community values and expectations. An indication of that, I feel, is the support which the Opposition has also given to this Bill in recognising that we, as a community, must all share the load for our children. It is the responsibility of all of us to maintain those children who have been brought into the world; they are, after all, our future. It is also important for us to recognise that, if equality of opportunity for children is to become a reality, they must be removed from poverty. This Child Support Bill is in fact a very important step in that direction, and I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr TUCKEY (O'Connor) (4.53)—Mr Deputy Speaker, it is worth remarking that, although the Opposition supports the Government in its attempts to address this very difficult area, the Opposition, too, has a responsibility to raise the issues as it sees them. It is worth also remarking that the honourable member for Forde (Ms Crawford) drifted into some rhetoric which could hardly be supported by the facts. One might remind her that it was in the hard-core Labor voting areas in Adelaide in which swings of 20 per cent were recorded. If that is not a message from Labor's voters as to their dissatisfaction with the arrogance with which those opposite have treated them in recent times, it is time that

they left office, because they have lost all their political skills.

The reality is that the hard-core Labor voting areas are finding it very difficult to make ends meet, particularly financially, under the policies of this Government. The examples are everywhere. This Government's basic principle of self-congratulation, its defence of institutions such as Medicare whilst ignoring the problems of individual people who are suffering under those arrangements, its commitment to a philosophy, is in fact far in excess—

Mr Howe—Mr Deputy Speaker, I take a point of order.

Mr TUCKEY—Is it starting to hurt, Minister—a little bit of advice to your backbench?

Mr Howe—Mr Deputy Speaker, if the Bill had something remotely to do with health insurance, we would be interested in the honourable member's comments on health insurance, but the Bill is about child support and I suggest that he be directed by you to address the Bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mountford)—I am sure the honourable member for O'Connor will come back to the text of the Bill.

Mr TUCKEY—Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. This Bill is a welfare measure, in part, and an attempt to relieve the poverty of children, many of whom are the children of people who have voted Labor all their life in the anticipation that their life would be better under a Labor Party government.

Ms Crawford—And it is. It is going to be under this Government.

Mr TUCKEY—There you are; those opposite are back to a policy of self-congratulation when the statistics are against them and the voting public is against them. I will go back to what we are here to discuss, because, as I said, I personally welcome this particular Bill. I will make some remarks which I hope the Government will consider very carefully because, in fact, both the administration of this Bill and the other efforts that the Government proposes to make in this area are fraught with difficulties. It is a great dilemma for legislators, and I use that word in the broadest sense. It is not easy. As the Minister for Social Security (Mr Howe) said in his second reading speech, this is one of the steps to keep the promise of the Prime Minister (Mr Hawke). I quote from the second reading speech:

This Government is committed to ensuring that by 1990 no child need live in poverty.

In truth, if that were a promise of this Minister, as compared to a promise of the Prime Minister, I would feel more confident for those children in poverty, because the record of the Prime Minister's promises is that people are best promised that they will not get the money because it is more likely that they will: when the Prime Minister promises us a fall in taxes we usually have higher ones, and so on. Nevertheless, I hope that on this occasion, in the interests of these children, the Prime Minister will be able to keep his promise; and I genuinely believe that the Minister would like to do that, provided that his colleague the Minister for Finance (Senator Walsh), over a period of time, is prepared to let him. These are the problems that we have.

This is a Bill about helping children, and again I commend the Government for setting out to help children. The great tragedy of marriage breakdown and, in many cases, of deliberate single parenthood is that children suffer because people take very selfish decisions totally related to their own circumstances, whether it be that they have found a new love or they can no longer tolerate their partner, or that it seemed a good idea at the time. Many of these decisions are taken by adults and the big losers are the kids. Of course, this contribution that is being made is a very minor contribution to overcoming those sorts of problems. To the extent that legislators are able, one of our major responsibilities is to try to recreate some of the older moralities that placed an obligation on people to keep their families together.

Ms Crawford—Oh, rubbish!

Mr TUCKEY—The honourable member for Forde scoffs at the idea that there should be some obligation to keep a family together.

Mr McGauran—Of course, there should.

Mr TUCKEY—Of course, there should in the economic interests and in the interests—

Ms Crawford—I did not say that.

Mr TUCKEY—The honourable member is another selfish person who sees the rights of the adults as superseding the rights of those kids who go into poverty and suffer. She scoffed, and she knows that she scoffed. That is a tragedy. It is a tragedy for kids. It is equal to the tragedy of some very young people being convinced, sometimes by social workers, to take little children home when they have neither the resources nor eventually the interest to care for them. They are carting kids into poverty when, of course, there are other very carefully selected parents who might have adopted those children.

That cannot be generalised about, but they are the sorts of tragedies that occur.

I am again raising the question: What does this Government or this Parliament propose to continue to do to protect the children? The figures that we read—800,000 children in poverty, 400,000 of those the responsibility of single parents—are the Minister's figures; Those 400,000 kids are suffering a degree of poverty purely and simply because their parents decided not to stay married or, in fact, decided never to get married. It is a very significant part of the administration and, if you like, the policing of this legislation that the bureaucracy—I guess, the tax man—and the Government have provided in this legislation and its regulations that both married and unmarried people will be treated equally. But the task for the Minister is to ensure that his bureaucracy does not take the easy option. I predict that that could have long term consequences.

I raise the question of the ease with which a bureaucracy can track down people who have signed a marriage contract. Having put their names on the dotted line they are clearly identifiable, as compared with those in some casual relationship, not even a de facto relationship, where children are the issue and there is the minimum co-operation from the custodial parent as to naming the non-custodial parent. I have a nasty feeling that identification of the non-custodial parent will become all too hard for the bureaucracy and that it will tend to concentrate its efforts on people who apparently have made the mistake of getting married. If that becomes a further disincentive to marriage and a traditional family lifestyle, it will be a major tragedy of this legislation.

I am not saying that the legislation should not be considered because of that problem; I just call on the Minister to ensure that out there in the real world great care is taken to be even-handed in pursuing the non-custodial parent of a casual relationship to ensure that that person too makes a contribution. If that is not done we will lose a lot from this legislation. The word will get around—it is around at present—that it is silly to get married today. I deplore that trend, because I think it is part of the problem of the generosity of government.

It is worth drawing to the attention of those honourable members present that when the supporting parent's benefit was first introduced by the then Treasurer, the present Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Mr Hayden), he was able to explain to the Government that this was

a very narrow area of difficulty and privation. He was able to identify an amount of \$40.6m with which he could fix the problem. There was an area of problem. As I have said, there is a huge dilemma. I personally believe that in some cases a little more economic pressure would not only hold marriages together over rocky periods but also assist those marriages over a longer period to become good marriages—in certain circumstances, I am equally prepared to admit that. I have a case going through my office at the moment of a woman who is under physical threat—threat of murder. I meet women who have been injured and who quite clearly could not tolerate their marriages. Nobody—not I or anybody else—could expect a woman to remain in a marriage in those circumstances simply because no financial assistance was forthcoming from the Government.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, as Treasurer at that time, recognised that problem and brought before a sympathetic Parliament a measure to help a person in those circumstances, a measure costing \$40.6m. Of course, when we consult the expenditure details now, we find that that figure has changed dramatically. For instance, the supporting parent's benefit and allowances this year will be paid to 179,000 recipients at a cost to the Government, to the taxpayer, of \$1,509.8m, or 6.7 per cent of the total social security outlays. Widows' pensions and allowances, which also cater to a degree for broken marriages, total a further \$1,111.5m, or 4.5 per cent of total social security outlays.

It is a huge problem for government and a huge problem for the community. When government stepped into people's lives it literally changed their moral values. Their moral values had been influenced over time by the economic fact that someone coming home to mother was a severe economic problem for the community. When government removed that problem the community said, 'Thank you' and we have had this massive growth in recipients. But the losers have been the kids.

This measure to some small degree will start to give some assistance back to those children and consequently we welcome it, but that does not alter the fundamental fact that, unless over time we can convince people to stay in their marriages, no amount of money that this Government or any other will be able to find will fix the problem for the kids. We are well aware now of the back-pedalling in so many areas. The Minister thought it was wrong to raise matters

of health, but they are all related. These children get support in that area too. This is a measure by which the Government will spend a little more. There has been no such measure in the health portfolio since I have been the shadow Minister. Every step the Government has taken has been either to increase taxation or to reduce some service to people. I will deal further with that on the appropriate occasions.

Another point I make is that the costs of measures such as this eventually result in taxation. It is quite pointless people believing that if they pay no or little income tax they are not contributing to taxation revenue. This year the Budget Papers show us that \$7,000m will be collected in consumer taxes. Sales tax applies to all sorts of items, including tinned pet food, and very few people escape that tax measure. Another \$7,000m will be collected in fuel taxes. In this day and age very few people do not consume that commodity at some time in a vehicle or with some other device. The fact is that most people are paying taxation.

I point out that there are 800,000 families in poverty, and one of the reasons for that is taxation. The tax burden on poorer people is something they cannot carry. As long as we keep ticking up expenditure in the area of welfare for one group of people we gradually make another group decide on the welfare option. The Government, following an initiative of the Fraser Government, has increased the assistance given to some of those people under the family allowance supplement, or FAS, and the Government is to be congratulated on that.

Any effort to stop people who, through low wages and a huge tax burden, have got to the point of opting out of being wage earners—any move we make in that regard—is desirable. The honourable member for Forde scoffs at that remark. I do not know what her mental processes are. I will repeat for her what I just said so that she can scoff again. I said that any measure that will keep people from taking the welfare option over the work option is desirable. If the honourable member for Forde thinks that is funny I will publish this speech in her electorate and we will have a poll on it. How far does she, with her social mentality, think a nation such as ours can go if everybody takes the welfare option? Does she think we are going to get the money from big public companies who include tax as part of their costs of production and declare their dividends after tax? Does she think they will be the contributors? No; they will charge ordinary consumers for their tax. The whole

process dominoes down to the ordinary consumers.

One might wonder, in light of the attitude of the honourable member for Forde, like that of many aspirants on the Government side in this place—whether they be aspirants to the Ministry or new additions to the Ministry or to the back bench—what has happened to the old Labor traditions of common sense, earned through a working class background. The Australian Labor Party is now a party of academics and social workers and has very little understanding of that side of the community that contributes to the tax dollar. The honourable member for Forde, with her scoffing this afternoon, has been giving us a classic example of that.

I raise another matter of practical administration which I hope the Minister will choose to answer. I note that employers again carry a very substantial burden in the administration of this legislation. I do not know a solution to that. I do not criticise the Government for asking employers to do so. I think it is pretty tough that they face fines of up to \$5,000 for failing to do the Government's work for it and I hope that the penalties will always be applied very leniently and only in cases where there is a deliberate attempt to defraud the Government or otherwise ignore the Government's request.

I see that an employer will get notification from the Child Support Registrar that he must deduct these additional amounts of money from an employee's salary, but I have not been able to discover in the legislation how the Registrar will necessarily know that a person who has these responsibilities is the employee of any employer. The reason I say that is that it has no doubt been presumed that each and every new employee, at the commencement of employment, will fill out the relevant form which entitles the employer to deduct tax at less than the maximum rate. I refer to the application for a concessional rate. I have done the calculations in respect of the ID card. A profit can be made by someone choosing to work under a false name and to pay a higher rate of tax. Depending on the levels of maintenance being contributed and, of course, the salary involved, there will be cases of employees opting not to fill in the form and deciding that it would be cheaper to pay the tax. Some others would prefer to pay the tax. We have to remember that there is great hatred in respect of some of these arrangements. I think the Government should apply its mind to that little administrative difficulty, because it is there and it will contribute to these sorts of problems.

Of course, there are other problems and other great dilemmas. It is not always the case that the non-custodial parent makes the choice to break up. I support the demands that we are making for equality. The courts of our country—and it is their decision, not one for this place—should look more closely at the ability of either partner to support children. It seems to me that in many cases male non-custodial parents should be given better consideration. I think they could prove to the court that they could fulfil this role, and I would not expect the court to rule in their favour unless they could. It appears to me that it could be simple if they had the funds available.

Heart-rending cases of wives and husbands whose marriages have broken up have been brought to the attention of my office and, no doubt, the offices of most honourable members. Invariably the partners think that the other has done them wrong. As I said, this is a very difficult problem. I think the courts have to look very closely at who is best able to support children, because the children are paramount. The courts have to give up some of the prejudice that we have all had about the roles of men and women and decide who—and I think the economic factor is very important—is best able to look after the children.

The reality is that these days many pressures are put on people in receipt of lower incomes because they do not have enough money. My late mother used to say that when poverty comes through the door love flies out the window. It is our job to ensure that we do not impose further poverty on Australians. We have to consider every mechanism which will enable us to hold together the traditional marriage structure, which I believe is the best solution. It is a much better solution than any legislation passed by this Parliament will ever bring.

Mr TICKNER (Hughes) (5.13)—I was very interested in the contribution made by the honourable member for O'Connor (Mr Tuckey), and I might refer to that in a few moments. Before doing so, I should set the scene on the legislation before the House. The Child Support Bill is, of course, the centrepiece of the Government's child support scheme. It is a further significant initiative in the Government's strategy to ensure that no child need live in poverty by 1990. The Prime Minister (Mr Hawke) made that commitment in the course of the last Federal election campaign. Some people rather cynically suggested that it was a trite statement, a statement without substance which was not going

to be honoured by this Government. Of course, that was never the case. The commitment of the Prime Minister and the Labor Government was a very real one which was reaffirmed by the overwhelming vote of the Labor Caucus at one of its first meetings following the election. Caucus adopted the following motion that I put before it:

That Caucus welcomes and unites behind the Prime Minister's stated first goal of the Third Hawke Labor Government announced in the campaign policy launch that by 1990 no Australian child will be living in poverty. I also asked that Caucus request detailed proposals for the implementation of that goal to be brought forward and that all Ministers and relevant policy committees focus on that first goal as a priority in Government decision making. There can be no higher goal. I would have hoped that it was the sort of goal that would unite both sides of this Parliament. The Labor Caucus certainly unanimously supported that prime ministerial commitment. I am very proud, as are my colleagues, to be associated with the Bill before the House, which gives a further tangible commitment to that already announced goal.

I am sure, as the honourable member for O'Connor mentioned in his contribution, that honourable members have at some time or other in the course of their electorate work or perhaps in their own family network witnessed the personal tragedy associated with family breakdown. When only couples are involved, in the majority of cases adults are able to overcome their personal losses and involve themselves in their work, career and lives. Perhaps they are able to rebuild their temporarily shattered existences. But the bottom line, of course, is that just two people, not children are involved.

In this legislation we are concerned with the tragic cases in which children are involved in a broken relationship. We believe that it is the legal right of every Australian child who is the victim of a marriage breakdown to have the support of both parents. It is, as other speakers have said, a sad indictment that more than 70 per cent of parents who no longer live with their children do not pay regular maintenance. This Government has been forced to legislate on an issue that I am sure, Mr Deputy Speaker, knowing your compassion in these matters, we believe ought to be the subject of actions of personal conscience on the part of the party who should be paying maintenance. But the reality is that that has not happened. As a result, the failure of non-custodial parents to pay maintenance contributes to the reliance by sole parents on social security support. There are now more

than 250,000 sole-parent families, with 450,000 children, who are forced to rely on pensions or benefits from the social security system. For most of these families the pension or benefit is the only source of income. The further tragedy is that in the vast majority of cases the non-custodial parent is employed and would be able to contribute to his or her children's support.

This Bill—the Child Support Bill—as stage one of a two-stage reform, gives the children of separated parents the right to grow up free from the misery of poverty. Whatever the reason for family breakdown or the split-up of a family—and the reasons are, of course, many and varied, ranging from developing incompatibility to perhaps pressing financial worries as a result of young couples taking on too many commitments or as a result of long term suffering by those families who live in the shadow of an environment of alcohol or drug abuse—it is a matter of great regret for those who are involved.

I was disappointed, if one can ever be disappointed with a contribution from the honourable member for O'Connor, that the honourable member sought, in a rather half-hearted way, to make some political capital out of the tragedy of family breakdown. The brutal reality is that those pressures that I have alluded to are not the fault of any government but are primarily due to the changing nature of society, not just in Australia but, indeed, around the world. Of course, the Opposition parties do not have a monopoly on concern about those questions. In fact, the evidence is that it is we on this side of the chamber who have sought to build an Australian society which would minimise the trauma of family breakdown by trying to tackle the issues that are so often the cause and at the heart of family breakdown.

The honourable member for O'Connor also made a cheap political gibe suggesting that the level of taxation kept people in poverty. Let me meet that argument by pointing out the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) figures of which the honourable member ought to be aware, and if he is aware of them he ought to have the decency to talk about them in this House. Those figures show that the level of taxation in Australia is low compared with the levels of other OECD countries. We are almost at the bottom of the list. The tragedy is, of course, that the honourable member for O'Connor and all those who share his philosophy of dramatic cuts in government expenditure, who support the unrestrained privatisation of government assets and the transfer

of expenditure from the public sector to the private sector, will exacerbate problems of poverty and the great disparity that exists between rich and poor in this country. The reality is that if one effects dramatic reductions in taxes—and it sounds very good at election time—there is a down side to the equation and that is that one has to bring about massive reductions in government expenditure. Where does one cut? One must cut hospitals, schools, roads and a whole range of community services. In reply to the honourable member for O'Connor, who raised this question in his contribution, let me say that his political philosophy would bring about a further disparity of wealth in this country and would hit the poor and middle income earners harder because the social infrastructure which gives us the quality of life to which we have been accustomed is only possible through public expenditure for the good of the Australian people.

Having met that argument, I return to the theme of my contribution—that is, that it certainly is the case that in the past there was a different social structure which was more family oriented and there were built-in mechanisms which enabled greater support to be given in the case of a marriage breakdown. I regret that there is not more family support and that we do not have a greater sense of community and compassion in this country. I know that that view is shared by the Minister. But the reality is that those days have passed. It is no longer possible for families in times of split up always to go home to Mum and Dad. Now single parents often live alone and in poverty with disastrous consequences for the children. The changes that have occurred make it necessary for the Government to take this initiative and I certainly acknowledge that it is a far-reaching reform.

The highlights of the Child Support Bill are the establishment of a Child Support Register to be administered by the Child Support Registrar; the creation of a child support debt whereby periodic child and/or spousal maintenance formally payable by a payer to a payee under an order or agreement becomes a debt due by the payer to the Commonwealth and the removal of any entitlement of the payee to enforce that debt. A further aspect of the Bill is that as far as practicable the collection of periodic child and/or spousal maintenance by means of automatic deductions from the salary or wages of employees is based closely on the existing pay as you earn provisions of the Income Tax Assessment Act. Another aspect is the collection of periodic child and/or spousal maintenance by

means of direct remittance on a monthly basis by the payer where automatic withholding does not or cannot apply, and the payment of maintenance collected by the Child Support Registrar to payees by the Secretary to the Department of Social Security. Also included in the Bill is a provision for the recovery of maintenance that becomes unpaid only during the time the liability is payable to the Commonwealth. Further, there will be penalties for employers and payers for various offences such as the late payment of maintenance and failing to provide information to the Registrar. Importantly—and I speak as one who has a great regard for the rights of the individual—there will be a system of objection and appeal rights for parties affected by the liability to the Commonwealth. Thus, one can see that the scheme of this legislation is that under the Constitution, the Australian Government is able to use its family law and social security powers to integrate a national system to ensure an effective method of collection whereby no Australian child will be disadvantaged.

