

The Premier: Yes, that is admitted and the need recognised.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I might even suggest that the Premier has promised the provision of a hospital at that centre.

The Premier: No, I said one was needed.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I suggest that the Premier did promise action in that matter.

Mr. W. Hegney: Have you seen the hospital at Pinjarra?

Mr. LAWRENCE: It is a beauty.

The Premier: You are a very observant person.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I do not know that the Premier said the hospital was needed and that he would provide it. Perhaps he spoke with his tongue in his cheek or made a legitimate mistake. I do not know that the Premier would be silly enough to say that he would provide it without knowing what it would cost.

The Premier: I said that it was needed.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I think I can produce in writing what was said.

The Premier: I did not put it in writing.

Mr. LAWRENCE: On the matters I have mentioned as affecting my electorate, namely, housing, education and hospitals, I trust the Premier will take steps to improve the existing position.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 11.31 p.m.*

# Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 19th November, 1952.

## CONTENTS.

	Page
Questions : Cement, imported, as to Auditor General's report on expenditure	2146
Transport, as to week-end passengers	2147
Hospitals, (a) as to new building, Northam	2147
(b) as to additions, Kununoppin	2147
(c) as to additions, Kellerberrin, Kununoppin and Wyalkatchem	2147
(d) as to extensions, Dalwallinu	2147
(e) as to new building, Meekatharra	2147
Flax industry, as to requesting Commonwealth assistance	2147
Education, as to new school, North Northam	2148
Free milk Scheme, as to committee's report on substitute	2148
Child welfare, as to employment of school-age children	2148
Water supplies, as to increased provision for Norseman	2148
Housing, as to vacant railway home, Bassendean	2149
Government buildings, as to Malcolm-st. block	2149
Traffic, as to Causeway regulations	2149
Fisheries, as to opening of crayfishing season	2149
Motion : State Electricity Commission charges, etc., as to inquiry by Royal Commission, defeated	2149
Bills : Brands Act Amendment, 3r.	2149
Fremantle Gas and Coke Company's Act Amendment, 3r.	2149
Traffic Act Amendment (No. 3), report	2149
Fremantle Municipal Tramways and Electric Lighting Act Amendment, 2r., Com.	2179
Plant Diseases (Registration Fees) Act Amendment, 2r.	2179
Nurses Registration Act Amendment (No. 2), 2r., defeated	2188
Annual Estimates, Com. of Supply, general debate	2191
Speakers on Financial policy—	
Mr. Guthrie	2191
Mr. Molr	2195

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

## QUESTIONS.

### CEMENT, IMPORTED.

*As to Auditor General's Report on Expenditure.*

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN asked the Premier:

(1) Will he inform the House who were the industrial users of cement, mentioned on page 38 of last year's report of the Auditor General, when he was reporting on imported cement issues to industrial users?

(2) Is it his intention to carry out his promise of the 11th September when he said, "I can assure the hon. member that notice will be taken of the Auditor General's report"?

(3) If so, does he propose to bring down a Bill to validate the expenditure by the Government, or an item that can be discussed by Parliament?

(4) If not, why not?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Hume Pipe Company, Hume Steel Ltd.; Denaro Concrete Block Manufacturing Company; Standard Tile Company; Peter Pan Tile Company; Swan Block Company.

(2), (3) and (4) Notice has been taken of the Auditor General's report on this question, but as the matter concerned was one of book-keeping, it is considered that no further action is necessary.

(See Auditor General's Report, 1952, p.41.)

### TRANSPORT.

#### *As to Week-end Passengers.*

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

In reply to previous questions, he described week-end travellers on passenger transport as "Mainly pleasure seekers."

- (1) Is this statement based on known figures or is it an opinion?
- (2) If there are figures to support this statement, do they indicate that the position is the same on all routes?
- (3) If there are no figures existing, will he cause investigation to be made to ascertain whether this opinion is, or is not, accurate?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1), (2) and (3) In general, transport of passengers is continually under observation.

The opinion was expressed from the knowledge of the general position and in the light of the facts mentioned in reply to question 3 on the 29th October last.

An investigation in detail as now suggested by the hon. member would appear to be possible only by interrogation of all week-end passengers and is not considered practicable.

### HOSPITALS.

#### *(a) As to New Building, Northam.*

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Minister for Health:

What progress has been made to date in relation to her undertaking to have a new hospital constructed at Northam?

The MINISTER replied:

A site has been selected, and final survey is awaited. No other work is necessary at present because the provision at Northam was to be subsequent to the proposed new hospitals at Albany, Bunbury and Geraldton.

Meanwhile, over £25,000 has been spent during the last three years to improve the existing hospital.

#### *(b) As to Additions, Kununoppin.*

Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Works:

Will he lay upon the Table of the House all files dealing with the additions to the Kununoppin hospital?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes, for one week.

#### *(c) As to Additions, Kellerberrin, Kununoppin and Wyalkatchem.*

Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Health:

Will she lay upon the Table of the House all files dealing with the additions to the following hospitals:—Kellerberrin, Kununoppin and Wyalkatchem?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes, at an early date.

#### *(d) As to Extensions, Dalwallinu.*

Mr. ACKLAND asked the Minister for Health:

Will she lay on the Table of the House the file dealing with proposed extensions to the Dalwallinu hospital?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes, at an early date.

#### *(e) As to New Building, Meekatharra.*

Mr. O'BRIEN asked the Minister for Health:

(1) When is a commencement likely to be made with the proposed new hospital at Meekatharra?

(2) In the meantime, is it intended to make urgently required improvements to the kitchen and other sections of the existing building, including the lavatory accommodation?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) We hope in the next financial year.

(2) Yes, but on an absolutely minimum basis.

### FLAX INDUSTRY.

#### *As to Requesting Commonwealth Assistance.*

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Premier:

(1) Is he aware that the Commonwealth Government has recently approved of an expenditure of £140,000 by the Com-

monwealth Flax Production Commission for use in South Australia and Victoria to revitalise the flax industry in those States?

(2) Could the flax industry at Boyup Brook in this State be further expanded if Commonwealth financial assistance were made available?

(3) If so, will he make representations accordingly to the Commonwealth?

The PREMIER:

(1) Yes. The money is to be used for conversion of dew retting mills to tank retting, which is the process used in this State.

(2) Yes. Provided additional growers can be induced to enter the industry, additional equipment could be installed, and if output warrants it, a small spinning and weaving mill could be established here.

(3) Yes.

### EDUCATION.

*As to New School, North Northam.*

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Minister for Education:

When is the department's appropriate officer likely to make a report regarding the question of selecting a site for the construction of a new school at Leake Estate, North Northam?

The MINISTER replied:

The selection of a site for the construction of a school at Leake Estate, North Northam, was the subject of recent inquiry by the Director of Education.

These recommendations are now the subject of inquiry by the Principal Architect, P.W.D., as the outcome of their consideration by the School Sites Committee.

### FREE MILK SCHEME.

*As to Committee's Report on Substitute.*

Mr. McCULLOCH asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Is it a fact that a committee has investigated the practicability of substituting milk in powdered form as a free issue to schools, where it has been found impossible to deliver whole milk under the "free milk to school children scheme"?

(2) If the answer to (1) is in the affirmative, what is the finding of the committee?

(3) If in the negative, is it proposed to do anything to give some substitute to children in country schools, in lieu of whole milk, as is being issued to children in metropolitan schools?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) In September, 1951, the State Advisory Committee concerned with the distribution of free milk to school children under the Commonwealth-State agreement recommended the use of milk in powdered

form as a substitute for whole milk in districts where the latter was not readily available.

All country schools were circularised and given details regarding their participation in the scheme by the use of powdered milk, and many schools have adopted this alternative.

(2) and (3) Answered by No. (1).

### CHILD WELFARE.

*As to Employment of School-age Children.*

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister for Child Welfare:

(1) How many licenses have been issued during each of the last three years permitting employment of children of school age?

(2) What are the age limits of children for whom such licenses have been issued?

(3) In what occupations is such employment permitted?

(4) What is the number of children employed in each occupation—

(a) under 14;

(b) between 14 and 16?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 1949-50, 502; 1950-51, 667; 1951-52, 716.

(2) Twelve to 14 years.

(3) Selling of newspapers and programmes.

(4) These figures are not available, but it is anticipated that approximately 90 per cent. of the permits are for newspaper selling and the balance for programme selling.

### WATER SUPPLIES.

*As to Increased Provision for Norseman.*

Hon. E. NULSEN asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is it a fact that four diesel booster stations are to be erected along the Coolgardie-Norseman water line?

(2) What is the cost of installations, and the estimated cost of operation and maintenance? Will not this increase the price of water delivered to Norseman?

(3) Has the Water Supply Department been refused extra electric power for operating automatic controlled electric booster pumps?

(4) What will be the increase in daily supply?

(5) Is it a fact that if a pipe line is large enough, water will gravitate to Norseman?

(6) What is the present average daily gallonage pumped to Norseman?

(7) What is the estimated maximum gallonage that could be delivered to Norseman through the present 8in. conduit daily?

(8) Will this quantity meet the present and estimated future water requirements of Norseman including departmental estimate of requirements for grassing and maintaining a grassed surface recreation oval and swimming-pool?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Estimated to cost £60,000. Estimated cost of operation and maintenance when fully developed to maximum capacity, £20,000 per year.

The boosting will increase the overall cost of delivering water; a gravity supply would result in heavy capital cost and higher annual costs.

(3) No.

(4) 170,000 gallons per day delivered at Norseman.

(5) Yes.

(6) In summer, 300,000 gallons per day ex main conduit at Coolgardie. In winter, 250,000 gallons per day ex main conduit at Coolgardie.

(7) Without using any booster pumps, 210,000 gallons per day. Using the original electrically operated booster pumps at Coolgardie and Norseman, 280,000 gallons per day. Using the four diesel powered stations constructed, or to be constructed, 450,000 gallons per day.

(8) Yes.

### HOUSING.

*As to Vacant Railway Home, Bassendean.*

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is he aware that in Scaddan-st., Bassendean, an empty house is the property of the Railway Department?

(2) That a number of railway men (some under threat of eviction) are anxious to obtain tenancy of the empty house referred to?

(3) Can he state why the house referred to is kept vacant whilst there is a demand for same?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) The house has been allotted to a railway employee, but before allowing possession there are a few essential repairs necessary which it is hoped will be completed in the near future.

### GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS.

*As to Malcolm-st Block.*

Mr. NALDER (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

When does he expect the temporary buildings in Malcolm-st. to be completed, and what is the anticipated cost?

The MINISTER replied:

I have made some tentative inquiries. The buildings will be finished at approximately Xmas time and the cost will not be a great deal over the estimate of £70,000 odd.

### TRAFFIC.

*As to Causeway Regulations.*

Mr. NALDER (without notice) asked the Minister for Police:

Have regulations been gazetted to regulate traffic on the Causeway?

The MINISTER replied:

There are regulations governing traffic across the Causeway, but whether there are any particular regulations dealing with it I do not know. I ask that the question be addressed to the Minister for Local Government, within whose sphere it comes.

### FISHERIES.

*As to Opening of Crayfishing Season.*

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN (without notice) asked the Minister for Fisheries:

Will he explain why a regulation was issued altering the date of the crayfishing season from 15th November to 24th November, and is he aware that this alteration has seriously interfered with the arrangements made by the crayfishermen at Fremantle?

The MINISTER replied:

The date was decided upon by the Superintendent of Fisheries after consultation with representatives of C.S.I.R.O. It was decided that that was a suitable and proper date, having in view the interests of the crayfishing grounds.

### BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Brands Act Amendment.

2, The Fremantle Gas and Coke Companies Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

### BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT (No. 3).

Report of Committee adopted.