As I have said, in the past the burden has fallen on the taxpayer to support children affected by family breakdown through the social security system with non-custodial parents, in the majority of cases, not meeting their responsibilities. The Government considers that this compulsory system envisaged by the legislation is the only way that children will receive the support to which they are entitled. Because the system is involuntary we must weigh up whether the common good is served by the initiation of such a scheme. On balance I believe it is because of the paramount rights of the child and because of those comprehensive appeals and objection rights to which I have already referred. I should add that there are strict secrecy provisions which are a key element of the legislation.

Children are the innocent victims of family breakdown. Whilst the Government can do little to prevent this in the short term, it has become its responsibility to ensure that children are properly cared for. It will no longer be a matter of choice on the part of the non-custodial parents as to whether they will support their children, but an unquestionable and undeniable right on the part of the child that this support should be forthcoming. I remind the House that with more than half the 800,000 children in poverty belonging to sole parent families and more than 70 per cent of non-custodial parents having families whose only source of income is pension and benefits, one can readily see the need for the Government to take urgent action in introducing the legislation. The level of child support awarded

by the courts or agreed upon by parents has often proved totally inadequate when compared with the cost of raising children. This matter will be partly addressed by the provisions contained in the Family Law Amendment Bill whereby child support will be given priority over all other commitments of parents, other than those necessary for their own support. As I have said, this is stage one of the reform.

The second stage of the child support scheme, to be introduced at a later date, will introduce a new way of determining the level of child maintenance payments. The issue of what type of child support formula should be introduced is currently under review by a committee chaired by a judge of the Family Court and with further community input. The committee will report to the Government and be acted upon early in the new year. I will continue on the general theme of my earlier remarks; that is, that this Bill is very much directed towards the welfare of Australian children. It is squarely in line with the commitment by this Government to eliminate child poverty by 1990. It also fits squarely within this Government's continuing commitment to honour the national social justice strategy and commitments of the Australian Labor Party.

I heard with great approval the comments by the honourable member for Forde (Ms Crawford) in her speech. The honourable member for O'Connor did not serve his own interests or those of his Party by attempting to disparage the very deep commitment and compassion expressed by the honourable member for Forde in her remarks to the House. I conclude on the note that this is a Bill about social justice. It is about the Labor Party's reason for being in government and we are very proud to see it come before the House today.

Mr McGAURAN (Gippsland) (5.29)—I do not want to get ahead of myself in making a contribution to the debate on the second reading of the Child Support Bill, but there is one matter that I wish to address quickly while the honourable member for Hughes (Mr Tickner), who has just spoken, remains in the chamber. I get a little tired of honourable members from the Left faction, of which the honourable member for Hughes is one, bleating about civil liberties and the rights of the individual. On many occasions I have heard the honourable member for Hughes raise, quite sincerely, issues of civil liberties which concern him, such as South Africa, the Palestinian problem in Israel and certain individuals, including the refuseniks from the Soviet Union. I am therefore puzzled why the honourable

member for Hughes and other Labor speakers do not hone in on what is, in my view, a central defect in the Child Support Bill—I hasten to add that I largely endorse, in fact heartily support the Bill—and that is the compulsory deduction of maintenance automatically from the salary or wage of non-custodial parents. By that I mean that the child support agency will deduct the maintenance, without any breach of maintenance agreements, from a non-custodial parent's wage or salary.

Where is the protection of a non-custodial parent's rights if he—or, naturally, in some cases she—is a decent, honest, responsible person fully prepared to accept his or her responsibilities to the children of the marriage? Why are we lumping together all non-custodial parents as irresponsible defaulters? Notwithstanding the secrecy provisions of this legislation, which make it an offence for a Commonwealth officer, or an employer who must make the deductions, to pass on to the child support agency within the Australian Taxation Office information concerning individuals which should be kept secret, the reality is that in many organisations, particularly in medium sized or small businesses, a non-custodial parent's maintenance payments will be widely known. In a number of small businesses a lot of people handle the wages. There may be a turnover of staff and a new paymaster brought in. I know of businesses in which there is a roster system of people to prepare the wages. It simply will not be possible to contain the spread of knowledge of a non-custodial parent's maintenance obligations. Therefore, where is the privacy in that regard? No matter how well one tries to legislate for that privacy, it will not occur in all cases. In fact, in a majority of cases there is a very serious risk that a person's privacy will be impinged. Moreover, I ask the Minister for Social Security (Mr Howe): Whatever happened to the presumption of innocence over guilt in this country? Again, I ask the Minister: Why should we assume that all non-custodial parents will default on their maintenance responsibilities?

In the Minister's second reading speech he stated two things. Firstly, he stated that the overseas experience was that within two years of a maintenance agreement there was default. That is a little woolly; he says nothing more than that, and produces no figures or sources to back up that claim. Of course, I accept that there is default in over 50 per cent of maintenance agreements. The second thing the Minister said in his speech which is of great interest on this point was that 70 per cent of non-custodial

parents did not pay regular maintenance for their children. What about the other 30 per cent? Is not the corollary of 70 per cent not paying maintenance that 30 per cent do pay regular maintenance? The Minister, in his understandable desire to ensure a faultless system, has gone too far. I call upon the Government to give a non-custodial parent the right—I believe the inherent right—to prove his or her responsibility. It is not a matter of being naive. If the Minister likes to say that 70 per cent will default, I accept that. But there must be a large number of people, if not in percentage terms at least in numerical terms, who deserve to be trusted to adhere to their responsibilities without the compulsion of this legislation. I am very disappointed that the Minister, who claims to be a civil libertarian, has drawn up such a draconian and all-encompassing provision. I look forward to the Minister's response at the conclusion of the second reading debate.

The Minister in his second reading speech started off by decrying the state of child poverty and the breakdown of marriage in our community; we all share those concerns. But he goes on to say that a government can do very little about this. I was quite horrified by the admission of the Minister with responsibility for social security abdicating responsibility, not just in his area but on the part of a government overall. Of course, one cannot lay all the blame for society's problems at the feet of government, although many people will try to, just as one cannot turn to government to provide the solutions to those same ills. But I do not agree that there is very little, to use the Minister's words, that can be done about the problem. For instance, what is the Government doing about pre-marriage counselling? I will tell honourable members what it is doing; it is drastically reducing the funding available for pre-marriage counselling. It has dropped over the years, as the Budget Papers show.

Reform of family law is proceeding at a snail's pace for two reasons. The first relates to the mechanics; there is not sufficient staff available to process the contested cases. Secondly, there has not been a review by this Government—at least none that has resulted in an amendment to the Family Law Act—to address the fundamental problems, such as fault and the length of time necessary to obtain a divorce.

The Government is running away too fast from its proper responsibilities. It can influence, at least indirectly, the institution of marriage in our society. What is the Government doing about

video pornography? Look at the Minister smiling smugly; he is dismissing these remarks out of hand. Government members wonder why they are out of touch. Every member of this Parliament—

Mr Howe—I take a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Frankly, the question of video pornography, which I am sure is a matter of great concern to many members of this House, is not relevant—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Millar)—I take it that the Minister is raising the question of relevance. The Chair will accept a brief allusion to matters appertaining to the family situation and consequential separations as having a passing relevance. I will hear the honourable member in that respect, without his unduly pressing it.

Mr McGAURAN—I will draw to a rapid conclusion on that matter: X-rated videos are flooding the various States, despite each of the States having restricted categories, because the Australian Capital Territory, which falls within the direct jurisdiction of the Federal Government, allows X-rated videos. The Joint Select Committee on Video Material, dealing with pornography and associated matters, has not reported since it was formed in 1985. Of course, a government can take the lead in matters affecting marriage and the family churches, parental authority and the education system all have an influence on the status and viability of marriage; there is no question about that. But I find it astounding that a senior Government Minister would decry the problem of family breakdown and say that it is not a real responsibility of government.

The objectives of the legislation have been well stated by previous speakers. They are to make non-custodial parents responsible, at long last, for their children so long as they have an ability to meet those obligations to pay the maintenance. Until now in many cases the payment of maintenance has meant only adding to the amount of social security benefits so as to make up a livable income for a custodial parent. As a practitioner in the area of family law—for a short time, I hasten to add—before I entered this Parliament, it was a common practice for my colleagues and I go to the magistrates court soon after a separation, normally with the wife having custody of the children pending a custody hearing. We would then negotiate with our opposite number.

Mr Deputy Speaker, until now I have tolerated some of the rather smart and unnecessary

comments from the Minister's advisers, but I certainly do not intend to accept supercilious grinning while a member of this chamber is speaking.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Order! The Chair did not observe the alleged offence but feels bound to remind ministerial advisers that their attendance in the House requires total circumspection.

Mr McGAURAN—It would be a common practice for the solicitors for the two parties to negotiate from the premise of the value of the pension available. When I was practising the pension was \$120 for a wife and two children. We would then negotiate a living allowance which would probably be \$160 or \$170 a week. Therefore, the non-custodial parent—to continue the analogy, the father—would be required to pay only another \$40 or \$50. The simple fact is that one's clients' nerves would be at a raw edge. They would often be temperamental. It is not for lawyers to lecture clients about their entitlements. If they were automatically entitled to a pension, of course in that heated environment in which lawyers are trying to do the best for their clients, one would require only a top-up to make a livable allowance.

The amendment to the Family Law Act which now disqualifies a court from taking into account the eligibility for social security benefit is a major reform. I am delighted that at long last that amendment has come about. However, my question to the Minister for Social Security is: Why has it taken so long? The Government has been in power for almost five years. The former Attorney-General, Senator Peter Durack, in the Senate in 1983 introduced an amendment to achieve that same objective. That was passed by the Senate. It has lain on the House of Representatives *Notice Paper* since that time.

I understand why a child support agency would take so long to put into operation. I think that the time it has taken has been needlessly long, but I understand all the difficulties and complications surrounding that. However, frankly, hundreds of millions of dollars has been wasted in the intervening period—between the passing of Senator Durack's amendment and the amendment late last year of the Attorney-General (Mr Lionel Bowen). If the Government had forced the courts to disregard pension entitlements and forced non-custodial parents to pay a living allowance by way of maintenance, it would have had a lot of defaulters. I do not suggest for a moment that that would have been the answer. However, I have no doubt that certainly it would

have saved the taxpayer a great amount of money.

I wish now to address the matter of child poverty. Other speakers have drawn on the figures given in the Minister's second reading speech in which it was stated that there are some 800,000 children in poverty of whom more than 400,000 are part of a sole parent family—if I can use that phrase. This legislation is a step in the right direction. It will at long last do something to turn back the poverty that afflicts so many people. It is not the whole answer. I do not think the Minister or the Government would pretend that it is. If one takes away the court's calculation of a pension as a starting point and examines the non-custodial parent's financial status in order to arrive at a living allowance, one will save the taxpayer money.

However, it will inject a great deal more tension and heat into the family law system. I have acted for fathers whose wives may well have left, taking the children—whether for good reason or not; this is not the time or place to go into why people leave each other. Such people are normally bitter. Normally, they have to face court fairly quickly after the separation because the wife and the children have no income. They are very difficult to handle. I am concerned that unless the Government also addresses some of the problems of the Family Court of Australia, particularly in regard to the delays that are being encountered, there is a risk of increased violence. I have no doubt at all that at long last forcing non-custodial parents to face up to their responsibilities is going to inject new heat into the Family Court.

Unless the Government drags people who have had it too easy in the past into a position of finally having to face up to their financial obligations and responsibilities to their children and at the same time makes the Family Court more efficient, a number of risks will be run.

Mr Sciacca—We are making it more efficient.

Mr McGAURAN—In reply to the honourable member for Bowman I say that it will be a slow process. As I said earlier, the Government really only has addressed some of the mechanics, the administrative aspects, of the Family Court. We need also to look at the legislation because delays are still being encountered. I have a number of constituents in my electorate who, frankly, are going out of their minds with frustration at some of the delays in contested custody and property matters. I have had to write to the Attorney-General about one property matter in particular because it has been delayed for some

three or four years, with no prospect of it being heard before June because of a shortage of judges at the Dandenong Family Court.

I ask the Government not to pretend for a moment that any real changes have occurred in the family law system for some years. For the Government to do so will mean that the disrespect, to say the least, in which the Family Court is held will increase. The potential for violence, which is always part of this sort of jurisdiction, will be turned up. Like my Opposition colleagues, I welcome almost every aspect of this legislation. I do not agree with the compulsory deduction of maintenance payments regardless of default. Moreover, I do not think the Government has yet grasped the enormity of the problem surrounding the Family Court itself.

Mr CLEELAND (McEwen) (5.47)—I suppose that it is not entirely appropriate for me to give advice to a young, keen National Party member who seeks ministerial office. But, if I can give the honourable member for Gippsland (Mr McGauran) some advice as someone who is a bit older, it would be that maybe he would care to read the legislation before coming into the House, maybe he would care to read the second reading speech before coming into the House and maybe he would care to do some preparatory work before he stands up and speaks in this place. I am sure that his ministerial ambitions have been severely dented by his making that most appalling speech which would have been heard by other members of his Party.

His speech was notable for its lack of any research at all. His speech was notable for the fact that it was obvious that he had not read the legislation in the first place. His speech ranged far and wide over all sorts of topics except the content of the Child Support Bill. I ask the honourable member to go away and do some reading to learn about this Bill and to learn about what the Government is doing. I suggest that he then come back into this place and try to debate us.

Mr McGauran—You are making a fool of yourself.

Mr CLEELAND—And then he may not make such a fool of himself. The reality is that the Child Support Bill does not represent a sudden whim on the part of the Government to introduce a part piece of legislation to tackle a part problem involving child support and maintenance as it now exists in Australia. This Bill is part of a series of pieces of legislation which will come into the House this year as part of a total package tackling the whole problematical area

involving child maintenance—and problematical it indeed is.

I was horrified to hear the honourable member for Gippsland talking about the way he sees people—lawyers, for example—in the Family Court of Australia utilising the child support assistance paid by the Commonwealth as part of the package that children should receive on the separation of parents. He was quite right in that regard. The reality is—I speak from experience, as a practising lawyer who has been involved for many years in the practice of the Family Court—that the tragedy has been, and still is, that in calculating the amount that a wife or a custodial parent should receive by way of maintenance for children the first thing that occurs is that the practitioners say: 'The wife will get so much by way of a widow's pension and will receive so much for each child in addition. Let us top it up with a bit from the non-custodial parent'. Traditionally, that is the way it has been done in Australia since the introduction of the Family Law Act in, I think, 1975. It is still being done today.

We hear a lot about economic rationalism from Opposition members. We never hear them apply it in debate but they talk outside this House as though they want to be economic rationalists. This Bill will relieve most Australian taxpayers of paying tax to support other people's children, and that deserves the support of this House. Why should this country have a system which enables non-custodial parents to rely upon the generosity of Australian taxpayers to support their children? That is both economically and morally wrong. It has been going on for a long time. It is most pleasing that when the rest of the legislation comes through and the formula system is introduced—if one had listened to the Minister for Social Security (Mr Howe) earlier one would have heard him explain the totality of the proposals—we will get to the stage where those non-custodial parents who have evaded their economic and moral obligations for so long will no longer escape the scheme. That is why there is a compulsion about it. If there is no compulsion to pay through a scheme such as this people will escape the net. We know this from history; we know this from past practice.

Mr McGauran—Not all of them; that is the point.

Mr CLEELAND—I suppose the honourable member for Gippsland would say that those judgment debtors who do not pay their debts should be given a chance, and that garnishment as a procedure should not be allowed because

garnishment is a compulsion on an employer to deduct from an employee's salary the judgment debt by way of contribution. I suppose the honourable member would say that that is a compulsion which in the language of the Opposition should also have been thrown out because people should not be compelled to pay their due obligations in a moral and economic sense. I dismiss that as ludicrous. I throw it out. I will not have a bar of it. The reality is that fewer than 30 per cent of non-custodial parents are making maintenance payments. That is the fact. We cannot ignore it, and this Parliament should not try to run away from it. To do so is the coward's way out. To do so is to allow a loophole that some people will use. Of course there must be compulsion.

I heard the honourable member for Bradfield (Mr Connolly), who led for the Opposition, complain that under this legislation employers would have more forms to fill in. I recall hearing this complaint when the fringe benefits tax (FBT) legislation was being discussed. I think we were told that it was a disgrace that under the fringe benefits tax legislation employers would have more forms to fill in and that they would have to pay tax on the fringe benefits they gave their employees. I recall appearing on a television program with a chartered accountant when I made a rather obvious point that employers obviously keep employment records and that if they were not keeping employment records they would not know what they were paying to their employees. The records are there, they are kept and maintained as common business practice. It was one of the great jokes of the whole FBT debate to say that employers were not keeping records of what they were paying employees by way of fringe benefits. The same thing applies to an employee now. Of course employers will have a form to fill in. It is common sense. Will the Opposition suggest that because an employer has to fill in a form we should not introduce this scheme? Is that the rationale of what the Opposition is saying in this regard? Is that all the contribution it has to make to one of the problems it sees? Again, it is a fairly shallow argument.

I note that the amendment moved by the honourable member for Bradfield states:

... by not requiring these agreements to be registered with the Child Support Agency, except in the event that maintenance arrangements are not being honoured.

The Opposition is saying, by way of this amendment, that it is not a bad idea to have a centralised child maintenance system but that we should

give those people who have an obligation to pay maintenance a fair sporting chance for a little while. It is like playing cricket. It is like saying, 'Let them bowl a few balls and if they do the right thing we will not compel them. We will not make them register those agreements'. That ignores the fact that, as I have already stated, only 30 per cent of non-custodial parents are paying maintenance now. The Opposition is saying that the people we know are not paying maintenance should get a sporting chance. It is like playing cricket. The Opposition wants these people to have a sporting chance and to get away with non-payment of maintenance for a longer period. It is a nonsensical amendment and it does the Opposition no credit. It is typical of the Opposition that, when it finds value in Government proposals, by some surreptitious means it puts up an amendment simply to show that it is different. Whoever thought up this amendment did not put much consideration into it. It is an amendment which is shallow and it does no credit to the Opposition.

The main problem we face with support payments is that the amounts are not enough. To be critical of the Family Court, my experience of it is that not enough detailed examination is made of the ability of a non-custodial parent to make appropriate payments for children. It has been said already in this debate that some 450,000 children in this country who are in sole parent families are in poverty. That we allow this as a nation is wrong. That we have not moved more quickly is an indictment of all parliamentarians in this House. It is nothing new; the Opposition knew about it during its 7½ years in Government and made no effort to do anything about it. The present Minister, to his credit, has gone about making changes in a very appropriate way. He instituted a series of committees. Over 12 months a great deal of effort was put into consultation with all the groups involved to gain their views. I was very fortunate to be one of a small group of backbenchers whom the Minister took into his confidence and used as a sounding board about the areas in which legislative changes were being considered.

It is a disgrace that in this country we have not, I believe, within the court system an appropriate means to delve into the financial background of non-custodial parents. The ease with which people can establish discretionary trusts, the ease with which people can establish exempt proprietary companies, the so-called private companies, the ease with which some employers will give false documentary evidence to reduce the amount of income payable to a particular

person in a Family Court case, is disgraceful. In my experience, sometimes there seems to be, much to my shame, almost a male conspiracy—the reality is that most single parents are women; that is a fact—which says that the children of broken marriages or of de facto relationships or of those one night stands which unfortunately result sometimes in the birth of the children, do not really deserve money support from the male parent. I have seen this in practice. I have acted for many males in my family law practice who when it was suggested to them that they had an obligation to their children in money terms, that it was wrong for society to be topping up maintenance to assist their children to lead a decent lifestyle, would rebel against that concept. They would reject it out of hand. They would simply say, 'That is not the way to go. The Government gives out money. There is a widow's pension. Let the Government pick up the tab'. I found that viewpoint alarming. I would not say that that attitude applies across the board, but when it surfaces it is horrifying and I think it is wrong. This Parliament, by way of legislation, must ensure that that attitude does not prevail.

This legislation is important. As I said earlier, down the track the Minister will bring in further legislation which will introduce other means of setting forth the amount of maintenance that should be paid. That will get away from the present system where the court is required to spend much time tracking down the shields that are put up on behalf of non-custodial parents to prevent a proper examination being made of what assets are available to provide support for the children. The formula system will ensure that that shield will be very largely broken down and that a more appropriate amount of money is paid for the support of young children.

The honourable member for Gippsland, in talking about compulsion, suggested that every person to whom a maintenance order is applicable would be forced to register the agreement through a centralised agency and that there would be no options at all. I indicated earlier that it is a pity he has not read the legislation. Anyone who has read the legislation and understands it will realise that the provision is not forced on every person entering into a maintenance agreement. It is aimed primarily at those people who receive from the public purse a payment by way of widow's pension for themselves and two children. To ensure that the appropriate amount of money that family should have is calculated and that the public purse is protected, maintenance is to be paid through a centralised agency. The talk about everyone in-

volved in a family breakdown, where there are young children and maintenance has to be paid, being compulsorily forced into the system is a complete and utter nonsense. It does the honourable gentleman no credit to suggest that.

The scheme is compassionate. I know that many people will not find it very attractive. Many people, some of whom live in the north and north-east of Australia and other remote parts of Australia, working in various mining activities will find the legislation absolutely horrifying and frightening. Some men will probably go overseas to avoid it, but the legislation will catch those people who for too long have not taken it upon themselves to exercise the moral and economic responsibility they have to make appropriate payments towards their children and ensure that in future they make appropriate contributions so that their children can live a better quality life, thereby relieving Australian taxpayers of some of the burden of making payments towards those children.

Mr WILSON (Sturt) (6.03)—The Child Support Bill 1987 is an important piece of legislation. However, sadly, it is a bandaid. It does not address the major problem that confronts the future of this nation. Australia's wealth, as we celebrate the year of our Bicentenary, is its people. Currently, because of social attitudes and, more importantly, government institutional frameworks, our population is declining. Our birth rate is significantly below the replacement rate. We maintain our level of population through migration programs. Those who know me would be aware of my continuous support for a sensible migration policy. But I would not support a migration policy simply because we need to replace the population that we cannot give birth to ourselves in this country. Sadly, the Government has not asked why the birth rate continues to be so low. Nor has it asked whether anything can be done to give Australian families and potential families the opportunity to fulfil their dreams and have families of the size that they would choose.

We fall back onto the customary wisdom that Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries have tried family allowance and special tax schemes and they have not worked. Australia is different from those countries. Even if we had the same result from our family allowance policies, developed on a more imaginative basis, at least we should ask ourselves whether or not our serious population drought is a consequence of government action or inaction through the tax and social security

systems. It is my belief that there are hundreds of thousands of young Australians who would like to have larger families and to have their families earlier, but they cannot do so because they cannot afford to face the economic consequences of bringing children into the world. They would want to do the right thing by those children.

It is interesting that some notice is being taken of the work of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, which analysed the cost of maintaining a child. The study was important from a number of points of view. Firstly, it was important because it recognised that the cost of maintaining children varies according to the children's age. Secondly, it was important because it made it quite clear that the allowances made to families with the lowest incomes are totally inadequate to meet the assessed cost of maintaining children.

It is not only those families with low incomes which are poor that we should be concerned about; it is those families with medium-sized incomes to which we should give some attention in our policy making. We make totally inadequate allowance for them through the tax system and family allowance system. The Labor Government, since it came to office, has funded many of its grandiose schemes at the expenses of Australia's families. It has frozen the family allowance and the spouse rebate and it has means tested the family allowance for families which may be high income families today but, once they separate, the mothers of which very often become low income earners and go onto social security. True it is that the Child Support Bill will address that question.

In making these introductory remarks, I emphasise my real concern that the fundamental issue which we should be tackling is the way in which our tax and social security systems look after families with children. Do we believe in the capacity to pay principle? If so, is capacity to pay merely a function of income, or does it take into account the number of people who are dependent on the taxpayer? I believe that we should take that into account. Children and the supported dependants should not be treated as a consumption expenditure to be paid for out of after tax income, but should be recognised as providing, in the case of children, for the future of the nation. Alternatively, if the Government wanted to look at it realistically, in today's modern society where families break up and responsibilities for children are shifted from private individuals to government, the tax system should recognise that a taxpayer who supports a child

should get in tax relief as much as it would cost the Government to support that child. Then there would be equity in the system and then we would fully recognise the cost of bringing up children.

What we have now is a system in which, when families separate, there are superficially substantial financial advantages. For example, a family with a single income of \$25,000 and one child, with all the allowances—the dependant spouse rebate, the Medicare levy and the family allowance—taken into account, has a disposable income of just under \$20,000. If that family separates and the mother looks after the child, gets no support from her husband but gains a supporting parent's benefit she receives an income of \$8,100, whilst the father of the child, her former husband, has an after tax income of \$18,686. The total income of that split family is \$26,786 compared with \$20,000 before it split. We say that two households cannot live as cheaply as one. That is true, but this family group that was living together has an after-tax income, when they split, \$6,000 to \$7,000 higher than when they were living together. That is causing a lot of social change. It is making people say, 'Well, we have economic problems and we have emotional tensions; we will split and separate'.

Mr Howe—I cannot follow that.

Mr WILSON—Can you not follow that?

Mr Howe—Surely the woman would not be part of that decision. She is on \$8,000. It is a disaster for her.

Mr WILSON—That is right; it is a disaster for her but in many instances women are part of that decision and arrangements between them do not come under the scrutiny of the Department of Social Security to assess the extent to which benefits are passing between the households and the father and the mother are optimising their situation and getting some \$6,000 or \$7,000 more than other families that are living together and struggling. I believe that is happening in a number of cases—a sufficient number for us to be concerned.

That moves away from the real point that I want to emphasise. We have to determine whether we say that in the case of an intact family the children are supported out of the after-tax income but if the parents separate we will provide them with taxpayers' resources to survive, albeit at that low, meagre, modest, and inadequate level. The whole system needs to be analysed and we need to change the total tax

and social security system to recognise the family formation period.

For most taxpayers it will be a transfer of their taxes from when they were single or before they had families to the time when they had families and likewise when the families are grown up. It will be a transfer of income across the life cycle. Young families want a greater level of income while they are having their children and supporting them, and buying the home in which they want to bring them up. At present our tax and social security system does not give sufficient sensitivity to those needs. We need life cycle taxation so that people can be relieved of tax to meet the cost of maintaining their children and pay a higher level of tax while they are not supporting their children. That is my primary concern and why I say that this legislation is bandaid legislation.

Another aspect of concern to me is that although I recognise that the radical tax and social security changes that I am advocating are not likely to be brought in very quickly—although I believe in the ultimate that Australian people will recognise that the sorts of changes that I am promoting must be examined—Australian people will ultimately support them and require of their governments that they make the tax and social security system more sensitive to the support of dependent children and, thereby, have some influence on family size and the rate of our population decline or growth.

Another area about which I am concerned needs some preliminary introduction. This Bill is to set up an agency to collect maintenance from non-custodial parents. I strongly support the idea that non-custodial parents should be required to provide as much support for the children who are not in their care as they would be expected to provide had those children continued to be in their custody and care. The legislation that was passed late last year to set the priorities was a correct approach to this.

I also support the idea that the maintenance should be collected through the taxation system. However, I am concerned about the proposals for the means test arrangements and the extent to which the Government thinks it will save money. We should be aiming to do two things: we should be aiming to save money, on the one hand, but, on the other hand and perhaps more importantly, we should be aiming to ensure that the children in the care of sole parents have a better standard of living than they now have. There should be benefits both to the general

body of taxpayers and to children who are placed in these circumstances.

The collection agency will be in the Australian Taxation Office. That is a sensible place in which to locate it. However, I have one area of concern and that is the suggestion that these collection arrangements are to apply only to families that separate after the legislation comes into force or, in the case of ex-nuptial children, where the parents are not living together—however, that is to be defined—to children born after the legislation comes into force.

I hold the view that this legislation and any formula for the collection of maintenance should apply to everyone who is subject to a maintenance order and particularly those who are on the social security system. When the formula is ultimately introduced, it should be introduced on the basis that it is deemed to be an amendment of every maintenance order. Maintenance orders are orders made subject to further order and when they are made subject to further order surely Parliament is in a position to legislate that the further order is that the maintenance to be provided is now the amount calculated in accordance with the formula. However, I recognise that some maintenance arrangements that have been entered into in the past involved capital transactions and other arrangements which may impose a hardship on some non-custodial parents. In those circumstances the rider that should be put on legislation such as that which I am now advocating is that the formula should apply subject to the court varying it downwards and taking into account the earlier circumstances in which maintenance arrangements were entered into. The children of non-custodial parents who are now separated from those parents should not be abandoned by the Government, by pretending that those children are to be helped by the legislation. When one reads the explanatory memorandum, one finds that although the legislation is to give the Government power to expand it to the children of all supporting parents, it says that it is designed to cover only those of families who separate after the legislation comes into force, or, in the case of ex-nuptial children, children born after it comes into force.

I cannot understand how the Government then expects to gather in the first full year of the operation of this legislation \$190m saved from the revenue. On my quick calculations, what the Government might save, if non-custodial parents pay a very high rate of maintenance, is the extra supplement that is paid for children and the mother's allowance. The Government will not

save what is the unemployment benefit called the supporting parent's benefit, being another name for a carer's allowance, because the maintenance orders are applicable mainly to children. On my quick calculations, the Government will have to have 35,000 marriage breakdowns in the first year of the operation of this legislation where the non-custodial parent pays the full rate of maintenance so that there is no child allowance or guardian's allowance payable to the supporting parent in order to gather in \$190m.

If that is the case, I do not believe family breakdowns are at that rate. The Government needs to come clean. I hope that in coming clean the Minister for Social Security (Mr Howe) will say that this legislation will apply to all children who are living in sole parent circumstances and that the fathers of those children will be required under the formula to shoulder their responsibilities for those children. If that is the case, tell them, so that those children are not abandoned by this legislation, so that those children do not continue to live in poverty.

Talking of poverty, the Government keeps saying that its aim is that by 1990 there will be no children living in poverty. We will have to redefine the Henderson poverty line, because 10 per cent of the population are always below that line. Unless we can move all children out of the bottom 10 per cent of the community, we will fail. The poverty definitions that we are using are totally inadequate for making determinations as to whether or not we can move children out of poverty, because there will always be 10 per cent of the population, or some percentage, that are in poverty, in accordance with the Henderson poverty line.

I would like us to look not just at these families where there has been family breakdown but, in a more realistic fashion, at all families. The Government has taken up the Fraser Government's family income support scheme and has sensibly expanded it to a family allowance scheme. The Minister today at Question Time bragged that the take-up rate has been \$100,000, but any social security program that is income tested has a relatively low take-up rate. The most efficient, effective and fair social security system is one that is universal. It is my view that the only way that this nation will continue to have a population that is increasing in size and not declining is if we have universal family allowances substantially increased for all families to the level equal to that which we are providing now to the poorest families. Yes, it may cost money or reduce tax collection—

Mr Howe—It is a bit hard to reconcile with the \$11 billion saving.

Mr WILSON—My social conscience would have me prefer to impose increased taxation to achieve equity for Australian's children, and all of them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Millar)—Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Debate (on motion by Mr Blanchard) adjourned.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER—Before vacating the chair, I remind honourable members that the bells will ring at 7.55 p.m. and honourable members should proceed to the Senate chamber for a Joint Sitting. The bells for the resumption of this House will ring for five minutes, probably at 8.25 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 6.24 p.m.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

JOINT SITTING

SENATE
AND
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Hansard

1988

The Joint Sitting convened pursuant to section 44 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 met in the Senate chamber, Parliament House, Canberra.

Tuesday, 16 February 1988

OPENING OF THE JOINT SITTING

The Joint Sitting met at 8 p.m.

The President of the Senate, as Chairman of the Joint Sitting, took the chair. The Speaker of the House of Representatives took a seat on the dais.

SENATE REPRESENTATION OF THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

THE CHAIRMAN—Madam Speaker, honourable senators and members of the House of Representatives: Pursuant to the provisions of section 44 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, this Joint Sitting has been convened by His Excellency the Governor-General to choose a person to hold a place in the Senate in the representation of the Australian Capital Territory rendered vacant by the resignation of the Hon. Susan Maree Ryan. The instrument convening the Joint Sitting will be read by the Clerk.

The instrument having been read by the Clerk—

THE CHAIRMAN—In accordance with the rules adopted by both Houses, the Joint Sitting will now proceed to choose a person to hold the vacant place. Is there a proposal?

MR HAWKE (Wills—Prime Minister) (8.02)—Mr Chairman, I propose Robert Francis McMullan as the choice of the Senate and the House of Representatives sitting together to be the person to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the resignation of Senator the Hon. Susan Maree Ryan. Mr McMullan has indicated that he is willing to hold the vacant place if chosen. That is the last of my surprises for the evening. I am informed that Mr McMullan is eligible to be chosen for the Senate—that has its own significance—and that the nomination is in accordance with sub-section 44 (3) of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.

Bob McMullan has been endorsed by the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) branch of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) to fill the vacancy created by Susan Ryan's retirement. He is particularly well qualified for the task as Susan Ryan's successor. He is a person of demonstrated capacity, integrity and energy. Bob has given many years of service to the Australian Labor Party, being a member since 1969. In his youth, Bob was prominent in his native State of Western Australia in the campaign against conscription and the Vietnam war. He was, in fact, the first person in Western Australia to establish through the courts his conscientious objection to conscription on the basis of political principle rather than religious principle.

Bob McMullan is well known to all in this Parliament for his long and professional service to the Australian Labor Party, most notably as National Secretary for the last eight years. His tenure has coincided with the unfolding of the period of the ALP's greatest political and electoral success. Bob's contribution to this success has been invaluable—in his role as national campaign director, in modernising the machinery of our great Party, and in his advice in the development of relevant and progressive policies. A monument to Bob's tenure as National Secretary is the substantially enhanced status and role of women in the forums of the ALP. Bob McMullan has been a resident of the Australian Capital Territory since 1980 and has been as active in local community affairs as his heavy party responsibilities would allow. The great respect with which Bob is held in my Party and in the community at large was demonstrated by his endorsement for this vacancy by the members of the ACT branch. I have no doubt that Bob McMullan will undertake his duties as a senator for the ACT with the same professionalism, dedication and enthusiasm as he brought to his work as National Secretary.

Mr Chairman, I wholeheartedly commend to this Joint Sitting of Parliament Bob McMullan's nomination as ACT senator and I look forward to the valuable contributions he will undoubtedly make to the Parliament and to my Government.

The CHAIRMAN—Is the proposal seconded?

Senator BUTTON (Victoria—Leader of the Government in the Senate) (8.05)—I am privileged to second the nomination of Mr Robert McMullan. I am very confident that he will bring to the Senate considerable experience and talent, and he is a valuable addition to the Government in the Senate. As to Mr McMullan's history and career, I fully endorse the remarks of the Prime Minister (Mr Hawke). I have nothing to add because, as is well known, we always agree. In those circumstances, Mr Chairman, I am happy to commend Mr McMullan to the Joint Sitting.

The CHAIRMAN—Is there any further proposal of a person to hold the vacant place in the Senate?

Mr HOWARD (Bennelong—Leader of the Opposition) (8.07)—Mr Chairman, the Liberal and National parties will not be proposing a candidate to fill this vacancy. As the vacancy arises in terms of section 15 of the Constitution and the person whose vacancy is being filled was a member of the Australian Labor Party and the

person proposed by the Prime Minister (Mr Hawke) is also a member of the Australian Labor Party, it is appropriate that that person be elected by this Joint Sitting to fill the vacancy left by the resignation of Senator Ryan.

I would like to take the opportunity to say one or two things about Mr McMullan, as he is the only nomination. I listened with great interest to what the Prime Minister said about the person who until recently was National Secretary of the Australian Labor Party. I think it is fair to say on behalf of everybody in this chamber that, whatever our political leanings may be, Mr McMullan brought very special professional skills to the job that he discharged. I was interested to hear the Prime Minister talk about the contribution that Mr McMullan has made to the Australian Labor Party and the views that he holds on a variety of subjects. I must say I was disappointed that the Prime Minister omitted reference to one or two of Mr McMullan's undoubted capacities. The first of those is his capacity to know the right account in which to put a campaign donation. There is no doubt that he would know the difference between a campaign donation and a maintenance donation. He would know that better than anybody else.