### MOTION—STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION CHARGES, ETC.

*As to Inquiry by Royal Commission.*

Debate resumed from the 5th November on the following motion by Hon. E. Nulsen:—

That in the opinion of this House a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into the high charges for electricity and gas, also the administration of the State Electricity Commission.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. D. Brand—Greenough) [4.45]: I feel that the hon. member, when moving this motion, was in many respects misinformed. We know that, as an ex-Minister, he is loath to indulge in accusations or condemnations without feeling that he is in possession of the facts, but as a result of my investigations into certain of the allegations he made I must, in fairness to all concerned, state that those things were not so. The Commission was appointed in March, 1946, and inherited an electricity supply which was based on East Perth. For many reasons that power house was not in good condition; in fact, in a general way, it can be said to have been fairly inefficient.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I think the power house was fairly efficient at that time.

**The MINISTER FOR WORKS:** It had only one modern unit which, at that time, was eight years old. Anyone who has inspected the East Perth power house must realise that "A" station is composed of very old machinery which does not make for efficiency or economical running.

Hon. E. Nulsen: It has done a wonderful job.

**The Attorney General:** It was the worst blunder that was ever perpetrated.

**The MINISTER FOR WORKS:** The new unit that was installed did an excellent job and ran for a number of years without any major overhaul. Great credit is due to those who were responsible for keeping it running. As members know, it is necessary that modern machinery should have an adequate system of maintenance if it is to give efficient running and long life in return for the large capital outlay involved. Not only the electrical generating equipment, but also the boiler equipment at "A" station was in a bad way and, owing to the high consumption of coal, heavy costs were involved in the production of electricity throughout the period of the war and the years immediately following.

Mr. May: Do you not think better quality coal would help?

**The MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I think we are getting good quality Collie coal.

Mr. May: Then you had better make some inquiries.

**The MINISTER FOR WORKS:** The Commission has not complained of the quality of the coal, but I daresay steps could be taken, in the light of modern invention and science, by means of which the quality of the coal could be improved.

Mr. May: Do you think you are getting the best quality Collie coal now?

**The MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I am not in a position to say whether we are getting the very best, but we are getting the average production of Collie coal.

Mr. May: I know what you are getting.

**The MINISTER FOR WORKS:** The Commission also inherited long term agreements such as those made with the City of Perth and the Fremantle Electricity and Transport Board. Under them it was compelled to sell approximately 75 per cent. of the electricity it generated at a price materially below cost, and that continued throughout the period when costs rose so rapidly. Because those agreements contained no relief clause the department was forced to continue to sell electricity at a price much below the cost of production. The East Perth power station and the reticulated system had a capitalisation of between £2,000,000 and £3,000,000 and had never been depreciated. The whole of the plant and equipment stood in the books at the original cost. Therefore, any statements as to profits made up to the time of the Commission taking over would, I think, be considered by any reasonable person to be misleading.

When the Commission was in process of taking over the chairman advised his then Minister of that position. In discussion with the Treasury Department, the chairman indicated that until the agreement with the Perth City Council and the Fremantle Municipality had been either terminated or amended it must be expected that large deficits would be made. He therefore indicated that the policy of the Commission would be to negotiate for the purchase of local authority undertakings and until progress had been made in that direction the Treasury would be called upon to meet the deficits. However, he thought that in four or five years, under such an arrangement, the Commission, given fair support, would be able to stand on its own feet financially.

As members will recall, negotiations were carried on with the Perth City Council and were successfully concluded towards the end of 1948, and with the Fremantle Municipal Tramways and Electric Lighting Board this year. In the intervening years the undertakings of the various local authorities in the metropolitan area and in the South-West have been purchased and the Commission's financial basis has been established. For the information of the House, and in contradiction of the hon. member's statement, the purchase price of these undertakings has been capitalised and will be written off in the usual way. In addition, provision has been made in the Commission's accounts for accumulating interest on the purchase price, which will ultimately have to be paid when settlement is reached with the various local authorities whose undertakings have been taken over.

The position of the Commission began to improve after the acquisition of the Perth City Council undertaking at the end

of 1949. The chairman of the Commission gave an intimation to the Grants Commission that the S.E.C. would probably have a deficit for another three years but said he anticipated it would then stand on its own feet. This deficit was to be funded in the usual way. The chairman's estimate has proved to be quite correct. In the year 1949-50 the deficit was £73,996, in 1950-51 it was £68,193 and in 1951-52 it was £126,979, making a total funded deficit of £269,000. During those three years the Commission was providing electricity to the Fremantle Tramways and Electric Lighting Board at a rate well below the cost of production and this figure of £269,000 was, in the main, a deficit arising from that source. The accounts for the quarter ended the 30th September last show a small surplus for both the electricity and gas departments. It is now reasonable to assume that the financial year ending on the 30th June, 1953, will conclude with either a small surplus or a balanced ledger. As members will recall, the hon. member made rather extravagant statements, saying that the State Electricity Commission was in a hopeless financial muddle and did not know where it was going.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I still think that and you have not proved otherwise.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I propose to show that the Commission knows just where it is going and that its financial position has been stabilised.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Naturally the Commission will tell us that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The deficit which now amounts to £900,000 belonged to an era when the Commission was forced, because of the contracts to which I previously referred, to provide electricity to various undertakings at a rate below the cost of production, and the hon member knows that.

Hon. E. Nulsen: That had been going on for a long time. They had only a small portion of that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is not so, as figures will prove. It is difficult to quote a number of figures as proof but they do show, and papers can be produced to prove it, that the main part of the deficit was caused because of those long-range contracts.

Hon. E. Nulsen: For the years 1946 to 1948 there was a deficit of £90,000 only and the price of electricity at that time was .75d., .80d and .85d.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: At that particular time costs were beginning to rise rapidly, and the large expenditure and the number of men employed by the Commission brought about a rapidly increasing deficit. At that time the basic wage was rising and that brought with it increased costs in other directions.

Naturally, as the price of electricity was held down to a rate fixed in the dim distant past, a deficit was quickly accumulated. The hon. member said that the Commission is in a financial muddle and does not know where it is going, but I am sure that all Western Australians who are fair enough to look at this thing in a reasonable way will consider that from 1946 the Commission, as a band of men, has given excellent service and has directed the affairs of the department in a most efficient manner; the state of affairs that exists today is a credit to all concerned.

I repeat that the Commission inherited a very badly worn out show. I am not going into the pros and cons of who is responsible or whether any blame is attachable to any particular person. The war years have to be considered as do the many difficulties associated with that period, but the fact remains that the Commission inherited this situation.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I definitely refute that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It cannot be refuted; the facts are there and were there for all to see.

Hon. E. Nulsen: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Apart from the new 25,000 k.w. machine, which everyone knows as No. 6 generator, the rest of the powerhouse was ancient and wellworn. No reliance could be placed on any other part of the powerhouse and the 25,000 k.w. machine could not be helped in order to give any measure of relief. I say that the hon. member has been ill advised because the Commission is—

Hon. E. Nulsen: I have not been ill-advised unless your representatives have been ill-advising members.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: —selling electricity at rates comparable with those of the larger undertakings in the Eastern States. The general manager, when addressing a meeting of Legacy, made that statement and it would have been completely foolish of him to say that if it could not be proved because he knows very well—

Hon. E. Nulsen: He cannot prove it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: —that there are people who are most anxious to prove that he was wrong. Those people would leave no stone unturned in that regard. I have had circulated throughout the House a plan regarding the test of a meter and a list of figures, which will indicate that our price for electricity compares very favourably with the cost of electricity in the other States.

Hon. E. Nulsen: What do you mean by "compares very favourably?"

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The figures indicate that our rates are as cheap as or cheaper than those in other States.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Ours are definitely not cheaper; they are dearer.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member says "we are definitely not cheaper." I say that we are; I have the figures to prove it.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I will challenge you on them later.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Very well, I will be glad if the hon. member does. The member for Eyre also made an attack on the Commission and myself—it was more or less a kindly attack but nevertheless it was an attack—by stating that we had handed over full power to Mr. Edmondson.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Which you did.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: By interjection I said that we had handed over no power to him, or no more than would be handed over to a manager of any big undertaking in order that he might assert his authority. Throughout his speech the hon. member reiterated his point, and it seemed to me that there was some intent behind his remarks in concentrating on the general manager in order to make it a point of attack. The hon. member appears to have entirely misunderstood or misread something from the Auditor General's report, and it is important that the members of this House should have the position clarified for them. The paragraph in the Auditor General's report on which the hon. member based his assertion, and which he quoted, reads as follows:—

On the 12th May, 1949, the Commission decided that—

- (a) All payments, purchases, works, services and staff matters, both salaried and wages, shall be authorised by the general manager and chief engineer or by those officers authorised in writing by him from time to time.
- (b) This authority was subsequently approved by the Hon. the Minister and has since been accepted by the audit for authority for all expenditure other than that referred to in Section 22 of the Act, and as authority for staff appointments, transfers and salary increases. Rates and conditions of salary and wages employees were checked with the relevant awards and the authority of the general manager obtained for special rates and conditions. As from the 1st July, 1949, lists of expenditure are being signed by the general manager.

Hon. E. Nulsen: In accordance with the Auditor General's report.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I see nothing wrong with that whatsoever. Early in 1949 the Auditor General's officer drew attention to the fact that various papers covering expenses, etc., were being signed by different officers and that he, as auditor, would require—as he would in any Government department—authority from the Commission, approved by the Minister, before he could pass the various payments. In fact, the wording of the authority that I have already read to the House is almost identical with that drafted by the Auditor General's officer. Therefore, what the Commission did and I approved of in respect to handing over power to this so-called dictator, is only what the Auditor General requires. Any general manager would require that authority in order to deal with matters coming before him from day to day and bearing in mind the fact that whatever he does he is still responsible to the Commission.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Does the manager of the State Implement Works have the same authority?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I could not say.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Or the manager of the State Engineering Works?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I would assume that the general manager or the senior officer, whoever he may be, would have delegated to him similar authority.

Mr. Hutchinson: It appears that the member for Eyre has misconstrued the Auditor General's report.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Of course he has, but I prefer to ignore that and deal with the facts because I consider that he has obtained information which was not founded on fact and may be, to some extent, a little biased.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I think your insinuation is wrong because I obtained most of my information from the Auditor General's report.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have only expressed my opinion. I have not attempted to insinuate anything that might mislead the members of this House.

Hon. E. Nulsen: No, of course you would not.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I asked the hon. member from where he obtained his information and he replied that he got it from an engineer in Melbourne and I accepted that. He said he did not want to disclose the name of his authority, and I accepted that.

The Premier: In Melbourne, did you say?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, an engineer in Melbourne. A similar position exists in various departments

throughout the Public Service whereby officers are authorised to engage certain employees and make payments. The authority that has been delegated to the general manager of the State Electricity Commission does not in any way interfere with the authority given under the Act to the Commission and the Minister. Although alarm was expressed by the hon. member it will be recognised that his concern is based merely on the wording of a normal departmental requirement, and that the authority given to Mr. Edmondson is only that which is generally given to a manager of a large undertaking.