I was also very disappointed that the Prime Minister failed to make any reference at all to the very considerable contribution that Mr McMullan has made to the intellectual debate in Australian politics about the damage done to political parties by factionalism. He has made a very interesting contribution. We had a perfect example of this, an absolutely exquisite demonstration, in the Caucus room yesterday. We had a contest between the honourable member for Kingston (Mr Bilney) and Senator Bolkus. On every criterion, the person who now seeks to interject, the Prime Minister, should have been supporting the honourable member for Kingston. If he had been following the advice of the man whom he has now proposed to the Senate he would have supported the honourable member for Kingston, but instead of that he went ahead and supported somebody who has opposed just about every position the Prime Minister has taken on major foreign policy issues in his Government and he supported a person whom, according to the dictates of his own principles, he should have opposed. I think it is poetic justice indeed that the very warning that Mr McMullan sounded about factionalism in the Australian Labor Party was perfectly played out yesterday with the Prime Minister putting up his hand because of a factional deal for the left wing Senator Bolkus against the far more responsible and far more

praiseworthy honourable member for Kingston, Mr Gordon Bilney. I say it is absolutely disgraceful that that is the case. We do welcome Mr McMullan and we hope that when he comes to this Parliament he will carry that same independence and fervour of conviction to the debates that he brings to the Caucus meetings.

Mr SINCLAIR (New England—Leader of the National Party of Australia) (8.12)—Mr President, Madam Speaker, senators and colleagues, those of us who sit within the conservative parties in the Parliament regard the Senate as the States House. We see within this chamber an opportunity for protecting and preserving the quality of administration that is necessary in governing a highly indebted country such as Australia. We see in this place an opportunity for the smaller States to be able to present their point of view and articulate their concerns. It is on the basis of our concern, therefore, for the traditions of the place and our intention to maintain the quality of the Parliament that neither the National Party of Australia nor the Liberal Party of Australia will be nominating for the vacancy which is about to be filled. However, I think it is worth while tonight, Mr President and Madam Speaker, to advise honourable members and senators that when the Prime Minister (Mr Hawke) first spoke to the House of Representatives on the changes to administrative arrangements he told it that he was intent upon increasing the responsiveness of the bureaucracy to the Government's wishes and upon increasing democratic accountability through Ministers to Parliament and the community. He then continued:

Portfolio Ministers are ultimately responsible for the administration of their entire portfolios and will be accountable to the Parliament for the overall operation of their portfolios.

Mr President and Madam Speaker, it concerns me that in the administration of the Parliament the Australian Labor Party—certainly under Bob Hawke—is no longer following those principles. We trust that with the appointment of an apparatchik such as Senator-to-be McMullan, who comes from the organisation, who has demonstrated a skill that I am quite sure would never have led the former member for Port Adelaide into the problems that have beset him, there might well be in this place henceforward a tendency to accept the responsibilities that there should be from a government that is no longer divided. We all recall the election policy pledge of the Prime Minister on 23 June. He said, 'We come before you as one united team—the one united team in which there will be in the Min-

istry three Queenslanders, three women and a Tasmanian'. It was a united team in which the honourable member for Robertson (Mr Cohen) said, 'I am not going to be shuffled aside just so they can dispense patronage to their mates'; within which the honourable member for Leichhardt (Mr Gayler) said, 'There is a very simple flaw in the whole equation and that is that ability and accomplishment are just disregarded, in some cases almost totally disregarded'.

We need to remember, Mr President and Madam Speaker, that in the course of the last little while we have seen an acceleration of ministerial resignations. Senator Gietzelt, the former Senator Grimes, Mr Hurford, the honourable member for Robertson, the honourable member for Parramatta (Mr John Brown), the former Leader of the House and Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs and member for Port Adelaide, the honourable member for Corio (Mr Scholes), Senator Ryan and, of course, the father of the House, Mr Tom Uren, the honourable member for Reid, have resigned from the Ministry. A number of other Ministers should have gone—Senator Gareth Evans, Senator Walsh, the Treasurer (Mr Keating), the former Minister for Transport and Infrastructure Support and the former Minister for Transport. Of course, today the Minister for Justice (Senator Tate) demonstrated that he no longer is entitled to hold a portfolio.

The point is that today's Labor Caucus is a constant grubby and greedy factional battleground. It is a contest of crude ambition, steeled by the knives of the Party piranhas. Government members fight amongst themselves to stay in power. Their policies are the figments of muzzled backroom deals and currying favour with the unions. There is no doubt that the currying for favour with the unions and their powerful mates is symptomatic of where the Government is today. Unfortunately, the losers are the Australian people. Within this chamber we wish the about-to-be senator well but we say to him that his responsibilities in this chamber will be onerous indeed in that little time Labor remains in government.

Senator CHANEY (Western Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (8.17)—Mr Chairman, senators and members, I wish to strike a slightly discordant note in supporting my Leader, Mr Howard, and the Leader of the National Party of Australia in the House of Representatives, Mr Sinclair, by welcoming Bob McMullan to the Senate. I do that because he is a fellow Western Australian. Whilst to the people

of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) he may be a carpetbagger, to me he is one of ours. As far as I am concerned, a good Western Australian is the best option if we have to have a Labor senator.

This induction of a new senator is taking place on a day when we woke up and listened to Mr Unsworth on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation making what sounded like a speech written by Barrie Unsworth rather than a speech written by somebody called Freudenberg. I am quite sure that many of the honourable senators and members opposite were listening to Mr Unsworth and his statements about the state of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and the attitude that the New South Wales Labor Party will be taking in the lead-up to the election. This is a day on which the criticisms which have been made by the Opposition of the Hawke Labor Government are as nothing when compared with the criticisms which have been made by members of the Australian Labor Party and Mr Unsworth in particular. I remind honourable senators and members that Mr Unsworth last night—it was broadcast today—was saying that there was a clear message that the ALP had to work for the people again. I quote:

The Labor Party, at all levels, must be perceived not just as the true government of the people but the true voice of the people . . . And we can only be their voice if we . . . listen to their voice.

I think the significance of the nomination of Mr Bob McMullan to this Senate place for the ACT is that he is just the latest in a series of ALP bureaucrats who have been put into the Senate as if it is some form of retirement home. I have to say that when we copped Graham Richardson we thought that was pretty tough but then we got Michael Beahan and Senator Schacht. He actually wore a tie on television the other day before the selection of a Minister. I remind the chamber that we have had four Labor Party apparatchiks coming into this place to match the 27 trade union leaders who have been put into the Parliament over recent years. If the people of Australia are wondering why the Australian Labor Party is out of touch with them they should look at the composition of the Labor side of this Parliament, because it is made up of union bureaucrats and trade union leaders who, on recent surveys, are the least trusted people in Australia. That is the sad statistical fact that it must put up with. All I can say is that, whilst it continues to make this Parliament unrepresentative by filling it with such a disproportionate number of trade union and Labor Party apparatchiks, it will continue to lose touch with the

men and women of Australia, who know that it does not represent their interests. It represents the interests of its own bureaucracies and its own narrow membership.

We have just had a by-election in South Australia. In that by-election Labor tried to put another trade unionist into Parliament. It was defeated in that by-election. That, I believe, is the pattern which demonstrates the unwisdom of the Labor Party closing off this Parliament from the people of Australia in the way that it has. Whilst I acknowledge the very considerable professional achievements of Mr McMullan and whilst I, as a Western Australian, welcome him to this place to represent the Australian Capital Territory, I also say that I think it is time that the Labor Party realised that its failure to do other than look after its own is one of the reasons why it is widely being despised by its own. There is no suggestion that these people are making Australia safer for democracy, but they are making it very safe for themselves.

The CHAIRMAN—Order! The honourable senator's time has expired.

Mr PEACOCK (Kooyong) (8.22)—I speak as Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I cannot but follow the temptation of the theme that was put down by Senator Chaney, particularly as I see opposite, together, those two graphic blobs of protoplasm who are the functional operatives, to be joined in this House by yet another knee-capper. If Senator Chaney is right in striking the theme that these operators are being brought in to control the mendacious lot that sit opposite, I can also strike the theme that he struck before when he talked about Mick's by-election. It is an auspicious day for Senator McMullan, as he will be, to come into this chamber—the day on which we have sworn in the Liberal member for Adelaide.

Senator Richardson—Do you think you will win over the wavers, Andrew?

Mr PEACOCK—It is all very well for Senator Richardson to interject. He really was one-upped. He travelled around the country saying that he had a vision for conservation, but Mick one-upped him with his \$10,000 vision. As for attending the Press conference to help his little mate because he felt sorry for him, God knows what will happen to the rest of them.

The third theme that Senator Chaney struck was that of battling Barrie Unsworth in New South Wales. On the day that we see Senator-elect McMullan come into this chamber—to pick up Senator Chaney's theme of battling Barrie—

I note that Unsworth actually asked, on this historic day, for a fair go. I thought we would meet him halfway: we will be fair to him and he can go. The reality is that the Opposition is not opposing Senator McMullan's nomination but it is pointing out, as Senator Chaney so correctly nailed, the increasing number of paid operators, the movers of the pawns in the chess game, who are coming into this chamber and, indeed, the trade union officials—for example, the one nominated in the Adelaide by-election.

I wish Senator McMullan well, but we are sworn and duty bound to seek his removal at the next election. That may well be sooner than many think. Where is Paul? Is he here? Leaving that to one side, we have no opposition to McMullan, but give a reminder of the way in which the Australian Labor Party is changing. I will not go over what Kim Beazley Snr said, but a few members ought to look around to see the changing nature of this once great Party at the commencement of its demise.

Mr Spender—Mr Chairman——

Senator Haines—Mr Chairman——

The CHAIRMAN—Order! Will the honourable member please resume his seat.

Mr Spender—To whom are you referring?

The CHAIRMAN—You.

Mr Spender—I thought that might be so.

Honourable senators and honourable members interjecting

The CHAIRMAN—Order! I call for order on both sides. I call the Leader of the Australian Democrats, Senator Haines.

Senator HAINES (South Australia—Leader of the Australian Democrats) (8.26)—On behalf of the Australian Democrats I would like to welcome Bob McMullan to this place. I hope he does not think that the behaviour exhibited here tonight is any indication of the normal proceedings of the Senate. The attendance of members from the House of Representatives has turned it into much more of a zoo than it normally is. I assure him that under normal circumstances the place operates in a much more decorous fashion. Senator Chaney commented that it is unfortunate that the Australian Labor Party (ALP) is putting in so many trade union officials because this particular group of people is not well regarded in the community.

Honourable senators and honourable members interjecting

The CHAIRMAN—Order!

Senator HAINES—In the main, when the electorate is asked what it thinks of certain professions and occupations, it tends to place politicians somewhere between pimps and purse snatchers. So I suspect that in any event trade unionists are not treated much worse, in the community's estimate, than we are.

Mr McMullan is following a very competent and tough senator who represented the Australian Capital Territory. As a Minister she was exemplary in the attention that she paid to her portfolio—often, and ultimately, to her cost. Sue Ryan was tough enough, honest enough and concerned enough about the portfolio of education to do herself a great deal of damage by bucking the party system.

Senator Wood—Mr Chairman, I raise a point of order.

The CHAIRMAN—Order! Senator Haines, there is a point of order from Senator Wood.

Senator Wood—Would you, Mr Chairman, call the right honourable member for New England to order. I cannot hear Senator Haines's speech.

The CHAIRMAN—Order! I call for silence on both sides so that Senator Haines can be heard.

Senator HAINES—I must say that Senator Wood—if indeed that is what he still is—is gamier than I in taking a point of order. I had contemplated doing so when the Prime Minister (Mr Hawke) was reading his speech of nomination. Of course, that is against Standing Orders in the Senate. In any event, I chose to be somewhat more diplomatic. As I was saying, Senator Ryan was a tough and competent Minister who lost a lot of points in the Labor Party by bucking the system with regard to tertiary fees in a portfolio that she held dear. More importantly, her toughness is made apparent by the fact that of all members and senators who have recently retired from this place she was the only one with the capacity, the ability and the guts to find herself another job—and in the private sector.

Everybody else who has recently left this place, from either side of the chamber, has had to be placed in a government position. The former member for Boothby, Mr McLeay, was sent by the Liberal Party as Consul-General to Los Angeles—which makes something of a mockery of the Liberal Party's criticisms of Chris Hurford, who went as Consul-General to New York. He is soon to be followed by Mr McVeigh, as Queensland's Agent-General to London, and was preceded by two eminent ex-senators, Doug

McClelland and Don Grimes, who were given ambassadorial positions. So I say to Sue Ryan what I used to say to her here: You did a good job, you will continue to do a good job, and good luck.

The CHAIRMAN—Order! There being only one person proposed, I put the question:

That Robert Francis McMullan be chosen to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the resignation of the Hon. Susan Maree Ryan.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The CHAIRMAN—As required by the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 I shall, as President of the Senate, certify to His Excellency the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia the choice made by the Joint Sitting. In accordance with the rules, I now declare the Joint Sitting closed.

Joint Sitting concluded at 8.31 p.m.

House of Representatives sitting resumed at 8.40 p.m.

SENATE REPRESENTATION OF AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Madam SPEAKER—I inform the House that, in accordance with the provisions of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, at a joint sitting held in the Senate chamber at 8 p.m. today, Robert Francis McMullan was chosen to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the resignation of the Hon. Susan Maree Ryan, a senator for the Australian Capital Territory.

CHILD SUPPORT BILL 1987

Second Reading

Debate resumed.

Mr BLANCHARD (Moore) (8.41)—I rise in support of the Child Support Bill 1987. There is undoubtedly a fairly wide degree of agreement in this House that Australia's current system of child maintenance is in need of reform. It is a sensitive area which should be dealt with in a sensitive way. There were a number of excellent speeches in this House earlier today from both sides. The honourable member for Bradfield (Mr Connolly), for example, made what I felt to be a constructive contribution to the debate. Whilst I can understand his and the Opposition's concern about voluntary maintenance agreements, I refer him and the Opposition to sub-clause 23 (3) of the Bill, which goes to the heart of the problems the Opposition has in respect of the Bill.

It is possible for certain payees effectively to opt out of the collection of their registerable maintenance liabilities. It seems to be of concern

to the Opposition that there is no way to opt out. Sub-clause 23 (3) provides the technical mechanism by which a payee may opt out of the scheme. Basically, a payee need not complete the form required by sub-clause 23 (2) if the payee elects within the 14-day period mentioned in that sub-clause to have the liability enforced under the Bill. However, one proviso attaches to this opting out arrangement. It relates to those in receipt of an income-tested pension, allowance or benefit. So I say to the Opposition that its amendment is not worth the paper it is printed on. We are trying to get to the heart of the matter and to deal with the Opposition's concern.

In 1980 the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on the Family Law Act recommended that an agency to collect and enforce maintenance payments be set up along the lines of agencies already operating in South Australia and my own State of Western Australia. Four years later a report of the Attorney-General's Department made detailed recommendations for a national maintenance agency to assist parties to obtain maintenance, to collect it and to take action against defaulters. Unfortunately, neither the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee nor those of the Attorney-General's Department addressed the inadequacy of the current levels of maintenance. The Government, in examining these reports, concluded that it was not cost-effective to set up an independent agency to collect and enforce maintenance payments unless there was some change in how those payments were assessed in the first place.

In the meantime, in 1985 the Family Law Council recognised that increasing the amount of maintenance needs to go hand in hand with a more effective collection system. The Council, in its submissions to the Attorney-General, argued that the amount of maintenance should be determined by administrative rather than judicial means by reference to a formula. The Family Law Council also argued for a right of appeal against administrative decisions, that a child maintenance authority should be established in the Australian Taxation Office, and that maintenance should be collected on pay as you earn lines. As a result of that, a Cabinet subcommittee on maintenance under the chairmanship of the Minister for Social Security (Mr Howe) was formed. In October 1986 that subcommittee issued its report titled *Child Support: A discussion paper on child maintenance*. It examined the growing incidence of single-parent families. Between 1974 and 1985 the number of such families increased by 73 per cent to 316,000 and the proportion of sole parents on a pension or

benefit rose from 65 per cent to 85 per cent. I mention those figures because it is important to realise the depth of the problem in this country today.

Further, the report, not surprisingly, found that the major cause of single-parent families was the breakdown of marriages and de facto relationships. Less than 20 per cent involve births to mothers who have never lived with the father. In other words, in the case of most single-parent families another parent has in the past shared responsibility for child expenses and the care of children. The report also noted the effect of the growth of such families on government payments, expenditure on supporting parents and widow beneficiaries rising by some 245 per cent in the period 1973-74 to 1985-86.

We have already heard in the debate today that supporting parent benefits and allowances are estimated to cost the community \$1,509.8m in 1987-88, which happens to be an increase of 10.5 per cent over the previous year. The report also noted that there were two major problems with the current maintenance system. The first is the non-payment of maintenance. Recent figures suggest that less than 30 per cent of custodial parents receive regular cash payments from the other parent. This means, as we have heard in the debate, that 70 per cent are not in receipt of such benefit. Only 10 per cent of unmarried sole parents and 36 per cent of divorced parents receive such payments. It was also estimated that less than half of the court orders were complied with. Secondly, the low level of payments was noted. The taking into account of social security benefits available and the desire to fix payments at a level which would encourage payment were also noted. In other words, there was a subterfuge in the process of awarding such payments.

Department of Social Security data show that most payments received by sole parents on pensions or benefits are between \$10 and \$30 a week—I think all members of the House agree that that is an abysmally low figure—with two-thirds of the payments being less than \$31 a week. These payments are so low that they are under the point at which the income testing arrangements begin to apply and therefore do not reduce the maximum rate of pension. In other words, the state is picking up the responsibilities which should fairly be thrown on to the shoulders of the non-custodial parent.

It should be noted that the low level of periodic payment may, in some cases, hide the true level of support provided by non-custodial par-

ents—for example, payment of mortgages, school fees and other items does occur, although unfortunately there is little available evidence as to its prevalence. However, a study by the Institute of Family Studies found that there was an arrangement for infrequent payments for health, education and other child expenses in only 17 per cent of cases. In 80 per cent of these cases this was additional to a regular arrangement to pay maintenance. It is against this background that the present Bill was evolved.

The major change is the recognition that non-custodial parents have a responsibility to support their children. I do not think any member on either side of this House would disagree with that proposition. This Bill will establish the Commissioner of Taxation as the Child Support Registrar, who will be responsible for the register of maintenance liabilities and the Child Support Register. I think it is important to say that the registers are an important aspect of the scheme in that they will be the basis on which the Registrar will be able automatically to deduct payments from wages or salaries. This will occur where the non-custodial parents fails to make timely maintenance payments.

If we look at the reasons why the Government chose the Australian Taxation Office to perform this important and necessary task—and this has been mentioned by honourable members from both sides of the House—we find, firstly, that the Tax Office, through the pay as you earn system, has an existing relationship with employers; secondly, that the Tax Office can best trace those persons who seek to evade their obligations under the Bill; and finally, that the Tax Office has substantial experience in the enforcement of financial obligations, as most of us as taxpayers well and truly know.

This Bill will succeed if it provides an adequate level of support for children who do not live with both parents. It will ensure the optimal development of the children. This important point has come out in this debate. Everyone who has contributed to the debate realises that the interests of the child are paramount and this is what we are seeking to achieve. In addition, the legislation must ensure equity as between parents in contributing to the financial support of their children. I would like to conclude with the words of Bishop Hollingworth, which I think sum up the nub of the argument:

. . . the real challenge is to collect maintenance in order to make significant net improvements to the living standards of single parents and their children. It would be a pyrrhic victory to reform the maintenance collection system purely to offset existing government

expenditure while at the same time leaving the acute poverty problem untouched.

I support the Bill before the House.

Mr DONALD CAMERON (Moreton) (8.55)—The Opposition has moved this amendment in relation to the motion for the second reading of the Child Support Bill:

That all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:

'whilst not declining to give the Bill a second reading, the House wishes to ensure the protection of the rights of non-custodial parents who have entered into maintenance arrangements to share in the cost of supporting their children at no extra cost to the Commonwealth, by not requiring these agreements to be registered with the Child Support Agency, except in the event that maintenance arrangements are not honoured'.

In supporting the Opposition spokesman, the honourable member for Bradfield (Mr Connolly), I suggest that this is a most reasonable amendment on our part and I hope that the Government considers it in that light. The subject that we are discussing in relation to this Child Support Bill is one that has to be viewed in the context of changes. Until the mid-1960s, a little under 6 per cent of children were born outside wedlock. Today about 16 per cent of all births are outside wedlock. That information comes from the Department of Social Security statistics section. It indicates that the number of never married mothers in receipt of a supporting parent's benefit has increased from 13,500 in 1974 to 45,000 in 1987. This is a trebling of the number which existed in 1974 at the time of the introduction of this benefit. Those figures speak volumes about the way in which the supporting parent's benefit took the worry out of not only being close but also being cautious while close.

There is no disputing that in more recent times Australians have been more sexually active outside marriage than previously. When we consider that the benefit has provided an alternative to abortion for many yet the number of abortions carried out continues to rise, it suggests that people are carefree in their approach or that contraceptives are not in fact the preventative they are supposed to be. While what people do with their lives, as long as it is within the law, is very much their own business, it does become the community's business and the business of government when the cost of these activities reaches hundreds of millions of dollars. Never-married mothers received more than \$400m of the \$1.5 billion paid out under this benefit. The message from this legislation is simple: people are free to do as they wish but if the

result of that freedom is a child it will become much more the financial responsibility of those people than it has been for a long time. The financial resources of Australia can no longer carry such people.

Another area of the supporting parent's benefit that has taken off like a bushfire is that relative to those who have simply been living together, have had children and are no longer together. In 1974 there were 3,100 women in this group. In 13 short years that number has grown to 17,700. In fact, there has been a downturn in that particular area—that is about the only area in which there has been an actual downturn but that is still a six-fold increase. Once more, this legislation shows that while the Government is not moralising on living together, it is saying that if children are born as a result of that relationship people will, in future, have to bear the financial responsibility of that relationship and not leave it to the taxpayer.

I now move to the arena where the 1974 advent of the supporting parent's benefit, in conjunction with the 1975 changes to the Family Law Act, has had such a devastating effect upon attitudes. I refer specifically to the breakdown of marriage. I guess that until 1975 there were hundreds of thousands of families across Australia who had never seen a divorce within their ranks. Today that situation is vastly different. Until 1975 it was not easy to divorce and it took longer. Pre-1975 many couples worked out those problems because it was easier than heading for the divorce courts. Today, sadly, divorce is rampant and it reaches across all socio-economic strata within the Australian community. Today there are tens of thousands of men and women totally bewildered as to the reasons behind their divorce. There are hundreds of thousands of children who are living either in a single parent situation or as part of a new family structure. All that the vast majority of those children really want is for their real parents to still be living together. I make a plea in this place to all colleagues—members of the Australian Labor Party, the National Party of Australia and the Liberal Party of Australia—to recognise that we have an obligation to society to amend the Family Law Act to make the 'quickie' divorce just that much more difficult when children are involved. If a marriage is childless, one year's separation is ample. If there are children the law, as it stands, is reckless.

Tonight we are legislating in a bid to put a cap on the financial aspects of a runaway situation. If we look at the results of broken mar-

riages in 1974, we see that the taxpayer carried 9,400 separated wives. The 1987 figure for this category is 106,000. I will read the year to year figures from 1974 up to the present. In 1975 the figure grew from 9,000 to 14,000. In 1976, after the introduction of family law, it went to 20,000; in 1977 it was 23,000; in 1978, 24,000; in 1979, 25,000; in 1980, 28,000; in 1981, 53,000; in 1982, 64,000; in 1983, 73,000; in 1984, 83,000; in 1985, 94,000 and in 1986, 102,000. Last year we kept up our great performance as a nation and 106,000 women were left to battle it out on their own. We have a situation where it is so easy for a marriage to be eclipsed. If it was the male speaking he could say, 'Bye bye darling, I'm off. The Government can look after you'. That really meant that the people could look after her. If something grabbed her fancy she might say, 'Bye bye, sucker; I'm off. I don't need your support. I'll apply for a benefit and you're not going to see the kids'.

I believe that this combination of the introduction of the supporting parent's benefit and the changes to the Family Law Act has done more to break down the structure of this nation than anything else other than perhaps the scourge of continuing high unemployment. There was a touch of irony in the fact that in 1986 the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Mr Hayden), in an interview on his 25 years in Parliament, claimed the introduction of supporting parent's benefit as one of the great achievements of his parliamentary career. I was in this place when that legislation was introduced. I must say that the only person who sounded a warning bell about the possibility that this could happen was the then honourable member for Mackellar, Billy Wentworth. His protests were fairly muted because nobody was quite sure what the effect would be, but we have seen the effect on those 106,000 people. The breakdown of marriage is costing the Australian taxpayer over \$1 billion.

I have said before that the effects of divorce have probably now reached into the majority of Australian families. It is not just the immediate families that are affected. The grandparents and relations are also affected, as are the kids who grow up hardly knowing who their cousins are. Those who have been through it—thankfully, I have not been—well know the experience and can relate it better than I can as a bystander.

I have said before that I make a plea to the Government to go to the core of the problem, which is easy divorce. The Family Law Act needs to be changed. It is too easy for all of us

to push the problem under the carpet, forget it and go on to other arenas and other areas of legislation. What the Government is saying is what the people are saying: Australia can no longer afford to pay over \$1 billion for the products of broken marriages and can no longer afford in excess of \$1½ billion to pick up the cost of the activities of those who have never married, those who have lived in a de facto relationship and those whose marriages have gone on the rocks.

One of the great tragedies, to which I have already alluded, was the emergence of an attitude in this country of letting government pick up the bill. Speaking from a male point of view, I agree with what the Government is doing. Men have to be brought to heel and made to recognise that, if they father children, they have to pay for them. They cannot bring children into the world after one night's activity, move on to the golf course next day and forget about the previous night. If one is not careful, a child is born; that is the risk of the game. What the Government is rightfully saying is, 'If you are not careful with your packet, we will get into your pocket'. I do not argue with that theory being applied. But when we talk about the 30-odd per cent of fathers who have met their responsibilities for maintenance and we cite the 60 to 70 per cent who have not, we must recognise that many within that group who have not, men particularly, have been denied access to the children and have adopted the view that, if they are not going to see their child or children, they are not going to put up the money. I fully recognise that in the male species there are some brutal men who have not only brutalised their former spouses but also given their children an experience that those children would rather forget. But I guess there is a great number of women who for reasons best known to themselves have adopted the view of 'To hell with him; I am off to the other side of Australia. He will not find me. He is not going to see the children, and that is that. I will live off the Government'.

When the Attorney-General (Mr Lionel Bowen) brought in amendments to the Family Law Act in the latter part of last year, I asked that he take this very important area into consideration. Whilst I recognise that in some instances the courts may rightly rule that one of the parents be denied access for the sake of the children, where access is granted the Government should be prepared to enforce that access through the courts. If the courts need restructuring to assist in the enforcement of this right,

that should be done. If a person has been granted access, bitchiness and an unco-operative approach should not be allowed to flourish because the problem is too hard to solve. I believe that the percentage, particularly of males, who support their children would have increased if in years gone by the Parliament—and I blame both the Opposition and the Government because we are both at fault—had been prepared to recognise that there are grave problems in the area of access and that a lot of the maintenance costs are a result of our ignoring those problems.

As I have said, the Opposition is not endeavouring to deny the passage of this legislation. Ostensibly, we support it. Perhaps we are all entitled to wonder why it took so long to be introduced. I am not just reflecting on the government of the day because I remember ringing the bell in my party room in the late 1970s about the growth that was going on in this area. We were then the government of the day and I am not saying that we shrugged our shoulders, but we seemed to be inadequate in coming to grips with the problem, which has now become more rampant. I hold the view that, if the Family Law Act had been amended, the number of broken families and marriages that we now see would not be as great. As I said earlier, I am not particularly concerned about the breakdown of childless marriages and, sad though it may be to see older couples go their own way when their children have grown up, at least the children are no longer affected because they are making their own lives. Such marriage break-ups do not have quite the same impact.

I know that the Government is saying that its reason for introducing this legislation is a bid to eliminate poverty. That could well be a justification if it leads to that and increases the income of some of those people trying to raise children. I have here a chart showing the cost of raising children. I have four children and I was quite amazed to look at this chart. The ages of my children are almost exactly the same as those in the chart. The chart mentions four children aged two, five, eight and 11; mine are aged two, five, seven and 12. The chart shows the costs for four children of those ages for someone in the middle income bracket as about \$8,000 to \$9,000 a year. It is absolutely beyond me how some women can raise their children on the supporting parent's benefit. Of course, some of them are assisted in other ways, such as cheap housing provided by government, but one can then argue that, if we have 100,000 single mums vying for housing commission accommodation, they are really displacing many of the families who in

bygone eras received those homes just because they were low income earners. Today we have a new poverty group existing in the community and something has to be done to put the brakes on and put an end to the problem.

Mrs HARVEY (Hawker) (9.15)—It is a pleasure to support the Child Support Bill, which is the latest in a long line of Labor Government reforms and programs aimed at assisting families. I must say that I have been very interested in the Opposition's argument this afternoon and this evening in relation to this Bill. One thread that has been common to all the Opposition contributions has been support of this Bill. Honourable members opposite see it as responsible, good and overdue and some of them have even congratulated this Government for having finally done something about the burgeoning supporting parents payments and the abrogation of responsibility by non-custodial parents.

Even though honourable members opposite of course agree with this Bill they are not going to stand up here for 20 minutes and say how good we are. What has the Opposition done? It has moved an amendment which not one Opposition member has spoken to. Not one member of the Opposition has explained or rationalised the amendment or told us why they want it. Honourable members opposite, in order to use up their 20 minutes, have indulged in the usual knee-jerk ramblings in which they indulge every time the words 'marriage', 'separation', 'children' or 'family' are mentioned. Honourable members opposite stand up and indulge in phoney and patronising—

Mr Blunt—It is better than empty rhetoric.

Mrs HARVEY—Wait a minute, I am getting to the point.

Mr Blunt—You are stuck with your empty rhetoric now.

Mrs HARVEY—I am getting to the point. Honourable members opposite have used phoney and patronising arguments about mothers, motherhood, separation, marriage and so on. I find it rather bizarre that the honourable member for Bradfield (Mr Connolly), in his opening contribution, somehow sought to supposedly illustrate by way of this Bill some perceived discrepancy between Government rhetoric and Government action in this area. I would have thought that this Bill more than any other is concrete proof that there is no discrepancy between rhetoric and action on this side of the House and that we actually do something about what we believe in and the things that need to be redressed.

There are many people in this country, particularly in the Opposition, who feel a warm inner glow when talking about the family and its sanctity. However, what policies does the Opposition have to assist families? Let us look at the Opposition's policies. I presume that it still has the policies that it had at the last election. I do not believe that there are any new policies. What about the \$11 billion spending cut the Leader of the Opposition (Mr Howard) is advocating? What effect will that have on families and on services such as child care, community health and education which are so vital to young families? What effect will that have on equal opportunity for the children of those families? Does the Opposition health policy still involve families paying for the first \$250 of their health costs? I have not heard any contradiction of that policy, so I assume that it is still part of the Opposition's health policy. That too is damaging to young families. Does the Opposition still deny certain women equal employment opportunity? If the Opposition does, it is denying mothers the opportunity to gain employment and to earn an income to support their families.

What has this Government done for families? Certainly in the last couple of weeks there seems to have been a myth around that it is out of touch with its constituency and that it is doing nothing or has done nothing to look after the interests of the low income families which are supposed to be its base. Let us look what we have done in the last five years. We have created one million jobs. What better thing can a government do for a family than to create a full time income for a member of that family? As has been pointed out many times, the one greatest cause of poverty in this country is unemployment. We have created one million new jobs. As the Prime Minister (Mr Hawke) has pointed out, that is twice the job creation rate of the rest of the world and four times the job creation rate under the Fraser Liberal Government. As far as health is concerned, we have introduced Medicare so that two million children are now covered.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mountford)— Order! I remind the honourable member for Hawker that the terms of this Bill are fairly narrow. I ask her to come back to the Bill.

Mrs HARVEY— Mr Deputy Speaker, I was just pointing out the difference between this side of the House and the other side of the House when it comes to implementing policies about families. I could go on to talk about the family assistance supplement whereby one million chil-

dren of low income families are getting real cash assistance. I could talk about our equal opportunity legislation for education and employment for women and children.

Today we are discussing the Child Support Bill which, as I said earlier, is the latest in a long line of Labor Government reforms and programs aimed at assisting children. There has been a feeling in the community over the last few years, with which I agree to a certain extent, that it has been too easy to get a government pension or benefit, that unemployed people could get a benefit without seriously looking for work and that single parents could get a benefit without seriously pursuing other sources of income. In other words, the social security system and the support of the taxpayer have been taken for granted. The generosity of the taxpayer has been abused. Inevitably, over the last few years this has led to an intolerable blow-out in welfare spending.

One of the great achievements of this Government has been the whittling down of the welfare bill. The number of unemployment benefit recipients has fallen demonstrably, largely due to this Government's highly successful job creation strategies and also to the application of strict eligibility criteria as regards collection of the unemployment benefit. The age pension bill has been reduced because of the assets test. Now the Child Support Bill and the proposal that non-custodial parents will be obliged to pay financial support for their children will lead to a huge reduction in government expenditure on support of those children. It has been estimated that \$7.6m will be saved in 1987-88 and \$120m in 1988-89, going up to \$193m in 1989-90.

The moral rationale behind this Bill was, I think, very capably presented by my colleague the honourable member for McEwen (Mr Clee-land) when he pointed out that separating parents will not now be able to assume that the Government or the taxpayer has prime responsibility for supporting children. Family law judges will not be able to take the availability of the supporting parents benefit into account when determining maintenance. As the honourable member for Moore (Mr Blanchard) pointed out, this move restores equity to the burden of both parents to support those children. Also, of course, it will lead to an improvement in the emotional relationship among supporting parents so that a lot of the resentment that is caused by an unequal sharing of the support burden will be lessened.

I would like to address some remarks to the comments made by members of the Opposition.

I said earlier that the honourable member for Bradfield used this Bill as an example of some perceived discrepancy between our rhetoric and our actions. As I think I have proven, we are the ones who are acting on principles. Honourable members opposite simply are the ones who are full of empty rhetoric. When my colleague the honourable member for Forde (Ms Crawford) was speaking earlier in the debate she used the words 'social justice' and said how this Bill was an integral part of our social justice strategy. The honourable member for Gippsland (Mr McGauran), who sits opposite, called out at the time, 'Social justice is a cliche. You don't understand what it means'. I would like the honourable member for Gippsland some time to tell us his definition of social justice. Perhaps in this context his definition of social justice is the attitude expressed by some of his National Party colleagues in Queensland who are on record as having said that there should not be any sort of supporting benefit and that the children of single mothers should not get any benefit because, supposedly, it encourages immorality or promiscuity or whatever. In other words, it is an example of the attitude that the sins of the fathers and mothers should be visited on the children. Is that the definition of social justice of the honourable member for Gippsland?

The honourable member for Gippsland and, more recently in this debate, the honourable member for Moreton (Mr Donald Cameron) referred to much overdue reforms needed to the Family Law Act. I remind the honourable member for Moreton and the honourable member for Gippsland that there are two Bills dealing with amendments to the Family Law Act sitting on the table in the Senate at the moment. They are being held up by members of the Opposition on technicalities and trivialities. These are Bills which would enable family law matters to progress more expeditiously through the family courts. For example, it would enable magistrates to hear undefended cases in the family law area. Those two Bills are being held up in the Senate at the moment by the Opposition. So let us have no more of this nonsense from the Opposition that reforms in the family law area are moving too slowly. It is the Opposition that is holding up what we are trying to do at the moment.

The honourable member for O'Connor (Mr Tuckey) told us that his main concern was children—little children, he called them. But did he go on to address the question of children, which is what this Bill is all about? No, he used the opportunity to indulge again in cheap, maudlin moralising about marriage and family law and

how we are, allegedly, destroying marriage. In terms of the legislation, it is taken as read that the parents have separated, that there is a single supporting parent. We are not here to moralise about marriage breakups or anything like that. We accept that these things happen and that there are children who are in need of support. That is what we should be addressing in this debate, not using the occasion to come out with tired old cliches and to moralise. The honourable member for O'Connor and to some extent the honourable member for Moreton stooped to blaming the Labor Government for the breakdown of marriage. What this Government has done, what the Labor Party has done in the area of family law over the last 12 years is to drag family law out of the nineteenth century. We are not encouraging people to separate. We are saying to people that if their marriage is intolerable they do not have to stay in it, they do not have to put up with a miserable situation in which the children are suffering, they can separate with dignity, without trumped-up charges. That is what we are saying. We are not encouraging people to separate. We are saying that they can separate if they want to with a bit of dignity and civility.

As other members on this side of the House have said, this Bill is an integral part of our plan to eradicate child poverty. It is an integral part of our plan to reduce government expenditure, and I would have thought that at least the Opposition would be in favour of that. As the honourable member for Forde pointed out earlier, it is an integral part of our social justice strategy.

Mr BLUNT (Richmond) (9.28)—The last contribution to which the House was treated this evening was lamentable, and it was lamentable because it was political. What we are talking about tonight should be non-party political. As my colleague the honourable member for Moreton (Mr Donald Cameron), who has now left the chamber said, the initial vote on the Family Law Bill was non-party; it was a free vote. I firmly believe and I am sure that most of my colleagues on this side of the House believe—I think if honourable members on the other side of the House were allowed to express an opinion on this they would also believe it—that questions of family law should be given a conscience vote and that it is not uplifting for this Parliament to indulge in the politicisation of the trauma that affects Australian families. Unfortunately, whenever a divorce takes place there is a lot of sadness, pain and suffering, and it is not appropriate for members of parliament from any party

to try to score political points on it. We have a responsibility to ensure that the legal framework that operates in our society for marriage and for the dissolution of marriage operates in the most efficient manner and minimises the suffering and trauma visited upon the partners to that marriage and their children. I for one lament every time I hear a politician try to score cheap party political points from someone else's suffering.