The member for Eyre also said that the Commission is being operated and controlled by one man; the general manager and chief engineer. It appears that throughout the speech of the hon. member on the motion, which is designed to influence this House to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into many phases and activities of the State Electricity Commission, his remarks were centred upon one man. The members of the Commission, which has been referred to as an allegedly moribund one, were, with three exceptions, selected by the Leader of the Opposition who was then the Minister in charge. I would also point out that the Commission was appointed by the Ministry of which the member for Eyre was a well-respected and senior member.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I have not reflected on their characters.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The members of the State Electricity Commission are Messrs. R. J. Dumas, Chairman; F. C. Edmondson, Deputy Chairman; A. J. Reid, Under Treasurer; J. Lowe, country consumers' representative; A. Richter, employees' representative; N. Fernie, who resigned in March 1952 and was replaced by Mr. D. O. Temby; J. F. Ledger, metropolitan consumers' representative, who was appointed in 1949. I would also point out that Mr. N. Fernie replaced Mr. W. H. Taylor, who resigned in 1948. These men are well known to most members of this House, and it is absurd for the member for Eyre to suggest that they would hand over the authority of the Commission to the general manager.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Which they did do.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They did not; they handed over just what they felt was necessary and in accordance with the Auditor General's advice and requirements. During my experience as Minister for Electricity—and I am sure also that this is the experience of my predecessors—the Commission has functioned with great energy. Led by the chairman, I feel its objective was to establish a commission or an authority which would give the metropolitan area and other areas a secure supply of electricity at a price comparable with other States. After having looked

over the records of the last two years, I feel it has achieved this objective. If we considered these men individually, we would appreciate that they would not hand over any authority that was necessary to them for the efficient running and wellbeing of the commission. Therefore, in regard to this one-man control and the handing over of control to the general manager, to which the member for Eyre referred, I would say the whole case has been built up on false premises, and should not in any way sway members of this House when making a final decision.

Mr. J. Hegney: How often does the Commission sit?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think it sits fortnightly. I have some papers here to which I will refer later, bearing on that matter. Another charge made by the hon. member is that the Commission is being inefficiently managed and administered.

Hon. E. Nulsen: That is my opinion.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: As a result of that, he feels it will not be long before private enterprise will be better off having its own plant, and that the cost of electricity supplied to consumers is excessive compared with that supplied in the capitals of the Eastern States. It is extremely difficult for a layman to make any comparison of the rates at which electricity is supplied for industrial and power purposes, and nobody who looks at the schedules for the capitals of Australia could come to that conclusion. I think the Leader of the Opposition would not deny that it is difficult to make a reasonable comparison. The only way to do so in respect to domestic or industrial rates would be to take an average. In the Eastern States over a number of years, certain special supply rates have been developed, known as the off-peak period rates. The hon. member referred to these off-peak period rates.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I did, and they must be taken into consideration.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Another rate is the water-heating night rate; this is for people who provide reservoirs and tanks and have their water heated at night, the electricity they consume being at a cheaper rate. This was introduced to build up the night load in order to have an equal pull on electricity, seeing that certain generation had to go on for those who worked shifts and required electricity during the night. But because of rapidly rising costs and the very cheap rate provided for this off-load period, this night off-peak period has now grown to be a nightmare. The authorities in the Eastern States find it difficult to cope with the demand made upon them in the off-peak period, and are very anxious to make some amendment to the policy they have adopted.



Hon. E. Nulsen: Nevertheless, it is still in existence.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is, but the authorities are most anxious to make some amendment to bring the rate up so as to equalise the demand now made. So why cannot we benefit by their mistakes and take note of what they have done? Why should not we do as the Commission proposes to do, and have a rate on a sliding-scale the basis of which is that the more the consumer uses over a certain minimum, the cheaper the rate? I would like to say that the Commission has stood firm, even in the case of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Coy., which company proposes to use thousands of kilowatts.

Mr. Dumas, who returned recently from England, and Sir Guy Copper who is here representing the company, have intimated that the Anglo-Iranian Oil Coy. is now satisfied that it will take our power at our standard rates—those laid down for everyone else. Therefore, if there is anything in what the hon. member suggests about private enterprise finding it cheaper to produce its own power, I would say that a company such as this, with all the heating fuel at its disposal and the most economical means of generating electricity, would do so, and would not want to take power from this allegedly inefficiently administered department, particularly if it could produce power cheaper itself.

Hon. E. Nulsen: That does not prove anything. I say that ultimately it will pay each householder to produce his own electricity because costs are going up all the time.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I know that; but so is the basic wage, and other costs.

Mr. Styants: Always the basic wage!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member says that with a smile; it is so factual that he cannot do anything else. The basic wage is going up and so are the costs of all other services, but that is not a matter which I propose to discuss during this debate.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Can the Minister tell the House why the basic wage is going up?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have just said it is not a matter for discussion during this debate. It is not the fault of one particular party or Government, or any particular country.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: You should look at Electronic Zinc Ltd.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The best way members can obtain a comparison that is easily understandable is to do as I have done. I have, set out on the cards, the various rates which are applied in the capitals throughout Australia. These have been set out by the general manager for three categories, namely—

(a) The careful man, using the minimum of electricity.

Hon. E. Nulsen: The careful man.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The next are—

(b) The man using the average householder's consumption.

(c) The man who has installed many electrical aids, bringing his consumption up.

Mr. Graham: Have you similar figures in regard to gas?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not the figures here in respect to gas; I am replying to the hon. member's motion in regard to electricity rates. I may say for the hon. member's information that I understand—and I say only that I understand—the cost of gas in the Eastern States is greater than in Western Australia.

Mr. Graham: But the quality here is poorer.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I cannot say whether it is poorer. The member for East Perth made that statement. I might reply that it is not, and certainly he would have no proof.

Hon. E. Nulsen: The calorific value is lower.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It conforms to the standards laid down. The gas coal we require, other than what is consumed ex-Collie, is imported from the Eastern States and to the cost of the generation of gas must be added that additional expenditure.

Mr. Styants: And you boost the gas up with oil.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, we boost certain Collie coals with oil, but it all goes to indicate that we, in Western Australia, are far removed from the coalfields of the Eastern States where the gas coal is available, and yet are doing very well in keeping the price of gas within reasonable limits and at a price comparable with that obtaining in the Eastern States.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Did I understand the Minister to say that the Auditor General had recommended the granting of these additional powers and authorities to the general manager?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not know why the Leader of the Opposition poses that question now, but I am informed that the Auditor General's representative suggested that certain powers be given to one man in respect of the signing of documents in order that we might avoid the problem of officers—evidently many officers—approving payments and taking such actions as perhaps might be expected to be vested in one officer.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Even if that were so, it would be only one power out of several.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Nevertheless, the Commission has vested the general manager with this particular authority. The members of the Commission stated definitely that this was in keeping with the suggestion put forward by the officer of the Audit Department, and to that extent I feel that the general manager has no more authority than would be possessed by any general manager in other circumstances. In any event, he is responsible to the Commissioners at their fortnightly meetings. It is, I think, useless for the member for Eyre to state in broad terms, as he did without any detailed evidence to back up his assertion, that the Commission was inefficiently managed and that it did not know where it was heading financially.

The facts before us are that the Commission has to date been able to balance its budget and at the same time is able to supply householders with electricity more cheaply than is the experience of consumers in other capital cities throughout the Commonwealth. I shall quote to the House the rates about which we have heard so much. I shall give the average prices of electricity charged to householders in the capital cities. Where the consumption is 620 units per annum, the average cost in those cities is—

Brisbane	....	....	3.935d.
Sydney	....	....	3.484d.
Melbourne	....	....	3.497d.
Adelaide	....	....	4.303d.
Perth	....	....	3.323d.

Where the average consumption is 824 units per annum, the consumer pays the following average prices per unit—

Brisbane	....	....	3.456d.
Sydney	....	....	3.262d.
Melbourne	....	....	3.087d.
Adelaide	....	....	3.718d.
Perth	....	....	3.17d.

On the other hand, it may be said that there are people who use more than the average quantity. I made reference to that particular category by saying that those people were taking advantage of the many electrical aids now available to the householder. Where such people used 1,200 units per annum, the average charges in the capital cities are—

Brisbane	....	....	3d.
Sydney	....	....	3.043d.
Melbourne	....	....	3.04d.
Adelaide	....	....	3.163d.
Perth	....	....	3.03d.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: How many units would the average consumer use in a year?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I have those figures. The average number of units consumed in Perth per annum is 824 and the consumer in Perth pays an aver-

age of 3.17d. per unit for what is used, taken on the average. I understand that is slightly lower than the average in Melbourne. In Sydney the consumer pays 3.262d. for current—when he can get it. The member for Eyre's figures for Melbourne were misleading. I believe he has ignored the fact that the Melbourne consumer pays a service charge of 4s. 3d. per quarter for each room in the house. That, of course, materially increases the average rate for each unit consumed. Because of the room charge, the small consumer in Melbourne is paying as high as 8d. for all units consumed.

With respect to the position in Sydney, the hon. member also omitted to inform the House that the domestic consumer pays for 3½ units per 100 square ft. of floor area at the higher or primary rate. I refer to our domestic rate which is all based on a certain number of units allowed for every 100 square ft. in the house, and the current is paid for at the primary or higher rate. I mentioned the payment for 3½ units per 100 square ft. in Sydney. As against that, the consumer in Perth pays for only 2½ units per 100 square ft. In Sydney a minimum consumption of 20 units is provided for. That means that the consumer must pay for 20 units, whereas in Western Australia no such minimum is imposed. Therefore people who use little lighting benefit by the fact of there being no minimum.

I also intend to say something about minimum charges. In Perth the lower minimum charge helps the small consumer. The following particulars show the minimum charges for electricity in all the capital cities of Australia:—

Perth	—10s. per quarter.
Adelaide	—10s. 6d. per quarter.
Melbourne	—10s. 6d. per quarter or pro rata for portion of quarter.
Sydney	—10s. per quarter.
Brisbane	—15s. per quarter.

Thus the minimum charge in Western Australia also compares favourably with that in other capital cities. The hon. member stated that the 40-cycle meter would not function with accuracy on 50-cycle current. This matter is much too technical for me and I am not sure that the hon. member himself understands it. It is on this point that I challenge his information. It is a point that has been raised time and again because a number of consumers have complained, believing that their meters have turned at a faster rate since the introduction of the 50-cycle current. I have questioned authorities on this matter and the advice of my officers is that there is little or no difference; in fact, the 50-cycle current may favour the consumer.

I felt that though I might talk all night on this question, I would not be able to satisfy the House and therefore I have had graphs distributed to members in

order that each may see the position for himself. In Western Australia there is an organisation known as the National Association of Testing Authorities. This body has been set up by the Commonwealth Government in order to provide a neutral authority for people who might doubt the position. Mr. D. W. Bowron is the officer in charge of the department here. He works with the State Electricity Commission and the chart is authorised as No. 47 of the association. The Act provides that there may be a maximum of 2 per cent. inaccuracy in a meter. The lines on the graph indicate that a test was made on a meter chosen at lib. No adjustments were made between the tests. The lines show that there was only a fraction of difference—in this case it was slower—between the 50-cycle and the 40-cycle current.

Mr. Styants: Was only one meter tested?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Only one meter was tested here, but do members imagine that that question would not have been considered seeing that it could be raised here? These men concerned are not altogether fools. No man of any standing would have furnished me with this information in black and white unless its accuracy could be proved.

Mr. Styants: You seem to know so much about it. How many meters were tested?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I cannot say, but if the hon. member wishes to make further inquiries, he has my permission to do so. I repeat that no responsible person would furnish such a chart unless it could be proved to be factual.

Mr. Graham: It is obvious that only one meter was tested.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The officer concerned would not have put his name to that chart unless he was satisfied that it afforded fair average proof that the meters function the same with 50-cycle as with 40-cycle current.

Mr. Styants: Was this an average test or a test of one unit?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The chart is the result of the testing of one meter; it does not show an average. Any member may go along and have more meters tested if he so desires.

Mr. Styants: Another meter might give an entirely different result.

Mr. Lawrence: Then what about the adjustment of the meters?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: A meter cannot be adjusted in relation to the effect of 50-cycle or 40-cycle current.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Some people have been prosecuted for adjusting their meters.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: But that is a very different sort of adjusting, amounting as it does to interference with the meter.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Mal-adjustment.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I think your information is wrong because meters can be adjusted.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member said that the error amounted to as much as 25 per cent. I think he was very unfair in making that statement. He would have had to obtain some technical advice, but the chart indicates that his information was not founded on fact.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: A water supply engineer once said that water meters were never accurate but did not over-register.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Leader of the Opposition, as an ex-Minister for Water Supplies, should know about that. This chart, as I have explained, indicates that an allowance to the extent of 2 per cent. either way is made for possible inaccuracy. The hon. member categorically stated that the Commission had never presented an annual report for tabling in the House as required by the Act. That statement is not in accordance with fact.

Hon. E. Nulsen: What rubbish! I did believe some of your statements, but now I shall not believe a word.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: After the balance sheet has been scrutinised by the Auditor General, the report covering the activities of the Commission for the previous 12 months, giving the information sought by the hon. member, together with the Auditor General's report, is forwarded by the chairman of the Commission to me in accordance with Section 58 of the State Electricity Act, and I have laid those papers on the Table every year.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I have not seen any of them apart from the Auditor General's report.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The points raised by the hon. member regarding the meters and the tabling of the reports were such as I considered should be noted, and I have made a special effort to have a thorough investigation undertaken. Lest there might be substance in the hon. member's complaint, the matter was referred to the Solicitor General, who advised that the papers as forwarded were those required under Section 58 of the Act. In this respect, as with many other suggestions made by the hon. member, he was not quite on the target.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Then there must be a legal technicality because it was not a report.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I cannot enter into an argument about legal technicalities. All I know is that the Solicitor General has advised that the papers required under the Act to be tabled have been tabled.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Then the Act ought to be amended.

**The MINISTER FOR WORKS:** The hon. member also suggested that the Commission sells electricity in bulk to acquired stations. Some investigation has been made into this statement. I cannot quite understand what the hon. member means but, taking the statement in its plain terms, I can only say that the Commission does not sell in bulk to acquired stations. He also spoke of the formula which has been developed to enable the Commission to adjust its rates in accordance with the increases in the basic wage and in the price of coal. The formula has been arrived at from calculations made by the accounting staff of the Commission, and submitted by the Commission to the Prices Commissioner for examination.

This is not a case where the Prices Commissioner has the right to decide the price to be charged for electricity, as that is outside his scope, but the formula was submitted to him as he was considered to be the best authority to examine the method by which the formula had been developed. He was asked, if he disagreed, to suggest an alternative. The Prices Commissioner was quite satisfied. The only way in which the correctness of such a formula can be tested is by actual results obtained over a period of time. This formula has now operated for 12 months, and due to the fact that the Commission has got rid of the handicap of the fixed price agreement with the Fremantle Tramways and Electric Lighting Board, it is now able to balance its budget. This is an indication that the public is not being overcharged.

The people here are not being charged a rate higher than those in the other States, and at the same time the Commission is allowing for reasonable depreciation and interest, and is able to pay its way.

**Mr. Styans:** A good advertisement for nationalisation.

**The MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I have heard the member for Kalgoorlie say that quite often. The member for Eyre also said it was wrong for an executive officer to be on the Commission at all.

**Hon. E. Nulsen:** I definitely agree with that.

**The MINISTER FOR WORKS:** The Commission consists of seven members, including the chairman, of whom three are technically qualified as provided for in the Act. Since its inception the general manager and chief engineer has been a member of the Commission. This is in accordance with the practice adopted by industrial and commercial offices throughout Australia. Amongst electricity undertakings, the chairman of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria is the general manager, and the same arrangement occurs in New South Wales. In Tasmania the general manager and the chief engineer is the chairman of the Hydro-

Electric Commission. Mr. W. H. Taylor, late general manager and chief engineer of the metropolitan system of the State Electricity Commission, was a member of the Commission. I feel there are precedents enough to satisfy anyone that an executive engineer or officer, such as Mr. Edmondson, has a rightful place on the Commission. Evidently the authorities in the Eastern States find it is necessary to have such a man as the general manager present at the Commission meetings in order that it might have direct information.

**Hon. A. R. G. Hawke:** Are they actually members of the Commissions in South Australia and Victoria?

**The MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Yes. The position is this, that amongst electricity undertakings the chairman of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria is also its manager. In the Electricity Generating Commission of New South Wales, the general manager and chief engineer of the Bunnerong Power Station is also chairman. The same thing applies in Tasmania. Evidently these States see nothing wrong with having an executive officer, such as the general manager, sitting in on the Commission, and not as the deputy chairman but the chairman. I want to close by saying that the members of the Commission at its last meeting evidently were very surprised to read of the allegations made in respect to themselves and the general manager, and they forwarded to me this motion which was passed at the meeting held on Thursday, the 6th November, 1952—

The Commission has noted with concern statements referring to the Commission made in Parliament by Mr. Nulsen, M.L.A. Since its inception, the Commission has met regularly at least each fortnight. Each month financial statements covering the activities of the Commission are presented, and each quarter a balance-sheet is also presented.

Therefore a close tag is kept on the financial side—

Since 1949 annual reports and balance-sheets and profit and loss statements have been prepared and audited. Commissioners are thoroughly conversant with every phase of the Commission's financial position and undertakings, and the Commission determines the general policy in all major matters.

Therefore I feel that the accusations and allegations made by the hon. member regarding high charges and inefficiency of administration have not been well founded, and that no case has been made out for a Royal Commission to inquire into the undertaking.

**Hon. E. Nulsen:** Why not have a Royal Commission to clear up any suspicion?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am quite satisfied, as I feel all members are, that the State Electricity Commission is doing a very good job. When we look back over the past two years we find we have had no breakdowns of electricity supplies and that, on the contrary, there have been adequate supplies. Mr. Beaumont, chief electrical officer of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Co., said to me that the power house was very modern and efficient and that he was prepared to recommend that his undertaking purchase its electricity from the Commission because he was satisfied we could provide it and that there would be continuity of supply, which is very important. What is more, he was prepared to take it at the standard rates which have been laid down for quite a time and which the Commission has adhered to in every case. Therefore I sincerely hope the House will not pass the motion.

**MR. BRADY** (Guildford-Midland) [5.50]: I must support this motion because of information that has come to me, and because of my own interest in the matter. It must be realised that Parliament is responsible for the State Electricity Commission and the Commission is largely answerable to Parliament for the success or failure of the enterprise. Because so many industries depend upon electricity for power, it is essential that Parliament should keep this concern in mind with a view to seeing that costs do not get out of hand; and if there is any way of reducing costs, or if there is any maladministration or inefficiency, we should be on top of the job immediately to effect such reduction and remedy such defects.

The Estimates for the current year indicate the estimated revenue and expenditure for 1953 and it is shown that, after the Commission has handled about £4,750,000 in revenue, it is still going to make a loss. I understand from the figures quoted by the member for Eyre the other evening that approximately £1,000,000 has been lost already, and we notice that the Commission is budgeting for a further loss this year. Consequently, we must have some regard for the motion moved by the hon. member. He has dealt with the matter at the top level, a very essential level at which to deal with it. I intend to approach it from the level of the individual consumer of electricity, or from what might be termed the bottom level, but nevertheless a most important one. There is an old saying that the first shall be last and the last shall be first.

These consumers are paying the piper and they have brought certain matters to my notice. I must have regard for their complaints and bring them before the House. We are reminded that recently the State Electricity Commission raised a loan of over £1,000,000. I take it that was to keep the show going and meet the deficits

that are occurring from year to year. Side by side with that, I have heard of two local authorities that intend to make claims on the State Electricity Commission for £90,000 and £50,000 respectively, arising out of the fact that their undertakings were taken over by the Commission. They are only two of probably half-a-dozen local authorities in the metropolitan area which have similar claims against the Commission.

The Minister for Works: It will be the subject of arbitration if an agreement is not reached.

Mr. BRADY: Be that as it may, if the claims of those local governing bodies prove to be only half correct, the sum recently raised by loan will go nowhere.

The Minister for Works: That expenditure had to be faced in any event.

Mr. BRADY: The matter is so important that we have to watch the position closely or, before we know where we are, a further loan will be floated for another £1,000,000. We must look at the subject from the point of view of the individual ratepayer. I realise that the Minister for Works has a certain difficulty in trying to see two angles. I am not going to say that he is not trying to see both sides. But the fact remains that the individual electric light consumer has not the ear of the Minister, as he has that of the member for his district. He seeks out the member and gives him the details, and I propose to give to the House the details I have received so that I can show the Minister and members what is taking place. It would appear that there is room for an investigation and that the motion has some justification.

I have already pointed out that there are two local governing authorities in my electorate that intend to claim £90,000 and £50,000 respectively from the Commission. I do not know what other bodies in the metropolitan area with a much bigger consuming power propose to claim but, if their claims are in proportion, they will make the recent loan look silly. Apart from that, we must bear in mind that there are certain fixed charges that the State Electricity Commission has to meet every year, whether it likes it or not. For example, £60,000 must be found for the City of Perth. In order to be able to pay out money, a profit must be made, because the money has to come from somewhere. For the next 50 years the Commission has to find £60,000 for the City of Perth in addition to having to pay large sums to two local governing bodies. That will make things difficult for the Commission.

In the last 48 hours, a consumer in Guildford asked me to call on her to discuss her electric light account with a view to finding out what was wrong. She said that her habits as a consumer are prac-

tically the same from week to week, from month to month and from year to year. She produced her accounts, which I have in my hand. The account for the 4th November this year is for £2 9s. 5d., whereas for the 2nd November last year it was 19s. 11d. That is an increase of approximately 150 per cent. There are thousands of consumers similarly affected, and they want to know what is happening. We are aware of the situation of pensioners and those on superannuation whose incomes do not rise in proportion to the increase in costs, of which electricity is one.

I do not want to continue along those lines, but dozens of other complaints have been made to me, and the strange part is that I have not sought them. I have not been going around to public and social bodies and asking whether anybody had a grievance against the Commission. People have come to me and asked me what is going on. I will quote a few cases that have been referred to me, and that might help the Minister to understand the position. Some time ago, I mentioned in the House the harsh effect of the regulations upon certain people. For instance, a man had built a bakehouse at a cost of approximately £1,000, and wanted to have electricity installed through his house to the bakehouse. The Commission refused to do this, because it said that the bakehouse should be on a separate title to the house. I mentioned the matter in this Chamber and also wrote to the Commission, and ultimately there has been a compromise. Instead of taking the electricity through the house and into the bakehouse, the Commission has agreed to take it across the street and into the bakehouse.

Another case concerns a man in Kalamunda in the electorate of the member for Darling Range. He told me that 30-ft. poles had been placed along a certain road for quite a distance and, to all intents and purposes, the line was to go through that area. The next thing that happened was that all the poles were taken out. The poles had been ready in the ground and then they were removed because they had to be put in another area altogether. I am not sure that the member for the district did not tell me he had drawn attention to the matter at the time.

A fortnight ago I went to a fete at Greenmount and a man told me he had had wires installed, and was staggered at the number of officers and inspectors who interviewed him. He said that 12 or 13 people had seen him with regard to taking a small line into his place. I mentioned here last year that another consumer of electricity in Guildford told me he had wanted a small change made in his installation to a shop nearby, and five inspectors interviewed him. Even then, he did not have the electricity put where he wanted it.

Then there is the matter of paying money to the department. I understand the position is that the department sends a man to read meters and, instead of leaving the accounts on the spot, he takes the readings back to Perth and the accounts are sent from there to the consumers, and then the people have to keep their eyes on the date and on the clock. They have to go to a certain place at a certain time to pay the accounts. The department sends officers to Guildford and Midland at the appointed time and place to receive payments, and I cannot see why it should not arrange with the local governing bodies for them to receive payments on behalf of the Commission during normal office hours on any day of the week. On the account appears the following:—

Please note that the office is open from 10.0 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. as under—

Guildford Municipal Offices on the 18th and 24th.