The honourable member for Hawker (Mrs Harvey) tonight commented that some honourable members on this side of the House have not spoken to the amendment. If the honourable member for Hawker is truly interested in the amendment I invite her to stay in the chamber for a while and I will talk to her and other honourable members about what that amendment seeks to address. It is a very important question of philosophy. The Australian Labor Party, regrettably, because it has chosen to politicise this matter, has also extended its party philosophy into this question. It has introduced into this House the Child Support Bill, which in many areas is worthy of support, but it is not worthy of support in so far as it seeks to interfere in the lives of people who have resolved their differences amicably, equitably and with dignity and who have come to a financial arrangement that is fair to both parties.

The Bill before the House tonight purports to involve everybody, irrespective of the arrangements people may have entered into with their partners, irrespective of the degree of satisfaction the former partners may have had. They may have sat down amicably at a table and agreed to the financial arrangements that will pertain after the dissolution of that marriage. They may be equitable, they may be fair, they may be quite generous, but under the provisions of this Bill Big Brother gets involved. There is no choice. The obligation to pay the maintenance is an obligation to the child support agency and the agency will remit to the other partner and that will be entered in the register.

As I have said, I do not believe that we should politicise this debate. I also do not believe that government has any business sticking its nose, and bureaucrats certainly have no business poking their sticky fingers, into people's affairs where there is no need. After the dissolution of a marriage, if there is no claim on the social security system, if there is no dispute between the former partners, if the children are being looked after well, if the maintenance payments are being made, why do we want a bureaucrat involved? That is the question that I am expect-

ing the Government to answer. The answer is that the Labor Party wants to involve the bureaucracy in everything. Other members have spoken in this debate tonight about the default figures. I have seen the default figures showing that 70 per cent of maintenance orders are not complied with. There is some question as to the accuracy of those figures, and I invite any honourable member on the other side of the House who is genuinely interested in this issue to read some of the information that is available and not just take the hand-outs from people who have a vested interest in this matter. The default rate is very high, I am not denying that, but there is some question about the often touted figure of 70 per cent.

The thing that must be acknowledged when we consider this is that if we change the circumstances, if we create an agency and facilitate a mechanism for the collection of maintenance, perhaps people will have a different attitude to its payment. Maybe historical figures are not necessarily appropriate for judging what will happen in the future. Of course, the Bill does not address the question of civil liberties, but what could I expect from a party that knuckled under to Caucus pressure and voted for an identification card. I do not think there are terribly many people on the other side of the chamber these days who have minds of their own. They are part of a machine, a machine which increasingly is run by party bureaucrats and political operatives—we inducted another one into the Senate tonight—a machine which is determining that the decisions of the machine will be paramount and damn the views of Caucus. I say, 'More power to Caucus'. It is about time Caucus started to flex its muscles. The doomed Premier of New South Wales said one thing that is very true. The Labor Party ought not only listen to the voice of the people but it also ought to pay attention to the people and implement their views.

The question we are considering tonight is fundamentally very important. The Labor Party is saying that it is another piece of its social legislation. The reality is that, if it is so important to the Labor Party, why did it wait five years? In 1983 there was a proposal to establish a maintenance collection agency.

Mr Connolly—In 1980.

Mr BLUNT—I am told by the honourable member for Bradfield that it was 1980. That was eight years ago. There was a proposal—it was not a perfect proposal—in 1983 which it could have acted upon. It could have acted on that in

1984, 1985, 1986 or 1987. But it is 1988, almost into the sixth year of the Hawke Labor Government and we have this piece of legislation that the Labor Party professes to hold dear. It comes in here masquerading on the basis that its entire motive for introducing the legislation is its concern about the poverty of Australian children. I suggest that honourable members on the Government side examine the Bill and the second reading speech of the Minister for Social Security (Mr Howe) and the rationale behind the Bill. They will see that what it is really designed to do is minimise social security costs. If the Government were genuinely concerned about this whole area it would bring to this House a package that was not just concerned with the payments of maintenance but which would address the problems of the Family Law Act. If ever there was a piece of law that had problems and was desperately in need of reform the Family Law Act is it.

Reference was made by the honourable member for Hawker earlier tonight to changes that were made to the Family Law Act to ensure that parents accepted responsibility for their children. Hallelujah! In 1983 Senator Durack, in another place, sought to amend the Family Law Act along those lines, and several times since 1983 we have sought to introduce a private senator's Bill in the Senate to make those appropriate changes to the Family Law Act—changes that are important in terms of equity, that will reduce demand on the social security system and that will require consideration of parents' means before resort is made to the social security system. This Government, which now attaches so much importance to the changes, would not accept them. It knocked them out. The changes never came before the House of Representatives. The changes could have been made years ago with bipartisan support, but they were not, because the Labor Party, contrary to its rhetoric, decided that this was a political issue and it would not wear the changes. The Government may not have liked our words precisely, but we are not difficult to deal with. All we were aiming to do was to change a problem that existed in the Family Law Act, to introduce a bit of equity relative to the Australian taxpayer and parents. We would have accepted changed words as long as the impact of the changes was what we wanted—what the Government has introduced recently in the last sittings of Parliament. But, no, that was not done. That is an indication of the Labor Party's priority and its determination to use the whole issue for scoring political points.

The way in which the Labor Party has handled this issue has been nothing short of disgraceful. In 1986 there was the rhetoric associated with the Budget Speech about how certain things would be done to improve the lot of supporting parents and to ensure that maintenance was collected. In my office we started to get calls from custodial parents who said, 'Oh, good, something is going to be done. We will not have to pursue this issue through the courts'. They stopped the legal action that they had initiated on the basis of the Minister's statements in this chamber. Unfortunately, the Minister was not fair dinkum, or perhaps he had a totally unrealistic expectation of how long it would take to bring the legislation before the chamber. The legislation was first talked about in 1986 and 1987 came and went. If my memory serves me correctly, the legislation was supposed to start on 1 July 1987. Here we are in February 1988 and the Bill is before the House. It was talked about in 1986, expectations were raised, there was rhetoric after rhetoric, statement after statement and politicisation of the whole issue and, in 1988, we finally see a Bill—a Bill which is really preoccupied with the social security aspects of this question and not the total picture as it is affected by the Family Law Act.

We have moved an amendment. It is an important amendment because it deals with the rights of the individual. There is one thing that we cannot accept and I do not believe that there is any difference between any significant numbers of honourable members, no matter on which side of the chamber they sit, about the obligations of parents, be they married or non-married, in terms of their children. The reality is that the primary obligation of a parent in terms of his or her children is to provide support to his or her capacity. There is no way, on moral or economic grounds, that a parent can justify walking away from that responsibility and placing it on the Australian taxpayer through the social security system. As I have said, it is lamentable that the Labor Party did not choose to amend the Family Law Act some five years ago to stop that. We would have had five fewer years of cases had the Government done so. How many cases does the Government think went through in those five years when it sat around on its hands playing politics?

As I have said before, it is important, when parents do the right thing by themselves, their children and the taxpayer, that they preserve the dignity about which the honourable member for Hawker spoke and that they not have a bureaucrat sticking his nose into their private affairs;

that they not be required to have their employer know all about their private affairs; and that they not have their name listed on some register; they have a right to come to a private arrangement. That is what our amendment is designed to do.

We recognise that there is a need to ensure that people make maintenance payments. If the payments are not made, if one former partner does not agree to a private arrangement or if there is a claim on the social security system, all bets are off and the agency should be involved. But if there are none of those things—if the partners agree, if the maintenance is being paid and if there is no claim on the social security system—what is the business of the Government's bureaucracy getting involved in their private affairs? That is the trouble with this country and the Australian Labor Party today. The Labor Party is too ready to stick its nose into the private business of Australian people. Let me tell the Labor Party that the Australian people are very concerned about this. If the Government goes along this track as it has intimated in terms of child support and if stage 2 of this package comes in and follows the same philosophies, it will have a massive backlash. The Government thinks that it had backlash over timed telephone charges. Wait until it sees the backlash it gets over sticking its nose into the private marital affairs of Australians. Literally hundreds of thousands of families are affected by this and literally millions of people are prepared to vote on it. The Government should think about that the next time Caucus considers a bit of legislation. There is no issue that raises greater passion than the question of the dissolution of marriage and the obligation of partners to pay maintenance.

It is not just a question of partners to a first marriage; it is a question of second families, their rights and equities and the attitudes of the second partner. I will give the Government one bit of advice which I hope it takes. I do so most sincerely. The Government should get politics out of the question of family law. Every time we have a question in this Parliament which relates to family law and the support of children, we should have a free conscience vote. It is only then that we will start to get down to an honest, non-political treatment of what is essentially a very personal, sensitive and important subject.

We have a problem in this country with the rate of marriage breakdown and the rate of partnership breakdown. I am not about to stand here tonight in judgment of anybody's domestic

or private arrangements, but I will say—I say this categorically and again, because I believe it most fervently—political parties have no business in those arrangements. If the Caucus had any guts it would insist on a free vote on these issues, because then we would start to get people in here talking reasonably and rationally and not scoring political points on this issue. To come in here and talk about family assistance packages and equal opportunity legislation in this context is a sheer nonsense and demonstrates a degree of insincerity that I find amazing, astounding and, as I have said, lamentable.

This issue is very important. I hope that the Government recognises the validity of our amendment. It is moved conscientiously and with a desire to protect the rights of individuals who come to a satisfactory arrangement—satisfactory to all the parties involved, including the taxpayer. I would hope that, if not in this place, in the Senate we would have support for it because it is important in terms of where we go next regarding changes to the Family Law Act.

Many other issues should be addressed. I note the injunction of the former Deputy Speaker to stay on the subject, but there are many issues that need to be canvassed, including amendments to the Family Law Act, resources available to the Family Court of Australia and related issues. It is a great pity that we do not have the opportunity to discuss those issues on a non-partisan basis. I support the amendment. As I have said, I hope that the Caucus has some guts and genuine concern for the whole issue of child support, will reconsider its position and will support our amendment.

Mr LAVARCH (Fisher) (9.43)—I doubt whether there is a family law practitioner in Australia who has not been affected by the hardship, the desperation and the feeling of hopelessness which accompany separation and the breakdown of marriage. The failure of a marriage is an emotional trauma for the parties of the marriage. Unfortunately, as well as the emotional fallout, many parents are thrown into financial hardship. It was my experience as a family law practitioner that many non-custodial parents had no idea of the cost involved in raising children. Often the parent had little to do with the day-to-day care of the children and certainly nothing to do with the purchasing of the basic necessities of food and clothing. Further, there is a general linking in most parents' minds of the access rights to children and maintenance, the custodial parent often believing that a failure to pay maintenance removed the right

of access. Conversely, non-custodial parents who do not have or exercise access rights contend that there is no obligation to maintain their children.

As a result of these two perceptions, as well as an inflated misunderstanding of the level of supporting parent benefits, the percentage of non-custodial parents paying maintenance is very low. The Bill before this House is part of a package of legislation designed to ensure that the legal right of maintenance is converted into an enforceable duty of both parents. Parties to a marriage have always been liable to maintain their children. Currently there exists a system of enforcement which, unfortunately, has not resulted in a large number of custodial parents receiving adequate maintenance, if any maintenance at all is received.

The current situation in Queensland, I believe, would be typical of the rest of Australia. In Queensland a custodial parent must seek a court order before any enforceable obligation is imposed upon the other party. That, however, is the easy part. After a court order is made, either by consent or by determination of the court, the enforcement is placed in the hands of the clerk of the court of the Magistrates Court having territorial jurisdiction over the matter. For many reasons the enforcement procedures are not effective. Alarmingly few orders are complied with and seemingly few defaulters are successfully pursued by the court registries.

Further, if the non-custodial party takes proceedings for collection of arrears, the general practice is for an order to capitalise the arrears for a period of no greater than one year and, of course, enforcing even a second order remains a problem. The new scheme proposes to remove the collection function from the State agencies and give it to a newly created child support agency. The agency will be a section of the Australian Taxation Office.

For non-custodial parents paying pay as you earn tax, the deduction of maintenance will be compulsory and automatic. For other cases enforcement powers will be given to the agency and payments will be required to be remitted on a monthly basis. Maintenance payments will then be passed on to the custodial parents by means of the social security system in conjunction with the family allowance payments.

The scheme will cover people who separate after the enactment of the Bill: social security pensioners and beneficiaries; and parents of children of de facto relationships where the child is born after the scheme is introduced—except in

the State of Queensland. The Queensland Government has refused to refer power to the Commonwealth over children not deemed to be children of a marriage pursuant to the Family Law Act. The effect of this action is that only in Queensland will there remain a confusing and complicated situation of courts competing for jurisdiction over custody and maintenance matters. The most serious consequence of the Queensland Government's action remains in the field of custody disputes involving children of de facto relationships and disputes involving children of a first marriage who are living within a family of a second marriage. In these cases the Family Court, the Supreme Court of Queensland, and the Magistrates Court all have jurisdiction in certain circumstances. I fail to see the logic of retaining a complicated system when all other States have now adopted a one court approach to the problem.

As well as the custody disputes maintenance questions will remain unnecessarily complicated for Queenslanders. Although the scope for confusion will be reduced by the fact that a majority of single parents arising from a de facto relationship will be social security beneficiaries some will not and will have to take maintenance action under the Queensland Maintenance Act. Court orders under this Act made by the Magistrates Court or the Supreme Court may not be able to be collected by the child support agency unless the Queensland Government displays a more co-operative attitude. We have heard a lot in Queensland since the election to the premiership of Mr Ahern; we were going to have a new era of co-operation and consensus and the inevitable conflict between the Queensland State Government and the Federal Government, as a matter of course and regardless of merit, would be a thing of the past. I can think of no finer example of a ludicrous situation than the Queensland Government standing alone for no logical reason and refusing to co-operate with the Federal Government. It would be a perfect example of how the Queensland Premier and the so-called new Queensland Government could show that they were willing to co-operate with the Federal Government in order to benefit Queenslanders.

Mr Sciacca—It is no different from the previous Government.

Mr LAVARCH—That is quite so, as the honourable member for Bowman correctly points out. For the remainder of my time I wish to turn to the general principles on which the Bill and the amendments to the Family Law Act

and social security Acts are based. There has been some community debate about the wisdom of enforcing maintenance obligations far more vigorously than at present. Some groups, such as the Lone Fathers Association, contend that strict enforcement will lead to increased tensions and possible violent reactions by non-custodial parents, especially when coupled with access difficulties. Others submit that it is unrealistic to expect teenage fathers of children from a casual affair to pay maintenance for a child with whom they have no social contact.

I shall answer those criticisms by saying that the existing division between custody, access, and maintenance is a correct one. Children are the responsibility of their parents. They have the right to be properly maintained and parents have a right to be part of their children's lives, even if a marriage or a relationship goes wrong. But the concepts are separate as financial disability should never be a bar to a parent being part of a child's upbringing. Equally, lack of interest in a child should not excuse a parent from having responsibility for the life which he or she has created.

In my view, the role of government should be to ensure that, as a society, we do not allow children to be victims of the follies or difficulties of their parents. This does not mean that government replaces the parent or the parent's responsibilities. The end result of this package will be that government support can be more adequate and the level of child poverty will be reduced. That is the aim—not to aggravate non-custodial parents but to ensure that those who have the ability to pay maintain their own children, and they should do so.

The next stage of this package concerns the determination of a formula to apply in calculating the amount of maintenance. I will be interested to see how such a formula can be developed as from my experience it might be difficult to develop a catch-all approach. Nonetheless, the reforms already encompassed will immeasurably improve the system. I do not agree with those who argue that deductions should occur only when the non-custodial parent has defaulted or has refused to pay maintenance voluntarily. This seems to be the particular point at which the Opposition amendment is directed and the concern of a number of Opposition speakers who say that there is a large number of defaulters but there is always a group of responsible parents who have made legitimate agreements between themselves and they are working, the payments are being made. The argument goes

on: why should the bureaucrats get their sticky fingers in this situation and become part of a situation that is clearly working?

Mrs Sullivan—It's expensive.

Mr LAVARCH—From my experience very few cases fall within that category. Generally, over time, even if there is an initial willingness to pay maintenance, it seems to dissipate as time goes on. As a result of that we must put into place a system that basically will cover the field rather than try to pick out individual cases at this stage. Of course, some parents are responsible and comply with their obligations, but the question is: Will people in that position be in some way disadvantaged by this particular Bill in the form of legislation which is encompassed? I do not believe they will.

Firstly, the payment by deduction is necessary for co-ordination with the social security system. Everyone, including the non-custodial parent, the responsible parent, will benefit if our social security system is properly targeted. Everyone will benefit if their taxes are spent properly. Hopefully, that will reduce the burden on the entire community, including the responsible non-custodial parent. Secondly, within the legislation there exist very strict privacy protections in relation to the information which an employer receives and which an employer can give out. Therefore, that aspect is also covered.

Thirdly—and this point seemed very much lost on the honourable member for Richmond (Mr Blunt), who asked: if there is no social security element in it, if they are not receiving a benefit and the system is working well, why should the bureaucrats become involved?—there is included in the Bill a clause which expressly allows the parties to opt out in exactly that situation. That situation is, in fact, covered.

In the situation where the parties to this agreement have sat down, worked it out and said, 'Okay, everything is working fine; the level of maintenance payments being made is adequate', the custodial parent can agree to opt out of the system. That is in clause 23 (4) of the Bill. That particular point, at which the honourable member for Richmond took great umbrage, is covered by the proposed legislation. I suggest he might, as a good starting point, actually read the Bill on which he is proposing to speak.

Mr Sciacca—He has not read the Bill.

Mr LAVARCH—As the honourable member said, it looks as though the honourable member for Richmond has not read the Bill. A responsi-

ble party not affecting the Government in terms of payments will not have to be involved in the system. That is catered for. That is the great point upon which this amendment is based. If that is the great concern of the Opposition, it has absolutely been covered already by the Bill.

It must be remembered that children are the beneficiaries of this scheme, not the parents as such. In my opinion, the balance must favour a certain system rather than an honour system, which simply has not operated effectively here and has not operated effectively overseas.

Finally, it is useful to view this scheme in the overall context of the Government's commitment to fight poverty. Marriage break-up is a significant cause of poverty, with some 450,000 children within single parent families living below the poverty line. This package will increase the resources to these particular families. It will maintain the incentive for such families to become more self-supporting by not affecting current income tests. It will make parents financially responsible for their children.

In conclusion, I believe that this Bill, in relation to the amendments to the Family Law Act and the social security Acts, is a viable and vital part of the Government's package towards the problem of child poverty. I commend the Bill to the House, and I ask the House to support it.