Mr. Ackland: Why do not the people pay by post?

Mr. BRADY: Why should they have to bear the added cost of 2d. for a cheque form, 3d. postage, and so on? Apparently matters discussed in this House are invariably viewed through the eyes of individual members and not from the viewpoint of the average worker. Two people phoned me recently to see what could be done about their refrigerators and radios which had been affected by the change from 40 to 50 cycles. I explained that the Commission would pay any cost involved in the change-over, but they asked me, "What about the inconvenience we suffer in the meantime?"

The Minister for Works: Who are these people?

Mr. BRADY: I will give the Minister the names of these two people later. They are reliable citizens.

Mr. Graham: The change-over from 40 cycles to 50 cycles would not affect their wireless sets.

Mr. BRADY: They said the difficulty arose immediately the men who came to effect the change had left the premises. Another point was that raised by the member for Mt. Hawthorn the other night, with regard to increases in the charge for electricity and gas being made retrospective. That is a further reason why an investigation should take place.

Mr. J. Hegney: It is quite true.

Mr. BRADY: Why should the increased charges be made retrospective? Millions of units of electricity are consumed each quarter and there is no justification for the increased charge being made retrospective. We all know that the price of coal has risen steeply in recent years and that the Electricity Commission is now paying about £2 10s. per ton, as against

25s. a few years back. In view of the increased charge the Electricity Commission should be receiving the best possible grade of coal and, if that is not the case and it is receiving coal of the same quality as that supplied to the Railway Department, there is a serious overcharge that is probably being passed on to the consumers of electricity. I hope later to deal with that point in greater detail when speaking to the motion moved by the member for Collie. The production of coal and electricity are basic industries upon which depend hundreds of other industries in the metropolitan area. It is the duty of this House to watch the position closely and, if any semblance of inefficiency or mal-administration is shown by the Electricity Commission, to remedy it. I support the motion and hope it will be agreed to.

**MR. HUTCHINSON (Cottesloe) [6.7]:** There are one or two points I want to discuss, but at the outset I want to say that I feel the Minister has put forward a case that answers almost completely the charges made by the member for Eyre. This session has seen a rash of Select Committees break out in this House and there has been an epidemic of Royal Commissions.

**Mr. Yates:** Pre-election propaganda.

**Mr. HUTCHINSON:** Some of them have fallen by the wayside and this is one motion that will certainly be defeated; I cannot see it coming to fruition.

**Mr. Styants :** Did you decide that at the party meeting this afternoon?

**Mr. HUTCHINSON:** We did not discuss it.

**The Minister for Works:** The hon. member must be judging by previous experience.

**Mr. HUTCHINSON:** It appears that the charges made against the Commission as regards its uneconomical administration and mal-administration are unfounded. I say that because of the Minister's answer this afternoon. In the first place, he answered the charge that the 40-cycle meter operating on a 50-cycle current results in greatly increased charges for the same amount of current used. That is obvious if one looks at the graph, copies of which have been distributed to members. In that regard the Minister and his staff are to be congratulated. The graph is a simple one and it shows clearly that there is practically no difference in using a 40-cycle meter on a 50-cycle current.

**Mr. Styants :** It is not worth the paper it is printed on.

**The Attorney General:** What a foolish statement!

**The Minister for Works:** Of course it is.

**Mr. HUTCHINSON :** The question that the member for Kalgoorlie asked the Minister was quite a legitimate one, but I cannot agree with the conclusion that the hon. member has drawn when he says the graph is not worth the paper it is printed on.

**Mr. Styants:** It deals with only one meter.

**Mr. HUTCHINSON:** I agree.

**Hon. A. R. G. Hawke:** It proves nothing except for one meter.

**Mr. HUTCHINSON:** The tests were conducted under the auspices of the National Association of Testing Authorities, and when the hon. member makes such a statement he does not credit the officer in charge of the tests with much commonsense. However, the Minister could have been a little more knowledgeable in his report on the test and could have asked for a series of meters to be tested. The member for Eyre quoted some interesting figures as regards the average price of electricity in Perth and Sydney. He said that the figures were authentic, but they are in contradistinction to those given by the general manager of the State Electricity Commission and quoted this afternoon by the Minister.

**Hon. E. Nulsen:** They were taken from Sydney and Melbourne vouchers.

**Mr. HUTCHINSON :** I must take the figures given by the Minister.

**Hon. E. Nulsen:** Naturally you would.

**Mr. HUTCHINSON:** The hon. member, when moving the motion, did not indicate from whence the figures came.

**Hon. E. Nulsen:** I did.

**Mr. HUTCHINSON:** I was unable to locate it.

**Hon. E. Nulsen:** I said that I communicated with Sydney and Melbourne and that the figures I used were the ones sent to me.

**Mr. HUTCHINSON:** I do not think the hon. member was on solid ground when he quoted the figures; the figures given by the Minister are a complete rebuttal of the charges made.

**Hon. E. Nulsen:** There was a bit of jerrymandering there.

**Mr. HUTCHINSON:** I do not think the remarks of the hon. member as regards the calibre and quality of the general manager were in the best of taste. In the general manager I think we have a man of considerable ability and under him the work of the Commission has progressed. Therefore I think we are most fortunate—

**Hon. E. Nulsen:** I said that he had not had experience in the generation of electricity, and I told members why that was so.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: I think we are fortunate in having in charge a man who has such administrative and intellectual qualities.

Mr. Lawrence: What are his qualifications?

Mr. HUTCHINSON: I could not say what his qualifications are.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Mr. HUTCHINSON: Immediately before the tea suspension a member on the Opposition side of the House—I think it may have been the member for South Fremantle—asked me what were the qualifications of Mr. Edmondson. I began to answer that I did not know but I can now follow that up by saying that, although I do not know of his qualifications, I consider that the manner in which he holds down his job and his capacity and ability are so evident that it proves he is a man worthy of his hire. To give point to that statement I have been informed, during the suspension, that his services have been greatly sought after in other directions.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I bet he does not accept any of the offers.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: I am informed that among a large list of applicants he was rated as second for the position of engineer in charge of the Bunnerong power station job which, in itself, is evidence of his high ability.

Mr. Styants: Did not the Government bring a man from Sydney to repair the generator in this State when it broke down?

Mr. HUTCHINSON: I could not see it doing that.

The Minister for Works: Yes, it did.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: It appears that a great deal of the criticism voiced by the member for Eyre of what he calls the one-man Commission is based on a paragraph or two taken from the Auditor General's report, and as I said earlier, by interjection, I think he misconstrued the meaning of those paragraphs because the decision of the Commission to place more power into the hands of Mr. Edmondson was based on a recommendation by the Auditor General himself.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Can you show me that in the report?

Mr. HUTCHINSON: In the circumstances the House would be well advised to reject the motion.

MR. MAY (Collie) [7.34]: There is one phase of this subject that requires investigation, namely, the quality of the coal that is being supplied to the State Electricity Commission and other Government instrumentalities. A fortnight ago a conference was held at Collie at which the Minister for Mines was present, and

the quality of the coal supplied to consumers in this State was brought under discussion. The Minister, acting more or less on the advice of the Chief Coal Mining Engineer, expressed the opinion that although a large quantity of the coal mined today was not more than 5,000 B.T.U.s., it had to be used. I agree with him, but this is not the time to use it. In effect, we are making the consumers of electricity and gas pay twice. The State Electricity Commission and the railways are accepting first quality Collie coal mixed with open-cut coal, and that mixture gives an increase of 7 per cent. in the ash content and produces in calorific value only 5,000 B.T.U.s. compared with the use of good quality coal.

The Attorney General: You mean that by using open-cut coal the B.T.U.s. are reduced to 5,000 compared with good quality coal. What are the B.T.U.s. of good quality coal?

Mr. MAY: Good quality coal produces from 9,000 to over 10,000 B.T.U.s. In effect, the calorific value of the good quality coal is reduced almost by 50 per cent. when mixed with open-cut coal and the ash content has risen from 3 or 4 per cent. to 7 or 8 per cent.

The Attorney General: The calorific value of the open-cut coal must be extremely low to bring good quality coal down from 9,000 B.T.U.s. to 5,000.

Mr. MAY: I have pointed that out on many occasions in this House but my remarks have fallen on deaf ears. I agree that low quality coal should be used, but, as was intended, only in a state of emergency. There is no reason to use it now when we have such large quantities of good quality coal available. Why ask consumers to pay increased charges for their electricity and gas when there is no need for it?

The Attorney General: It would be cheaper to use open-cut coal because the cost of mining it would not be so great.

Mr. MAY: The State Electricity Commission and other public utilities are paying the same price for that low-grade coal as they would for the best coal that we could produce, but because of its low calorific value people are forced to pay extra for their electricity and gas.

The Attorney General: I do not think you would be right there.

Mr. MAY: The Attorney General is entitled to his opinion but I know many people who support mine. In addition to the reduced number of B.T.U.s. and the increase of the ash content, a larger quantity of this coal mixture is required to provide the same energy that would be produced with good quality coal. That is an aspect that requires investigation. So far as I am able to ascertain at present, no explanation has been given to the people



in regard to the increased cost of electricity and gas charges. I strongly support the motion for this very reason. I feel that that angle should be investigated because it is up to us, on behalf of the people, to see they get the quality of coal for which they are paying.

This low-quality coal produced from open-cuts should be used only in a state of emergency; we should not ask engineers to use such muck nor should we expect firemen to use it. If we were short of coal, then I would say we have to use it. But until such a state of affairs is brought about—and it will not be brought about in the next 200 years—we should not persist in using this low-grade coal for which the top price is being paid, and from which the engineers in the power house and the firemen are not able to produce the same amount of steam or energy as they would if they were using the best quality coal.

Mr. Ackland: Are the mines capable of producing enough underground coal?

Mr. MAY: The hon. member should not bring that up because I will tell him a very sad story about the non-development of the mines. Had the coal companies at Collie carried out the arrangements made when they were first allowed to mine open-cut coal, they would have had the mines developed to the stage where we would have had ample supplies of underground coal. I have mentioned this on several occasions. I suppose the hon. member was travelling on the other side of the world when I was speaking. But there is no excuse now for the hon. member; he knows, and he acknowledges he knows, and consequently I will look for his support of this motion.

MR. LAWRENCE (South Fremantle) [7.42]: I feel I should take some part in this debate, and in doing so I fully support the motion. In passing, I would point out that the member for Cottesloe in his remarks appeared to defend the character of Mr. Edmondson.

Mr. Hutchinson: I do not think any defence is needed.

Mr. LAWRENCE: That is what I want to point out to the hon. member. This is not an attack on any person or any group of persons; it is merely a plea by the member for Eyre, who has gone fully into this matter and has discovered certain things he claims can be rectified only by an inquiry to see whether they can be substantiated or not. I raised the question with the Minister in this Chamber some months ago, and asked whether the meters in the changeover from 50 cycles would read a greater number of units than they originally did when on 40 cycles.

The Minister for Works: I did my best to give you an answer.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I am pleased the Minister is so modest about it; he tried to do his best to give me an answer, but I have had further advice from men who are thoroughly versed in this matter and they disagree with the advice of the Minister.

The Minister for Works: Who are they?

Mr. LAWRENCE: I will give the Minister their names later. He may grin about that, but I will keep my promise and let him have their names. If the Minister desires, I will present a deputation of these men who are fully skilled in this matter.

The Minister for Works: You need not bother about a deputation; give me the names and I can interview them myself.