Mrs SULLIVAN (Moncrieff) (9.58)—Mr Deputy Speaker, I recognise the sincerity of the honourable member for Fisher (Mr Lavarch) in the point he was making. I must say that nothing he said persuaded me that it is not desirable that there be an option in this maintenance arrangement. I accept the point he has made—that, whilst people may enter into satisfactory maintenance agreements, over time they may become less satisfactory. I do not take that as a rebuttal of the Opposition's amendment. I believe the right should always be there, if a maintenance arrangement became unsatisfactory or there was good reason to believe it would become unsatisfactory, to have resort to the government agency that this Child Support Bill provides.

In many cases there are many advantages in having the government agency. For one thing, it removes the notion of dependency and a notion that has grown up of an almost optional favour element in paying maintenance. It forces people to face the reality of parenthood and their responsibility to their children and it certainly would protect a lot of people who at the moment live in a parlous state in this country because of the disinclination of a very large

number of parents to face the financial responsibilities they have to the children they parented.

The supporting parent's benefit was introduced just prior to my initial election to this Parliament. However, from the time of its introduction it has attracted a great deal of public comment, the most noisy of it being unfavourable comment. The critics of the supporting parent's benefit have basically concentrated on the female nature of the recipients of it. It was, of course, the Fraser Government that extended the supporting parent's benefit to fathers who were full-time carers for children. It has, nevertheless, had an overwhelmingly female clientele. Criticism that has flowed to the female recipients of the supporting parent's benefit has rarely flowed to the unmarried fathers of those children.

I think it is worth noting that 85 per cent of recipients of the sole parent's benefit are divorced or separated. It is also worth noting in the context in which so many people choose to put it—a context of immoral young females—that only 4 per cent of all supporting parents are teenagers and that they are not exclusively female; there are some male teenagers who are on supporting parent's benefits.

Although I was not here when the supporting parent's benefit was introduced—as I said, I came into Parliament shortly afterwards—I was here when we debated the Family Law Bill and I do remember some aspects of that debate that I think are relevant to this matter. In the course of this debate there have been some attempts to re-canvass the Family Law Act. That is not my intent; that is an occasion for another day. When we inserted into that Act a requirement that the Family Court take note of other income or benefits that were payable, the clear intention was to alleviate an injustice which then existed. The overall intention of the Family Law Act was to alleviate injustice and the hypocrisy of the previous situation. The debate on that particular aspect which has created a lot of the difficulties that we are debating tonight centred on an unfairness to men, which was that the forerunner of the family allowance, the child endowment, was not taken into account by any courts in any maintenance arrangements and that, if a maintenance arrangement was made, it could on occasions cause hardship to the father, whereas a woman could be receiving child endowment, which of course was tax free, and the courts ignored that sort of payment.

Our intention was to get the Court to take account of all the sources of income or benefit

to make fair maintenance arrangements. It was not our intention that the Court should shovel off onto the social security bill a whole lot of parents. That was never our intention. It was an unintended consequence, if you like. It was the Family Court's marrying of that section of the Family Law Act and the supporting parent's benefit that has had far-reaching effects well beyond the financial aspect. This magnification of a different concept of marriage and marital breakdown has led in this society, I believe, to a different concept of marital and parental responsibilities. It has all become just a little too easy. I am not one who wants to turn back time on that and I would hate to see the reintroduction of fault as either a ground for divorce or for the awarding of custody or maintenance.

The beneficial role of the supporting parent's benefit in a desperate marital situation, I believe, is an important safety net. I am aware of many women with young children who are subject to violent marital situations. It may be emotional violence; it may be physical; it may be a combination of both. I believe it is important in that situation for the dependent partners to the marriage, the mother and the young children, to have that safety net—a bolthole, if you like.

However, the drawback is that it makes it all a little too easy. There is no pressure on the mother and father to try to sort things out. In a situation of violence there is no immediate pressure on the father to take stock of himself. From cases that I have observed, it is some time before the father starts to miss his children and to suffer the emotional trauma that so many young fathers do when their marriages break up, much to their surprise, as a rule. The situation has gone too far down the track by then. The supporting parent's benefit, being used in the way it has been, has become too easy an out from sorting out marital problems.

Marriage is, we say, a relationship or contract voluntarily entered into and ideally for life, but our birth is involuntary and the parent-child relationship is inevitably for life. Our great concern ought to be what is happening to children in this country. I have made many speeches on this subject over the past decade. The statistics on the number of children being reared in single parent families on social security, or just families on social security, are alarming as far as I am concerned. We here both reflect and set standards for our society through our laws. In this specific case the Family Court's action took the intent of the Family Law Act far beyond our

intent, and the reform that has led to it has been too slow.

It alarms me that there are so many children growing up believing that the wherewithal for life comes out of the letterbox—the cheque that is delivered by the mailman. There are so many children—half a million or more—who see the act that puts a roof over their heads, food on their plates and clothes on their backs as a payment from government. They are not learning the basic lesson of life, which I know both sides would want them to be learning; that is, that one survives in our society essentially by one's own efforts but that we have social security for those who are put in an unfortunate situation.

The other dimension of this problem is that we have an enormous number of children who, being reared in one-parent families, are growing up without a concept of the joint parental responsibilities that come with marriage. It is my belief, from my own experience in my days as a teacher, that those children are better off in that situation than in a very unhappy family situation. But the best situation of all, of course, is the ideal role model of two parents with the children, both male and female, seeing mothers and fathers playing their role in relation to the mutual support of the other parent and the vital support of the children.

This is overwhelmingly a female problem. As I have said, the figures show—I quote from the Women's Budget Statement, last year's Budget Paper No. 6—that in the category of widows' and sole parents' programs there were 419,303 children in this country being reared by women on their own; that is, widows as well as sole parents. In total, 556,616 children were being reared by women who were the income recipients, whether from an invalid pension, a supporting parent's pension or whatever. That is an enormous number. We do not need to debate this, and I do not need to elaborate at length; we know that families in that situation—one parent, social security dependent—are living in poverty, and that they get locked into it. The child who is being reared by a mother in a sole parent situation is almost inevitably in a worse position than the child being reared by a father.

We have here an historic situation relating to the education and training of girls and the expectations they have of adult life. In the 1970s we had a sudden legacy of the undereducation, undertraining and underaccess of women to employment opportunities in this country when we had a rapidly escalating rate of divorce. It was

in the 1983 Federal election campaign that former Senator Ryan so successfully used her slogan referring to the feminisation of poverty. She did not invent it, but she certainly made it very effective. It is rather regrettable that it has taken five years for us to face the full extent of it.

I want to relate some very stark and pretty brutal figures on what this amounts to in the context of what we are discussing tonight. In 1985 less than 30 per cent of sole parent pension recipients—remember that 90 per cent of them are women—had extra income and two-thirds of them were receiving less than \$31 per week. More than 70 per cent, in other words, had only a pension. Statistics provided by the Australian Institute of Family Studies in 1986 showed that in the average case where the woman was a sole parent and the man was living alone, the man—that is, the father—was \$175 a week better off than the woman after payment of tax and after maintenance. An Australian Bureau of Statistics survey found that the mean income of a female sole parent was less than 35 per cent of that of a married couple who were parents and that the mean income where the man was the sole parent was nearly 64 per cent of the married couple's income. The dramatically worse position of mothers rearing children compared with either men or married couples is very stark. It has also been demonstrated that 56 per cent of female sole parent incomes are in the lowest 10 per cent of income units, whereas only 34 per cent of married couples' incomes fall into that category.

A survey on the economic consequences of marriage breakdown showed that 77 per cent of female sole parents were worse off than they had been at the time of separation by a factor of \$78 per week. In contrast, 75 per cent of unpartnered men who were living alone were better off financially than they had been prior to separation by \$72 per week. Those figures have been around for a long time and have been quoted over and over again. Former Senator Ryan had them at her disposal in 1983 when she referred to the feminisation of poverty. We cannot separate from a debate on this subject the general subject of the situation of women in society today.

Some progress has been made in the education of girls, but the general subject of access to education for women as distinct from girls has not improved very much at all. I believe that we have made virtually no progress in the education of girls and boys about responsible adult behaviour and responsible parenting, and our

progress in child-care is too slow because the Government refuses to look at all the options available. The worst effect of this is that single parent women have an extended dependence on social security so that they are even less employable when they are older and their children are less dependent on them. I welcome the progress that has been made through this Bill, but I believe that a very wide range of other issues has to be addressed before we will truly alleviate the problem.

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

Performances by Services Bands—Electorate of Macarthur: Price Watch Network—Health Insurance Commission—Health Insurance—Honourable Member for Adelaide—Queensland: Local Government Boundaries—Time Charged Telephone Calls—Middle East Conflicts—Australian Labor Party

Madam SPEAKER—Order! It being 10.15 p.m., I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr COBB (Parkes) (10.15)—Last year the Kingsgrove Returned Services League Club decided to arrange an unusual night's entertainment as a special event for its old diggers. It decided to engage the 2nd Military District army band to perform at a club concert it had planned for 12 September. This was to be quite a gala occasion for the club as it had not had such a band play there since the club was opened in 1956. It may seem only a small thing to some, but one can imagine the air of expectation and excitement that this idea generated amongst the club executive and its members. They, of course, mainly consist of ex-servicemen and war widows, most of whom have historic ties with the military. Glowing reports had been heard of the band, and these people were looking forward to it coming and performing in their auditorium.

To get the arrangements under way early and to do the right thing, the club wrote to the Minister for Defence (Mr Beazley) on 23 June to get his clearance for this band to play at the club concert. One can imagine its almost utter disbelief when, on 20 July, it received a letter from the Minister's office, signed by Barry Davies, Senior Private Secretary, which stated:

The Minister for Defence has asked me to respond to your letter of 23 June 1987 in which you request the presence of the Army band from 2MD to play at your RSL Club concert on 12 September 1987.

I am advised that as a result of previous requests for Service bands to perform on commercial premises, com-

plaints have been raised by the Musicians Union. As a result it has been necessary for the Minister to issue a directive to the effect that Service bands are no longer permitted to perform at Club concerts.

In the circumstances, it is regretted that a Service band cannot be made available for your concert.

Mr McGauran—Shameful.

Mr COBB—It is outrageous. The Kingsgrove Returned Services League (RSL) had actually engaged three union members at a cost of \$1,000 to perform on the night with the band. The band itself was to be paid \$1,500 by the club, which the band was looking forward to receiving to put into its own favourite charity, which I believe is Legacy. So the RSL was not getting entertainment on the cheap. The club had also well served members of the Musicians Union of Australia over the previous year, having paid out about \$120,000 in fees to it.

The ramifications of this decision are quite mind boggling. Not only will Service bands be stopped from performing in RSL clubs but also, if the 'commercial' premises clause in the Minister's letter is applied, they will not be able to perform in private clubs anywhere even though they may want to perform for charity. There will be no charity concerts. Perhaps they will not even be able to perform at the Sydney Cricket Ground or at bicentennial functions in 1988.

Mr McGauran—Or at passing out parades.

Mr COBB—Yes. It is intriguing to hear that the Secretary of the Musicians Union, Alan Nash, apparently had discussions with the Minister beforehand and, if honourable members will excuse the pun, he is calling the tune in this outrageous affair. Servicemen, who fought for preservation of freedom and commonsense in this country, are asking why the Minister, in uncharacteristic fashion, is caving in to this man. The whole thing is so farcical that Alan Nash himself apparently suggested that if Kingsgrove RSL wanted a military band so badly, the Musicians Union members themselves could dress up in uniforms similar to those worn by members of the 2nd Military Band and play on the night. Have honourable members ever heard anything so stupid? Apart from this club, the Wagga RSL Club was also denied permission to have the Kapooka military band play for half an hour at its recent 7th Division reunion.

It is worth noting that the Musicians Union, which is dictating what some sections of our military forces can or cannot do, has an appalling record of militancy over the years. One of its executive members at the time of the adminis-

sion of four moderate unions to the Victorian Trades and Labour Council a year or so ago said that this was 'tantamount to pack rape of the Victorian Branch'. In recent times the Musicians Union has also pulled on many strikes during performances, at great dissatisfaction to patrons. If I could just give one example: last year at the Victorian State Opera on the opening night of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*, a performance that lasts for two hours and 11 minutes, this union called an 'interval strike' during the performance because it insists in its award that its members work for no longer than two hours without a break. Have honourable members ever heard anything so ridiculous? So for the sake of 11 minutes, *The Flying Dutchman*, which is traditionally played without a break, was largely spoilt for the audience. The President of the Musicians Union, Mr Jack Varney, said that he noted the irate audience's objections to this cultural vandalism but said that they 'were not unduly worried'. He said:

In this business there are always critics.

Regrettably this Government has showered the Musicians Union with numerous grants totalling \$58,491 for the most ridiculous projects, such as hiring writers and photographers in residence to document the working lives of musicians. The whole episode of pandering to this union—

Madam SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr COBB—and banning military bands from performing in RSL clubs is ridiculous.

Madam SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member will sit down when the Chair tells him that his time has expired.

Mr MARTIN (Macarthur) (10.20)—Tonight I would like to pay tribute to a group of people within my electorate who work assiduously and tirelessly on behalf of the local area as part of the Macarthur price watch network. Over the last 12 months these people have gone around on monthly basis to supermarkets that are located within the northern suburbs of Wollongong and conducted a price watch campaign, something which this Government has pioneered within this country. As part of the local price watch, they follow the usual system whereby a specific bag of goodies is checked for prices on a regular basis—every month, as I have indicated. The figures are tabulated and fed not only into our own local network but certainly into the national network to see how successful we have been in applying pressure on supermarkets in terms of their pricing policies. We are able to

introduce an element of competition that will benefit low income earners, pensioners and other disadvantaged groups in our various electorates.

A great degree of community awareness has grown up in regard to the benefits of this system. I am pleased to be able to say that the Macarthur price watch was the first to commence on the south coast of New South Wales. This operation has been followed by a price watch operation in the electorate of my colleague the honourable member for Throsby (Mr Hollis) and in other adjacent electorates. As I have indicated, the result of price watch has been quite positive. The feedback, particularly from pensioner associations, has been quite staggering. As is my particular bent, every so often I go to pensioner groups within Macarthur and I speak to them on a range of issues pertinent to their needs. I also inform them about the Government's plans, policies and priorities, particularly as far as aged people are concerned. In the last few months I have been quite flattered by their remarks about how well the Macarthur price watch has worked. They look forward every month to getting a price watch newsletter which we produce and distribute amongst community groups.

I hasten to point out that the Macarthur price watch is accurate and scrupulous in its activities in so far as we do not tell the supermarkets when we are coming to check the prices. We do not visit a supermarket on the same day each month. Indeed, the basket of goodies is quite often altered. So a very scrupulous and accurate way has been developed in accordance with principles laid down by consumer organisations and pensioner groups to measure the changing prices of a specific basket of goods. Numerous hardworking and dependable volunteers who work within the Macarthur electorate represent a wide variety of the residents of Macarthur. They include pensioner association members, members of Australian Labor Party branches, local community representatives and so on. Tonight I would particularly like to pay tribute to Eileen Hardy, Cath Bonney, Patricia Cosby, Nell Maher, Kay Tuckerman, Mrs Joy, Marie Grace, Yvonne Shannon, Craig Kershaw, Judy Hunt and Jean Smallgood. I am sure that their efforts are appreciated not only by me but certainly by the whole community. As I have indicated, the newsletter that we produce brings people information on a monthly basis in respect of which supermarket provides the best value for their dollar. Of course, people who have a limited income, whether they be low income earners or pensioners, have to watch those dol-

lars. All members of this House would be aware that the Federal Government has no jurisdiction over the control of prices. On at least three occasions governments have attempted through referenda to get control of prices at a Federal level. But, of course, that has been rejected by the people of Australia. I would suggest that from the point of view of inflation future governments could look at this area.

I conclude simply by saying that all of these people have contributed greatly to the local area. I am grateful for the support that they have given me. I am very pleased to see that the effort that we have put in over the last couple of months has been rewarded in so far as one of the supermarkets in my electorate has become the cheapest supermarket in which the shop in New South Wales.

Madam SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr McGAURAN (Gippsland) (10.25)—Madam Speaker, you are aware, as we all are in this chamber, that in recent days much has been made of members misleading the Parliament. The former Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories, the honourable member for Parramatta (Mr John Brown), admitted to misleading the Parliament and sacrificed his ministerial career as a result—at least for the time being. Today a censure motion was moved against the Minister for Justice (Senator Tate) for allegedly misleading the Senate.

I wish to draw the attention of the Parliament to a further act of misleading—by the Health Insurance Commission which has misled the Government in the Government Budget Papers of last year, and by extension, it has misled the Parliament. The Health Insurance Commission advised the Government that \$1.5m could be saved by terminating private health insurance funds operating as Medicare agencies. I allege that that is not the case; those are false economies and the huge resources of the Departments of the Treasury and Finance should be put to work to determine the falseness of this figure, once and for all. Indeed, I allege that the Commission has a hidden agenda for terminating these private health fund agencies and replacing them with Medicare offices at a considerable cost to the Government—certainly, on my calculations, more than the cost of continuation of the private health agencies.

Why does the Health Insurance Commission have this hidden agenda? That is simple; it is to provide even more forums for Medibank Private,

which already has so many advantages over the private health funds. It operates from the Medicare offices and there is a steady flow-through of traffic. This means there is a further isolation of private health funds. I am very concerned about this and I call upon the Treasurer (Mr Keating) and the Minister for Finance (Senator Walsh) to put the resources of their Departments to investigating that \$1.5m saving, as alleged by the Health Insurance Commission and relied upon by the Treasurer in the delivery of is Budget to this Parliament and the nation last September.

It is widely accepted that the average cost of establishing a Medicare office is \$85,000. The Health Insurance Commission has stated that nine new Medicare offices will be established to replace the agencies of the private health funds. Two of those new offices will be in my electorate—at Bairnsdale and Sale.

Mr Tim Fischer—What about McMillan?

Mr McGAURAN—The honourable member for Farrer asks about the electorate of McMillan. The city of Moe—not a town but a regional centre—has the private agency operated by the Latrobe Health Insurance Fund terminated and not replaced by a Medicare office. Thus, this city of 25,000 people will be without any Medicare office or agency. What has the honourable member for McMillan (Mr Cunningham) done about that? He has been bleating in the local media about the error of the decision but why was he not monitoring the situation properly? He has turned his back on his constituents. He is yet another example of a Government member who has lost touch with the grassroots, with the people he alleges he represent. The honourable member for McMillan should be ashamed of himself; he has bashed the Minister for Community Services and Health (Dr Blewett) right throughout Gippsland, but nobody buys it because if there is any one member who unquestioningly repeats the party line it is the honourable member for McMillan—and in one sense I admire him for his loyalty. Therefore, it is a matter of great amusement to many of us that he has finally decided to put aside that Caucus pledge, albeit temporarily and under great pressure, in order to truly represent the interests of his constituents.

I ask the honourable member for McMillan, the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance this question: What are the true savings, or is this just part of the ever-growing, octopus tentacles of Medibank Private. Medibank Private is in a privileged position which puts it competitively

far ahead of the private health funds. Jobs are being lost in the private health funds as their members are deserting them in droves. What chance do these funds have if their agencies are terminated and Medibank Private offices spring up all over the countryside like mushrooms after rain and sunshine—I make that comment in case any one thought I was not a rural member. The Health Insurance Commission has misled the Government and the Government has misled the Parliament as a consequence.

Mr CUNNINGHAM (McMillan) (10.30)—This situation in which the honourable member of Gippsland (Mr McGauran) gets up in this Parliament on the adjournment debate and attempts to score points against his neighbour, the member for McMillan, is becoming rather repetitive. But I am quite happy to speak to this House at any stage in relation to those issues. I wish to put on record that, as far as I am concerned, as the member for McMillan my first duty is to those people who elected me. I have always taken and will always take that position as long as I am a member of parliament.

Mr McGauran—Fringe benefits tax, capital gains tax.

Madam SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member for Gippsland has had his go.

Mr CUNNINGHAM—The honourable member for Gippsland did have his go and he certainly made a lot of allegations. The first point that needs to be made following what he has said is that no more than five years ago, when the conservatives were in power, two million people around Australia had no cover of health insurance at all—none whatever—private, public or anything else. Those people lived in fear that if they got sick they would be sued for the costs of any care that they had to have. This Government came into power and reinstated what was possibly the greatest traditional move by the Whitlam Government. The Medicare program was put back after it had been dismantled by the previous conservative government. That program was originally introduced, as everybody knows, by the Whitlam Government. We then had the procedures of the Fraser Governments mark 1, mark 2, mark 3 and, I think mark 4 of Medicare where it tried to dismantle the total program. All it did was create a situation in which two million people were uninsured.

I can assure the honourable member for Gippsland and all the electors in McMillan that this Government certainly has at heart the interests of those people who had no cover under the previous administration and who do have cover

today. What we are talking about and what the honourable member has raised in this House is how we administer that cover. Do we install Medicare offices all round Australia or do we use a method of Medicare offices and some agencies? In the past five years we have used the agency method effectively but times have moved and technology has changed. The evidence today is that it is much more economical and efficient for the system to work through Medicare offices. They are to be established in other parts of Australia progressively as we develop the program. That will continue.

The honourable member for Gippsland fails to recognise that a couple of problems have developed. I have no doubt that honourable members in this House would be very interested in them. One is that there are indications that where we do have Medicare offices or even agencies, the medical fraternity quite clearly takes advantage of that situation. The doctors know that if they force the customers to pay cash, those customers can walk straight down to a Medicare office and use it virtually as a cash-flow banking system, collect their money back and go on with their shopping. That is the case I have put to the Minister for Community Services and Health (Dr Blewett) in relation to the situation in the city of Moe where I have my office. There is great concern at the moment that the private agencies of the Latrobe Valley Health Fund and the Yallourn Medical Association have been closed down. Those people have come to realise that if the doctors force them to pay cash—and they do because \$16.90 becomes \$19.90 if they do not pay cash, so they are accustomed to doing that—they then walk out of the doctor's surgery after having paid maybe \$30, if a parent has two sick children at the one time. That is a lot of money out of the grocery cash for the week. Those people can then walk down to the agency and collect their cash and continue with their shopping. It is understandable that in a town of 20,000, people would be concerned. They have expressed those concerns and I have passed them on to the Minister. He has listened and he has taken it up with the Health Insurance Commission. We are working through a proposal that I have put to the Minister and expect that within 48 hours we will have an answer to the problem. It is certainly not an insurmountable one and it is certainly better to develop this program successfully over a period of years, than to have the alternative five-year example that we had previously when the conservatives took us from full medical cover to two million people with no cover at all. The

honourable member for Gippsland gets up and criticises this Government but this is a government that does look after its traditional base.

Madam SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr ANDREW (Wakefield) (10.35)—I rise in the adjournment debate this evening to echo the sentiments that you, Madam Speaker, expressed at 2 p.m. this afternoon and to welcome to this side of the House the new honourable member for Adelaide (Mr Pratt). I do so not only because he is now a member of what will be the next Federal government here in Australia but principally because he happens to have had the good fortune to have been born in the electorate of Wakefield. In fact, the honourable member for Adelaide spent the first 30 years of his life as a farmer in the Blyth district of the electorate of Wakefield, almost in the centre of that electorate. Not many people in the House will be familiar with the Blyth district because it consists of only a very small country town, but it is adjacent to Clare and to the Clare Valley, which is renowned for its fine red wines.

The honourable member for Adelaide joins a team of influential people who have served the Federal Parliament and who have come from the Blyth district or from the heart of the electorate of Wakefield. I modestly exclude myself from this team. I point out that a former member of the House of Representatives, now Senator Chapman, was once a neighbour of the honourable member for Adelaide. The present Opposition Whip in the Senate, Senator Reid, also came from an area adjacent to the Blyth district, as did the present honourable member for Boothby (Mr Steele Hall). Perhaps most significant, a former President of the Senate also had a farm adjacent to the Blyth district in the electorate of Wakefield. So the honourable member for Adelaide came into the House today and, as honourable members will have noticed, he had with him his wife, Dianne, and his two children to see him sworn in as the honourable member for Adelaide.

A great deal has been said about the Adelaide campaign. Many have supposed that the Liberal Party of Australia was successful in the seat of Adelaide simply because the Prime Minister (Mr Hawke) made the faux pas of referring to the Telecom time charging fiasco. But I have to say that that was only one of many incidents which made it possible for the Liberal Party to be successful in the Adelaide campaign. Certainly the time charging fiasco, which provided so much embarrassment to the Government opposite,

worked to the Liberal Party's advantage. But one should never lose sight of the fact that it was the arrogance of the Prime Minister and the sense of isolation that the people of Adelaide felt that made it possible for us to win. In fact, wherever one went in the seat of Adelaide—and the honourable member for Adelaide may well later want to echo these sentiments—particularly in State electorates such as Pooraka, Kilburn and Blair Athol, in the Premier of South Australia's area of Prospect and in the State electorate of Ross Smith, people felt that they no longer identified with what the Australian Labor Party was saying. Time and again they said to the now member for Adelaide, 'You are the first politician we have seen in 18 years'.

The campaign was a real team effort and I was proud to be part of that team. The sorts of dilemmas that the Government knows that it has to face in its isolation from the people and its selection of trade union leaders to dominate the benches opposite were a feature of the campaign. But what we cannot lose sight of is the real role played by the honourable member for Adelaide in identifying with the electorate and in identifying Liberal Party policies to the electorate.

I would like to conclude with a little poem which I discovered and which I think refers pertinently to precisely what the honourable member for Adelaide achieved. It reads:

Somebody said that it couldn't be done
But he with a chuckle replied
That 'maybe it couldn't, but he would be one
Who wouldn't say so till he tried.
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin
. . . On his face. If he worried he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done and he did it.

Mr COURTICE (Hinkler) (10.39)—Tonight I wish to call on the Queensland Minister for Local Government and Racing, Mr Randell, to launch an investigation into the local government boundaries around Bundaberg. The last royal commission into Queensland Government boundaries occurred in 1927. It was under the Ryan Labor Government that the City of Bundaberg was greaterised. Other cities correspondingly affected were the cities of Toowoomba and Brisbane. I note that the Queensland Finance Minister, Mr Austin, is coming to Canberra to call for a better deal for Queensland local government. This is the same Minister who is reported to be spending over \$800,000 refurbishing his new government office. He is a member of the same Government which has just given permission for the northern development Minister,

Mr Katter, to appoint a third media officer to his staff at over \$30,000 a year. It is this same Government which refused to intervene in a situation in the Gooburrum shire within my electorate. The shire wanted to reduce its councillors by two, a reported saving over a three year period of \$24,000. The Government, through the local government, said that there was not enough time to do this before the council election. This is from a Government which has had no qualms about overriding local governments at Maroochydore, the tall building in Brisbane or special Acts of Parliament for special projects.

Mr Sciacca—A disgrace.

Mr COURTICE—The honourable member for Bowman is correct. It is a disgrace. So Gooburrum ratepayers are left to pay \$24,000 in extra rates. Bundaberg has three local authorities in its region—Gooburrum, Woongarra and Bundaberg City. The authorities have 29 councillors serving a region of about 60,000 people. Yet the City of Brisbane has 21 aldermen for almost 1 million people. The three shires share buildings in the one city block in Bundaberg.

The Minister for Local Government, Mr Randell, has refused to act until the councils petition him for a boundary change. That is something like telling State members in Queensland to draw their own electoral boundaries. In other words, why are people who are benefiting from the present situation likely to want to change it? This is hardly an example of courageous leadership from Mr Randell. The Federal Government has allocated over \$7m to local authorities in the Hinkler electorate. The Ahern Government is supposed to be providing a government of excellence. Here we have examples of gross stupidity, and the Government has sent a big spender like Mr Austin down to demand more money.

Bundaberg and Woongarra shires share a boundary along McCarthy Road in Bundaberg. One side of McCarthy Road has a different cyclone rating from the other side. One side of the road pays over \$300 a year in rates, the other side over \$800 a year. This absurdity reaches new heights when it comes to promotion of the area. Bundaberg City has the resources to promote itself, but no more. Woongarra has all the room but no resources. It would be a brave mayor of Bundaberg who stood before ratepayers advocating promotion of the area when all the new housing goes into the next shire. The State Government policy on local government in Bundaberg is actually retarding the positive development of the city.

The challenge facing the State Government is to get its thinking out of the horse and buggy days. It should do what a Labor government did many years ago—it should widen the city boundaries. If it feels that the benefits are uncertain, then it should hold an inquiry into it. If the present system is so great, it will stand the intense scrutiny of an inquiry. If the system is outdated, and I believe it is, then the Ahern Government should have the courage to give us excellence at the local level in Bundaberg.

Mr IAN CAMERON (Maranoa) (10.43)—Madam Speaker, I would like to say tonight how pleased I am to see you back in the chair. No doubt you had a happy Christmas with your family. I bring the attention of the House to the subject of the timing of local phone calls, about which there has been a lot of debate. The thing that really strikes me about this whole debate is that those on the Labor side of government do not seem to understand that the people who have been living in inland Australia have for the last two years actually been paying a time charge on their phone calls.

Mr Sciacca—You are in favour of time charging, are you?

Mr IAN CAMERON—No, I am not, but while the Australian Labor Party has been in government it has introduced the timing of phone calls in the Countrywide Calling zones, which include three parts of this continent. Yet it has the gall and the dumbness to campaign against something which Telecom Australia wishes to extend. I am not in favour of it, but I want to point out to the House tonight, and to take this opportunity of pointing out to all of those other people who live in the other parts of Australia and who are not paying for their phone calls on a time basis that many of my constituents have been doing so for the last two years. I am sorry that the Prime Minister (Mr Hawke) is not here tonight. I wish to God he was. Unfortunately I will probably not get an opportunity to put a question to him about this matter. But he has told the nation that there will not be any time charging of phone calls. However, the Countrywide Calling system is in every rural phone book in Australia. It points out the facts in black and white. Madam Speaker, I wish to table that information. I am sure that my friends on the Government side will allow me to table it. I could table every rural phone book in Australia, because every one has two pages on Countrywide Calling, which would demonstrate in no uncertain terms to honourable members opposite that while they have been in government they

have introduced time charging on telephone calls. Madam Speaker, I would like permission to table the information.

Madam SPEAKER—Is leave granted?

Mr Punch—Madam Speaker, as a point of clarification, does the honourable member wish to table the whole phone book and, if so, does he wish to incorporate it in *Hansard*?

Mr IAN CAMERON—I would like to table pages 26 and 27.

Madam SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member is seeking to table, not to incorporate. He is seeking to table two pages.

Mr IAN CAMERON—I wish to table pages 26 and 27 of the 074 subscriber trunk dialling (STD) area code telephone book, which is the phone book for my own area.

Madam SPEAKER—Order! I have not yet had an answer from the Minister.

Mr Punch—By all means, Madam Speaker. How could we resist such a charming individual.

Mr IAN CAMERON—On page 26 of the telephone book it is stated that there will be a rate of '6c per minute (in multiples of 18c) except for those calls which are charged at the local call rate'. In other words, in the extended zone area the amount we pay has now been increased to 7c a minute. If one is calling from one zone to another, it states:

Calls from an extended zone to an adjoining zone are charged at a rate not exceeding 20c per minute.

I am quoting from last year's phone book. I cannot get the up to date one. I have got one at home but I have not got one in my office. I suppose that is typical of Telecom Australia. The charge was 20c a minute but it is now 22c. That is how the people living in inland Australia are being charged. I wish that the Prime Minister were here in the House. He has guaranteed to the people of Australia that there will not be any time charging of phone calls. I want him to come into this House tomorrow and make a definite statement about Telecom's Countrywide Calling program, which has been in place in this nation for the last two years.

Mr Martin—It is a subsidy.

Mr IAN CAMERON—It is not a subsidy.

Mr Martin—Withdraw it.

Mr IAN CAMERON—Honourable members opposite should withdraw it; they are in government. The Prime Minister has made all the statements over the last 10 days. He came out supporting time charging, but suddenly he did

the usual, hypocritical Hawke backflip. Because there was an election coming up—which the Government lost—he said, ‘We won’t have any timed phone calls’. We have had them for the last two years! Most people in inland Australia have been paying for time phone calls for the last two years. What a fool he is. He does not even know what is going on in this country.

Madam SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member’s time has expired.

Mr SCOTT (Hindmarsh) (10.48)—Tonight I wish to refer to the very serious developments in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Our Prime Minister (Mr Hawke) has advised those of us who were privileged to have a report from him on this question that he has communicated very strong concern to the Israeli Government over the treatment of the inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Mr Hayden) has been reported in the Press as pushing home the concern of the Australian people. I want to make it clear that as a long time supporter of the Jewish people and their struggle against the attempts to wipe them out in the Holocaust I am deeply concerned that the support the Jewish people have rightly enjoyed for so many years is very much at risk.

I take this opportunity to put my views on the record and to say to the Israeli Government that it should with all haste correct what is going on in the West Bank and the disgraceful attacks that have been made on the Palestinian people. I, more in anger, urge the Israeli Government to do something and to do it quickly. On Saturday it was reported that the Foreign Minister asserted:

... Israel’s harsh crackdown on Palestinian demonstrators in the occupied territories damaged prospects of reaching an Arab-Israeli peace settlement.

I am sure that all members in the House would agree with that. The Foreign Minister continued:

We condemn the arbitrary measures and violence ... Many Palestinians will increasingly see violence as the only way open to them.

Those who have taken time to watch on television just what is happening to the Palestinian people must fear that this time we will be on the wrong side; the people who we have supported for so long, the Jewish people, in finding settlement in Israel will go under because of the behaviour at this time. I think the Foreign Minister is correct when he states:

Our view is that there should be an international conference under United Nations auspices to determine the process which eventually leads to the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination.

I urge the Israeli Government to take note that its friends are crying in anguish and saying, ‘You have gone too far. You are being as bad as the people who oppressed you so severely in the 1940s. Please take note of the rights of these people in the Palestine areas, as you fought for your rights’. If we do not see this turnaround very quickly, then I am afraid that all the worldwide goodwill that has been put to the Jewish people will be lost because the current and future generations will not remember the Holocaust and will not remember in detail what happened to the Jewish people.

In conclusion, I urge the Prime Minister to make public this letter to the Israeli Government. I take the opportunity in this Parliament—I am sure that both sides would agree—to say that we should send a friendly but strong message to the Israeli Government that this time it has gone too far and its friends will have to leave it unless it takes corrective steps to look after its brothers and sisters in Palestine.

Madam SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member’s time has expired.

Mr TUCKEY (O’Connor) (10.53)—I just thought I would speak for a while under the heading ‘vale the Labor Party’s case-hardened representatives’. I came to this Parliament in 1980 and sat in government. As many back-benchers in the Government would know, one need not be very busy during the parliamentary day in that situation. I chose to learn what I could. A lot of that learning came from watching the abilities and the skills of members who were then in opposition and are now in government. I believe that watching them I learned a lot about the business of being in opposition and the need to perform in this Parliament. I then saw a number of these people transfer into government and use their long experience in this place to good effect. In recent times we have seen a number of those people either depart from the Parliament or depart from the Ministry. I talk of Chris Hurford, the honourable member for Robertson (Mr Cohen), the honourable member for Parramatta (Mr John Brown), Mick Young and the honourable member for Reid (Mr Uren). I thought it was worth noting today the stark comparison of the abilities of the people who have replaced them in attempting to pick up where those people left off. Nothing, in terms of the pure tactics of this Parliament, was more noticeable than the failure of the new Leader of the House (Mr Beazley) to be able to perform like his predecessor. Let me point out to the House what happened here today when

the Government was under pressure from the Opposition.

Mr Lee—Some pressure!

Mr TUCKEY—It was pretty tough pressure all right. Let me put it to you, Madam Speaker, that the pressure was such that the honourable member for Melbourne Ports (Mr Holding) felt compelled to jump in to give the new Leader of the House a hand. That was disastrous too. We had about three or four people trying to run the show and all were failing. They were in total confusion. We did not see the Leader of the House take his position at the dispatch box and try to intervene with the Deputy Speaker at the time. He was running over and chatting to him on the side. He thought it was some sort of faction discussion. It was an absolute disaster.

Of course, this is the price the Australian Labor Party is paying for the ambition of the young turks. The fact was pointed out in the Senate chamber tonight that the Government is constantly becoming more distant from the electorate because of the ambition of union bureaucrats to become members of parliament. They come from a rather isolated existence. In this modern day and age trade unions leaders no longer come from the shop floor but come from a university career and have very little of the sort of understanding that I, strangely, have picked up running a hotel for 20 or 30 years, training a few racehorses and standing around with genuine working people day after day.

If the Government would take a bit of advice from me it might ask itself how well it went to

today. When I was in business one of the things I learnt was never to underestimate one's competition. Never kid oneself that one is selling more beer than the fellow down the road when one can go out and count the empty kegs and find that he has more. The Government is getting good advice and getting it for free. One immediately asks oneself, 'Where am I going wrong?'. The Government gave us good evidence today of where it is going wrong. It no longer has competent people to manage this place to its advantage. It was very obvious today. Take it from me that the comments of the Prime Minister (Mr Hawke) about how quickly the Minister for Defence (Mr Beazley) would become an excellent Leader of the House certainly were not supported by the actions of the Leader of the House today. He was an absolute failure. He did not know what he was doing. He did not know the Standing Orders. He did not even stand to defend the Government. He accepted the attack of the Opposition—sat there and copped it. One could imagine Mick Young doing that! Mick would have been in there. He might not have had much to go with; he might not have had many facts on his side but it would not have worried him. The Government took it today without defending itself. The Government's actions and the efforts of the people whom it has put in charge were an absolute failure.

Madam SPEAKER—Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

House adjourned at 10.59 p.m.