Mr. LAWRENCE: I would like to see them get a fair go. I have had numerous complaints from all parts of my electorate about the supply of electricity. Complaints have also been received from the Premier's electorate. They have come from Rockingham, Safety Bay, and tonight I have heard that complaints were coming from as far as Leonora. I know that in the suburban areas complaints are very long and bitter.

Mr. Hutchinson: What is the nature of the complaints?

Mr. LAWRENCE: I will read a letter dated as far back as the 15th August, 1952. It was written from Safety Bay and reads as follows:—

Dear Mr. Lawrence,

May I draw your attention to the following unfortunate fact: Since this area was converted from 40-cycle to 50-cycle electricity on the 24th March, 1952, the consumption rate of C rate units would seem to have more than doubled, with every householder in the district with whom I have discussed the matter.

I would like you to note, Mr. Speaker, that it has more than doubled.

My own account which I received this morning, states that from June 4th to August 6th, this household used 2,736 units! As I know this to be impossible, I have rung the accountant of the S.E.C. and, acting on his advice, have sent a letter to the consumers engineer at the S.E.C. For your personal I enclose a copy of this letter.

I understand several other householders intend writing the S.E.C. similarly pointing out that their consumption of C rate is far in excess of what they could possibly have used.

If it is a fact that conversion to 50 cycle affects meter registration, is it reasonable to expect the householder to pay for units not used at the rate of 2.37d. per unit? Is not the onus on the S.E.C. to see that all

meters are adjusted, and until such time as they are to charge the householder on an equitable and reasonable basis, according to the percentage of difference in meter registration.

Yours faithfully,

W. S. Hedges.

The Premier: What is his name?

Mr. LAWRENCE: Hedges. I do not know whether he voted for the Premier, but I feel sure he will not do so at the next election!

The Premier: You were talking about courtesy the other night. If you had done the right thing, you would have handed that letter to me for action.

Mr. LAWRENCE: It occurred to me that the Premier would not be available, and since the person had written to me, and knowing how busy the Premier was at the time, I thought I would have mercy on him! The following is a copy of a letter sent to the consumers' engineer of the S.E.C.:—

According to this account, we have consumed 2,736 units at C rate since the previous reading of July 4th. I wish to draw your attention to the fact that it is quite impossible for us to have consumed this number of units in the time, particularly as for about ten days during this period we were without the use of our electric pump, and for about three weeks during the same period we were without the use of the Thor washing machine. There was no ironing done for over three weeks, the oven of the electric stove was used only once during the last two months, and no additional electrical equipment has been added to the home.

For your perusal, the following are readings of the C rate quoted from receipts taken at random from my file, covering the past 2½ years:—

	Units.
August 6, 1952 ....	2,736
June 4, 1952 ....	561
March 28, 1952 ....	1,321
February 1, 1952 ....	1,045

Comparing this with September 29th, 1950, we find that the consumption was as low as 716 units. The letter goes on to state—

The high consumption during February and March of this year can be explained by the fact that we had children staying with us, entailing the frequent use of the washing machine and the iron, and a great deal of baking in the electric oven.

The accountant at the S.E.C. advised me per phone today that this current account will be held in abeyance until you have taken whatever steps you consider desirable and necessary.

It is obvious to me, and must be to the Minister, that the accountant at the State Electricity Commission has wakened up to the fact that it was impossible for this person to have used the number of units debited against him after the change-over. I consider that members of the House generally, as well as the Government, have a duty to the people to see that any State utility is run properly. Now that we have had specific examples quoted and the member for Collie has pointed out what has occurred, surely it is reasonable to ask the Minister to agree to the desired inquiry.

The Minister for Works: There is no need for an inquiry.

Mr. LAWRENCE: All the complaints that have been mentioned cannot be wrong.

Mr. Hutchinson: But even so, that would not justify the appointment of a Royal Commission.

Mr. LAWRENCE: Then we are just to sit back as the Minister would like and do nothing!

Mr. Hutchinson: No, the case you have mentioned could be dealt with.

Mr. LAWRENCE: That is one case, but the other instances I have heard of, which are not set out in writing, are numerous. The Rockingham Road Board, only a month or so ago, wrote asking what could be done to make lighting services available to portions of its district, and the answer received from the Minister was that it was impossible to service those places because of lack of materials, equipment and funds. That applied especially to the section of the Kwinana townsite between Mandurah-rd. and Kwinana where there have been 380 blocks sold and a further 380 have yet to be disposed of there. People in that district will not proceed with their building operations until the electric mains are put through.

The Minister for Works: In answer to a question, I told you we were putting in a new line of heavier copper for that purpose.

Mr. LAWRENCE: Yes, but when?

The Minister for Works: It is going in now.

Mr. LAWRENCE: Is it?

Mr. Cornell: You surely do not suggest that Kwinana is being neglected, do you?

Mr. LAWRENCE: Kwinana is definitely not being neglected, but the section I refer to is not actually in the area the hon. member has in mind. I do not think we are asking the Minister to do anything that should not be adopted to protect the interests of the people, and therefore an inquiry should be held. To indicate to the Premier and the Minister for Works how serious the position has become, I re-

ceived in today's mail the following letter from the Poultry Farmers' Association of Western Australia:—

We have received a report from the poultry farmers in the South Fremantle-Coogee area expressing concern over the sharp increases in charges for electricity.

The local secretary reports that in many cases the increases are quite staggering. However, they do not quote facts on the matter, but we are led to believe that their complaint is quite correct.

It is likely that the association will move at its next meeting to ask for further information as to why there is a necessity for such a steep increase.

I want the Premier to note the next paragraph—

Meanwhile I would be obliged if you could raise this question in Parliament, in order that the Government can be aware that this section of the community, in common with many others, are feeling the disastrous effects of their policy.

That letter is signed by H. C. Griffin, the secretary of the Poultry Farmers' Association. Complaints of this nature are heard from everywhere. The Minister should leave no stone unturned to see that the inquiry we seek is instituted on the right lines. To the member for Cottesloe, I again point out that it involves no attack on individual officers of the State Electricity Commission.

Mr. Hutchinson: The member for Eyre said that the general manager was deluding the Minister.

Mr. LAWRENCE: Did he? I would not suggest that was the general manager's fault, but rather the fault of the Minister for allowing it to go on.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I do not think I said that.

Mr. Hutchinson: The Minister denied it.

Mr. LAWRENCE: If the member for Eyre has a grievance, he is quite entitled to state it in the House.

The Minister for Works: Every right!

Mr. LAWRENCE: I cannot understand why the Minister should oppose the motion.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [7.54]: If it had not been for the remarkable document placed before us regarding the testing of the 40-cycle house meter, I would not have spoken to the motion for the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the activities of the State Electricity Commission. Having now decided to speak, I shall deal with a couple of matters affecting the Commission that

I would otherwise have left untouched. I want to make it clear that anything I have to say is not a reflection upon the general manager of the Commission, because I feel that, owing to an action of mine some years ago, I am as responsible as anyone else for that gentleman being in the position he holds today. I refer to the time when I was a member of the Perth City Council. The position of manager of the Electricity and Gas Department became vacant and Mr. Edmondson was one of some 20 applicants for the position.

Mr. J. Hegney: Order!

Mr. STYANTS: The amount of canvassing and electioneering that went on in connection with the appointment was astonishing. Eventually the selection was reduced to two applicants—Mr. Edmondson and a Mr. Carey who had been an employee of the Electricity and Gas Department, but had left.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Will the hon. member resume his seat? Some member called out "Order!" His action was quite in order because he can do so, according to "May." However, it was not a joke. That sort of thing should not be done in the form of a joke.

Mr. J. Hegney: I would like to explain, Mr. Speaker, that I did not call for order as a joke. My action was spontaneous. It was very difficult to hear what the member for Kalgoorlie was saying. I am interested in his remarks, but, owing to the conversation and the noise that was going on, his words did not come to me. That has happened quite often in connection with members both on this side of the House and the Government side. Sometimes we cannot hear what is being said.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member could always draw my attention to the fact.

Mr. J. Hegney: I am sorry that I did not do so. My action was quite spontaneous. As a matter of fact, I think we want an acting Speaker at this end of the Chamber on occasions.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Kalgoorlie may proceed.

Mr. STYANTS: Thus the decision resolved itself into the choice of either Mr. Edmondson or Mr. Carey. As I mentioned, the latter had been an employee of the department, but had left. He had gone to Sydney to better himself. On the other hand, Mr. Edmondson had remained with the department and was Western Australian-born. I admit to having been a little prejudiced in favour of the Western Australian-born applicant and decided to give Mr. Edmondson my vote. Eventually, Mr. Edmondson was appointed to the position with a margin of one vote. Therefore I feel I have some responsibility in the matter.

As manager of the Electricity and Gas Department of the Perth City Council he did an excellent job, which was a totally different one from that which he undertakes now. Really he was in charge of a distributing agency on behalf of the City Council, and in that regard he did a particularly good job. Whether his qualifications and experience are such as to entitle him to hold down the position of general manager and chief engineer of a generating plant as well as of a distributing organisation, I am not in a position to say. I have heard many complaints from districts to which the 50-cycle current has been extended and I feel that I am fortunate in living in an area that is still on the 40-cycle current. I have heard from acquaintances living in districts that have been supplied with 50-cycle current alarming and non-understandable instances of sudden and violent increases in their accounts for current immediately they have been put on the 50 cycles.

I do not know whether this is due to the meters or to some other cause, but all sorts of stories can be heard of electrical apparatus playing up, even after it has been adjusted by the Commission's mechanics to the 50-cycle current. The apparatus runs for a brief period and then breaks down and, unless the breakdown occurs immediately after the adjustment has been made, the owners have to pay for getting it fixed again. One may hear those complaints in all directions. I am not in a position to say whether it is likely that the meters do not register accurately with 50-cycle current because they were manufactured for measuring current at 40 cycles.

I believe that a fear was voiced by the member for Vasse earlier in the session that, by constituting the State Electricity Commission, we had created what could prove to be an octopus in this democracy. While I am conscious of the great advantage inherent in such a set-up, I believe it could be the means of bringing about a complete hold-up of the industries in this State. If we had an occurrence somewhat similar to the metal trades strike extending over a period of six months and the engineers decided to hold up the railways and the supply of electricity—I understand that, to a large extent, members of the same organisation are employed in both industries—there could be a total cessation of industry throughout the length and breadth of the State. Therefore I say that the Commission could prove to be an octopus in our democracy, and I do not know that I am particularly enamoured of the set-up in some of the country districts.

From time to time I meet people in some of the larger country centres like the Premier's electorate but, unlike another mem-

ber, when complaints have been made to me, I have conveyed them to the Premier to have them rectified in order to avoid impinging upon his territory or functions. Let me cite a case that has come to my knowledge. A man built a week-end cottage at Mandurah. The power station there had been taken over by the State Electricity Commission and the headquarters for the Mandurah district is at Bunbury, 60 or 70 miles away. The man paid £1 for getting the cottage connected and the meter installed, but it could not be paid at Mandurah; it had to be posted to the office of the Commission at Bunbury. The money was sent to Bunbury, together with a request that, as the cottage was intended for use only at week-ends and would probably not be occupied for periods of four, five or six weeks, the Commission should send the account for current and also any correspondence to his Perth address.

In due course he received a receipt for the £1 and a promise that the cottage would be connected up, but, remarkable as it may seem, the account could not be posted to his Perth address but must be delivered to the place where the electricity was consumed. Members will appreciate the situation that will be created in that way. I understand that the intention is to send a van from Bunbury, which will probably stay at Mandurah for a couple of days and people will be expected to go to the van and pay their accounts. In the case of this Perth man, the account will be put under the door and he will know nothing about it. When he again visits Mandurah, the van will have gone, the account will not have been paid and an instruction will probably have been issued to cut off the supply.

I daresay there are other owners of cottages in a similar position, because Mandurah to a large extent is a tourist resort and many people have week-end cottages there. Could anything be more bureaucratic and ridiculous than that? Seeing that the cottage would be connected up and a certain amount of current consumed, is there any reason in the name of all that is sensible why the account should not be sent to Perth so that the owner may remit the money to Bunbury? This is the sort of bureaucratic action that can occur with a great monopoly such as the State Electricity Commission has become and will become to an even greater extent in future.

I wish now to speak of the chart that the Minister for Works made available this afternoon for the information of members. When I first looked at it, I thought it purported to show the result of the testing of a number of meters to determine their reaction when operating with 50-cycle as against 40-cycle current. In reply to an interjection, the Minister said that the chart showed the result of the testing of one meter.

Mr. Hutchinson: That was all that was needed. That is explained on the graph.

Hon. E. Nulsen: That would not prove anything.

Mr. Hutchinson: Nothing more than that is needed.

Mr. STYANTS: The member for Cottesloe may be an authority on algebra, history or geography, but I have yet to learn that he is an authority on electricity. There is no valid reason for assuming that the chart sufficiently testifies to the behaviour of meters when operated by the different cycles. If the hon. member is so unsophisticated as to accept as sufficient proof the testing of one meter, I am not. We are not even assured that the test was made with a fair average type of meter.

Mr. Hutchinson: You are saying that this is untrue; that this top line is untrue.

Mr. STYANTS: I am not saying anything of the kind. What I am saying is that this is the result of a test of one meter and that there is nothing so ridiculous as to test one meter. If this showed the average after a test of a number of meters, I would be prepared to accept it as proof that these meters will work in exactly the same manner or approximately the same manner with a 50-cycle as with a 40-cycle current. I know what takes place in Government departments. I worked for the Government for a number of years; and I know that when a load test was to be made, the best locomotive was picked and not one of the old rattle-traps. If it was desired to make a test for the purpose of proving an assertion made either by the Minister or by the head of the department, the officials picked an engine that suited them.

Mr. Hearman: It would be no good picking one that was known to be crook.

Mr. STYANTS: No one is suggesting that one should be picked if it is crook. What I am suggesting is that a number should be picked and tested and an average obtained. Without having any knowledge of the working of the meters on the two different cycles, I would hazard a guess that a half a dozen could be tried and would give different results.

Mr. Hutchinson: They would still be within the limits prescribed by the Act.

Mr. STYANTS: The Minister was quite emphatic that no adjustment of a meter could be made. On this chart there is a special note which says, "Meter tested under identical conditions on 40 and 50 cycles. No adjustment made between tests." Is that not an implication that an adjustment could have been made had that been desired? Evidently the Minister was speaking without scientific knowledge when he said that adjustments could not be made. This diagram does not con-

vince me that meters will work under almost identical consumption with a 40-cycle and a 50-cycle current.

The Minister for Works: I am informed that quite a number have been tested, but this is a diagram indicating that there is no difference.

Mr. STYANTS: It would have been a different matter if the Minister, when answering my interjection—

The Minister for Works: I was not too sure at the time.

Mr. STYANTS: —had said that 40 or 50 had been tested and the results had been practically the same. I would have taken that as being a fair average test. But to pick one meter and regard a test of that as being sufficient to show beyond doubt that there would be a similar reaction on the part of all classes of meters is not convincing to me. I have no opinions on the matter at all. I do not know whether that is the position or not. But I do know that there have been a tremendous number of complaints.

My circle of friends is relatively small, but I think that every member of the House would have friends in those areas where there has been a change from 40 to 50 cycles, who have found most alarming and violent increases in the consumption of electricity registered through the meters, without additional appliances having been used to account for such increases. Members have been notified of these occurrences and there must be some reason for them. If some inquiry were made along the lines suggested by the member for Eyre and there were a thorough investigation, preferably by a Royal Commissioner, a scientific and technical man, it might be found that quite a lot is not being done that should be done when a decision is made to change the currency cycle from 40 to 50.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth) [8.15]: In my opinion the Government would be well advised to agree to an inquiry, even if only for the purpose of allaying public feeling which exists throughout all sections of the community. There is no gainsaying that the great majority of the people feel that something is wrong, not necessarily with the administration but in the fact that their accounts have been growing increasingly large. Concerning the latter portion of the motion, I want to say that, from my experience, there is no real warrant for an investigation into the administration of the Commission. I can, of course, speak only from my own experience, and I have found ready co-operation and courtesy extended to me on all occasions, with one or two exceptions, which one would expect to find in any concern, and that applies to all, from the highest to the most humble officer.

There are some who have genuine doubts about the qualifications of the general manager and chief engineer. Like the member for Kalgoorlie, I do not feel that I am qualified to pass judgment on the merits of Mr. Edmondson and the technical qualifications, he may or may not hold, or as to the experience which is necessary thoroughly to equip a person for such a responsible position. But I should say that he has around him quite a number of competent engineers. After all, he does not investigate and probe every single technical problem raised. I understand his chief virtue is that he is a man who has plenty of drive and gets things done. Where there may be a lack of academic training or qualifications of one sort or another, and even experience, if the principal executive is able to give directions and to make immediate decisions with a certain amount of balance and responsibility, those characteristics make up for any deficiency there may be in other respects.

From my own experience, I feel that there is no great warrant for an inquiry into the administration of this important and growing department. But, as I stated earlier, there is an increasing concern at the nature of the accounts being received by ordinary citizens. Great stress has been laid on the additional charges for and certain unsatisfactory features connected with the supply of electricity. However, it should not be overlooked that gas plays a most important part, and in many households the gas account is of much greater dimensions than the charges for electricity. I have been shown accounts by persons who live well regulated lives and whose habits year in and year out are practically the same. It is appreciated, of course, that a difference in seasonal conditions will have some effect on the quantity of fuel consumed, and so I was careful, when investigating past accounts, to make certain that they covered similar quarters of the year. I did that in a number of cases, for each of the quarters of the year, and found that for a long time, and particularly in the last three or four years, the volume of gas consumed has been steadily increasing at a considerable rate.

That indicates that the quality of the gas has been decreasing, because it now requires a greater volume to provide the same amount of heat as formerly. I have heard several possible explanations put forward, but if what I am putting up is correct—as I believe it is—it is no use the Minister or anyone else suggesting that there has been, say a 50 per cent. increase in the cost of gas over a given period, because if the quality has fallen during that period it is more than likely that the consumer is now paying two or three times as much for the actual heating effect of the gas as he did in years gone by.

The Minister for Works: Under the law the standard of the gas must be maintained.

Mr. GRAHAM: From my own observations, I would conclude that there is a large percentage of air in the gas as the jets are constantly flickering, with bursts of yellow flame instead of the regular blue flame that one is entitled to expect. Any gas—apart from the heating gas—which passes through the meter must also be debited against the consumer. The public are being hit in both directions and so there should be a proper check made in order to arrive at a correct conclusion. If a family of two, with regular habits and possessed of a certain number of gas-burning appliances, uses 200 units of gas in the quarter ending the 30th June this year, that should not become 300 units for the same quarter next year, and 400 units in the year following.

Mr. Totterdell: Perhaps the meter has galloping consumption!

Mr. GRAHAM: One would draw that conclusion if this were happening in isolated cases only, but it is the general experience today. While people are usually silent when they have no complaints to make, from inquiries I have pursued in a number of quarters I have not learnt of a single instance in which a user of gas has in recent years received a meter reading showing a reduction in the volume of gas consumed. Surely it is worth while having an authoritative inquiry into this question to satisfy the public at large, seeing that the people are decidedly concerned about it at present!

Mr. Hutchinson: Is that with regard to gas alone?

Mr. GRAHAM: Yes, I feel that what is happening in the case of gas is sufficient to warrant a searching inquiry. Such an investigation could be undertaken by the Electricity Commission but I do not think that would be satisfactory because, with no suggestion of dishonesty, there is always a natural tendency for any department conducting inquiries of this sort to tilt the scales in its own favour. I hope and trust that the Minister and the Government do not think that this motion, irrespective of what might be said in debate is to be construed as an attack on the Electricity Commission. Its purpose is merely to get to the bottom of certain questions that are at present disturbing the public mind.

I realise that many people have a number of false ideas about electricity and, to a lesser extent, gas. They imagine that all sorts of things might happen, or in fact have happened, because of the conversion from 40 cycles to 50 cycles. It is well known, at all events by those of us who own cars, that if an engine that is working reasonably satisfactorily requires certain work to be done to a particular

part of it, the result often is that, when that work has been completed, further disturbances seem to take place as a result of that work having been done. Many people have electric motors in refrigerators and other appliances and believe that because of the minor adjustments that have been made by officers of the State Electricity Commission in connection with the change-over from 40 to 50 cycles, the motors are no longer functioning efficiently. When something goes wrong, they immediately blame the 50-cycle current.

Electricity is little understood by the average individual, and he is apt to believe that all sorts of transformations are taking place in his electrical units because of the change-over. Many people have complained that their radio sets and electric irons, as well as other similar appliances, are no longer working properly since the conversion, while in fact the change from 40 to 50-cycles can have no effect at all on apparatus of that description. While I am not a technical man, I did learn something about electricity years ago, and I understand that the conversion has the effect of causing an electric motor to run more rapidly. By and large, the work undertaken by officers of the Commission in connection with the conversion consists mostly of making minor adjustments in order to bring electric motors back to their former speed.

Notwithstanding the assurance of the Minister, I feel that the conversion must have some effect on an electric motor because, after all, if it results in a speeding up of the motor, surely it is logical to assume that it involves also a greater consumption of current. From a number of investigations I have made in the case of domestic consumers of electricity and gas—especially those who have gas appliances, such as refrigerators, hot water systems, coppers and so on—I have found that, due to the poor quality of the gas and the increased charges, their accounts have reached staggering figures. It must be remembered that in these days a refrigerator is no longer a luxury, but a necessity for the preservation of foodstuffs, yet the quarterly bills received for electricity and gas are reaching such dimensions that many people are finding them beyond their capacity to pay. I know that it sounds like an Irishman's adjustment, but I think it would be better, to enable working families to meet expenses, if accounts were issued monthly instead of quarterly. I am aware that an immediate objection would be that so much additional meter reading and office work would be involved in issuing accounts and so on. But it is a far easier matter for a person on a limited income to pay £5 a month than it is to pay £15 a quarter. Anyone who has had experience of a number of small accounts as against a large one will appreciate the significance of that argument.

To give an example, the majority of members depend upon their parliamentary salaries only, and if we were to receive our taxation assessments for £100 or £200 and they had to be paid in a lump sum most of us would be in queer street; but as our assessments are paid in smaller instalments it is easier for us to deal with the situation. As certain industrial and business establishments, particularly in the heart of the city, have their meters read every month and are issued with monthly accounts, surely the same procedure can be given effect in order to assist people who are battling and find the greatest difficulty in meeting expenses! Perhaps it could be left to the discretion of the individual consumer who could elect to say whether he wanted his meter read monthly or quarterly.

I am stressing this point because of the crisis which confronts so many people. It is a real problem for them, and in many cases it is becoming an impossibility for them to meet their accounts. I have a friend who lives in the electorate of Nedlands, and he has had to dispose of his gas copper and return to the use of firewood because he cannot afford to meet the gas charges.

Mr. May: Why does he not see the member for Nedlands?

Mr. GRAHAM: He may do that in due course. Because of coming events it is more than likely that the member will be calling on him in addition to quite a number of other people in the district. In view of the various points that have been advanced by a number of speakers I ask the Government to reconsider its opposition to this motion and construe it as a genuine desire that this question of electricity and gas charges, and the quality of gas, should be investigated rather than that the Government should adopt the negative attitude of opposing the motion because it feels, on account of what one or two members may have said, that this is an attack against the S.E.C. and therefore the department must be protected and defended. The Minister and those who sit behind him seem to feel that this may be a vote of no confidence, indirectly, against the Minister, but to think that destroys the whole purpose and intention of this motion which is to resolve something in the interests of the public.

MR. YATES (South Perth) [8.35]: I would say that the speech of the member for East Perth was one of the most reasonable that he has delivered in this Chamber during the current session.

Mr. Graham: How am I expected to take that?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: "Beware of the Greeks when they bring gifts."

Mr. YATES: The hon. member related, to the best of his ability, experiences that have been passed on to him by consumers in his electorate, and he also gave a reasonable account of the activities of the general manager of the State Electricity Commission. Apparently the hon. member finds no fault with the general manager.

Mr. Hutchinson: Or the State Electricity Commission.

Mr. YATES: With that I agree. Whether or not a better man could be found to guide the destinies of the State Electricity Commission remains to be seen; whoever is selected will have his critics. The member for Eyre has been a great critic of the present general manager.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I have nothing against him from a character point of view. He has not had the experience and I repeat the statement.

Mr. YATES: But as a manager.

Hon. E. Nulsen: No, as an engineer.

Mr. YATES: I would not say that the member for Eyre has had sufficient experience to judge that.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I have commonsense.

Mr. YATES: I could not judge the value of Mr. Edmondson as an electrical engineer any more than could the member for Eyre; we can go only on performances. An engineering degree is all right if a man practices engineering.

Hon. E. Nulsen: That is so—continual practice.

Mr. YATES: But after a period of years, if the same person sat for an examination similar to the one he passed to obtain his degree, he would fail because he would have forgotten most of the academic knowledge that he required to pass that examination. However, in practice and in theory he has gained a far greater knowledge through his every-day avocation. If the member for Nedlands were asked tomorrow to sit for an examination for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts he would probably fail because he would have forgotten most of the theory work involved. But he retains that degree for the rest of his life in the same way as the general manager of the S.E.C. retains his degrees in engineering. It is the practical knowledge that a man has gained over a period of years that must make him an expert in his own particular field.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Where did he get the practical knowledge?

Mr. YATES: He has been in charge of the State Electricity Commission since its inception—

Hon. E. Nulsen: That is only a distributing agent.

Mr. YATES: —and he was also in charge of the Perth City Council undertaking.

Hon. E. Nulsen: But he has not had experience in the generation of electricity.

Mr. YATES: Does the hon. member deny that he has degrees? As the member for Kalgoorlie said, many of his staff are experienced in their own particular fields and they guide him in his deliberations and in the practical work involved.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I concede that.

Mr. YATES: If Mr. Edmondson is replaced by another man other members in this Chamber would criticise the new manager. Even the last general manager, Mr. Taylor, had his critics and he was recognised as top of the class in his particular field. There were people who said that he did not have the qualifications to be in complete charge of an electricity undertaking.

Hon. E. Nulsen: He did not do any other work.

Mr. YATES: We can judge only on performances.

Mr. Hutchinson: Is the member for Eyre a critic of the previous general manager?

Mr. YATES: I have not heard him criticise Mr. Taylor; he has always lauded his efforts. But the member for East Perth stated that, in the main, he had received nothing but fair and courteous treatment at the hands of the staff of the S.E.C. I would say that most members have received the same treatment. The motion asks for the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire, firstly, into the high charges for electricity and gas and, secondly, into the administration of the State Electricity Commission. However, many other irrelevant matters have crept into the debate. If a Royal Commission were appointed and it had to inquire into all the minor matters that have been raised in the House during the debate on this motion, such inquiry would be extremely comprehensive and a great deal of the subject-matter would be redundant and would not assist the member for Eyre in reaching his objective.

I do not think an inquiry is warranted. During the past three years the State Electricity Commission has developed to a stage we never dreamed it would. It has taken over numerous undertakings throughout the State. I have not heard the Leader of the Opposition criticise the extension of the power lines to Northam which proved to be a very costly undertaking. At the moment Northam is being supplied with electricity from the local station, which I believe has been working reasonably well for many years and has given a continuity of service with few breakdowns. However, it is the policy of the State Electricity Commission to take over many of these smaller power stations and so create a better balance in the supply of power to those parts nearer the metropolitan area. At South Fremantle it



has established one of the most modern power stations in Australia and it intends to duplicate that station in the near future.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Who established it?

Mr. YATES: I am not interested in that, but it is part of progress. If this Government is defeated the one succeeding it will carry on the undertakings the previous Government initiated, and so progress continues irrespective of who first thought of these projects or who established them. I know that, in the main, the previous Government established the State Electricity Commission and that it intended that the Commission should further develop its activities, but the war prevented this. However, the Commission is supplying power at fairly low prices.

Mr. Brady: Has the State Electricity Commission ever received complaints as to the prices charged for electricity and gas?

Mr. YATES: All I can say is that I have not received one complaint in writing but I have had two complaints over the telephone since the charges have been raised. As to damage to electrical appliances as the result of the change-over from 40 to 50 cycles, I have had only one complaint.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I have received six telephone calls from people in South Perth and three people have asked if they could come and see me.

Mr. YATES: I cannot help it if people do not ring me and ring the member for Eyre instead. That is something beyond my control. The figures that I have quoted are correct. Those quoted by the member for Eyre may have been issued prior to those received by the Minister. The figures I have show that on the lowest consumption possible, namely, 620 units, the price at the moment is 3.23 pence a unit. The price at Sydney is higher, at 3.484d.

Mr. Johnson: Are your figures reliable?

Mr. YATES: I am led to believe that these figures are absolutely reliable. On an average consumption of 824 units per annum the following are the average prices per unit:—Sydney, 3.262d. and Perth 3.17d. I am quoting the Sydney figure because that was the one used by the member for Eyre. It may be said that some people use more electricity than the average consumer. On a consumption of 1,300 units per annum the charge at Sydney is 3.043d. per unit and at Perth 3.03d. In Sydney, where there are hundreds of thousands of consumers in a closely settled area, the charges for electricity are higher than those in Perth with the exception of one rate and therefore it can be said that the Perth charges compare very favourably.

It is only in the second group that the Sydney charges are cheaper than those in Perth. As I have said, the charge in that group is 3.17d. per unit in Perth and 3.07d. in Sydney. On those figures the electricity prices average reasonably well throughout the Commonwealth, and Western Australia is not charging fantastic prices for its electricity as compared with other States. I had a complaint in writing from one of my electors which I investigated fully. As a result, I received a written reply from the Minister and a copy of the frequency change engineer's report which dealt with the complaint. I will not quote the name of the elector, but will read portion of his letter to give members some idea of the nature of his complaint. It reads as follows:—

On the 21st October the change-over was made and the unit vibrated terribly, at my request an employee of the S.E.C. came out, he tied the unit down with adhesive tape and string "to stop the fan going through the condenser," as he put it; he also said I would have to get a refrigerator mechanic to put it right. That day another S.E.C. man came out, but would not touch it, saying it should never have been tied up. I then saw the frequency engineer, who stated that the bearings of the motor were faulty. I agreed to pay to have these replaced, and he agreed to bring the motor into town and replace it. He suggested taking it to—who had done other work for him.

At the end of the letter he says—

I would ask the following questions:

- (1) How many householders in South Perth have had £10 expenses following the change-over, for I know mine was not the only refrigerator to give trouble?
- (2) How do you reconcile all the above with your statement in the Press that the change-over would be without expense to the householder?
- (3) In many cases has the Commission paid up, after legal action has been threatened?

The frequency engineer's report to the Minister is as follows:—

Mr.—called at this office last November asking that the Commission correct a noise in his refrigerator. He was shown work slip No. 1438 which stated that a knock existed in his unit on 40 cycles, before conversion.

His attitude changed and he then agreed to pay for the overhaul of the motor. Messrs.—was decided upon to carry out the work.

As a service to a consumer, the Commission agreed to remove the motor, hand it to——and then re-install it. Mr.——called on——to check progress, and in good faith, the motor was re-installed by the Commission as received from——, the fitter having been specifically instructed by myself to install the motor and not otherwise touch it, so that any possible repercussions would be avoided.

It afterwards transpired that the motor as received from——had a defect which was not in any way caused by the Commission as stated by Mr.——in the fourth paragraph of his letter of the 5th December.

Mr.——called in Messrs.—— who finally adjusted the motor.

As the electrical characteristics of the motor on 50 cycles were perfectly satisfactory and required no corrective action by the Frequency Change Department, and as the Commission was not responsible for the condition of the motor at any time, Mr.——'s account was returned with a covering letter.

So it will be realised that most of the complaints that were made after the frequency change-over were reasonably dealt with. It should also be borne in mind that many refrigerators and electrical appliances were extremely old and had reached the stage where they required overhauling. Quite a number of people thought that the proposed change-over provided a good opportunity for them to wait until it actually occurred in the hope that the officers of the State Electricity Commission would come to their homes and repair their obsolete electrical appliances free of charge.

Mr. Brady: That is a bad inference to draw concerning the people of South Perth.

Mr. YATES: I am talking generally.

Mr. Brady: Do not talk nonsense.

Mr. YATES: I am not talking nonsense.

Mr. Brady: You are saying that the people are thieves.

Mr. YATES: I am not. If the hon. member would give me a chance, I would explain to him that only one complaint was made to me about this matter.

Mr. Brady: Are you sure the department has not browbeaten them?

Mr. YATES: Of course not.

Mr. Brady: I have had a number of such cases.

Mr. YATES: The member for Gullford-Midland has probably had a number in his electorate but I have only had this one written complaint. This was completely investigated by officers of the department. This constituent of mine is not claiming

anything because his machine was old; he is trying to get recompense for it. He thinks he had a genuine complaint which I fully investigated on his behalf.

Mr. Brady: All people think that.

Mr. YATES: But in some cases they knew their plant was defective before they called in the State Frequency Engineer, but that is beside the point. The fact is that the department has not refused any consumer an inspection of his machinery where electrical appliances might have been affected by the change-over. As a result of the report given by the engineer, the department has agreed to pay certain costs in connection with the repairs.

I would now like to refer to the second part of the complaint of the member for Eyre; that is the administration of the State Electricity Commission. With the exception of the remarks made by the hon. member, I have not heard any complaints in the House regarding the administration of this department. I consider it is efficient. I have had dealings with it—not on many occasions I must admit—and I have had occasion to approach it on certain matters and have always found its efficiency was equal to that of any other Government department. It is quite a big undertaking and now that it has grown considerably since taking over the electrical undertakings of the Perth City Council it has required a complete change. Its staff had great difficulties and problems to meet when they changed from being employees of the Perth City Council to being Government employees. A number of these problems and difficulties over the past two or three years have been mostly ironed out. In the main, this department compares very favourably with any other Government undertaking of a similar size or magnitude.

In the circumstances I think the general manager has done a reasonable job. He has not toadied to the Commission, nor has the Commission given away any of its powers to him. The Commission sits regularly. The general manager is responsible for the conduct not only of the staff but of the entire undertaking, so must have his finger right on the pulse of the organisation. He is responsible to the Commission for the undertaking attempting to pay its way and also to ensure that it gives satisfaction to the public to the best of its ability. In the main I say it has given, in the past two or three years, complete satisfaction, with the exception of complaints regarding high prices which are general throughout Australia.

Concerning the increase I have quoted with regard to the change-over from the 40 to 50 cycles, those are natural complaints which would be received in any conversion of such magnitude as this. I wonder if there would have been the same

complaints had the conversion been from 50 cycles to 40 cycles. Unfortunately the State started off on the wrong cycle and we are now paying for that.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I do not admit that.

Mr. YATES: The member for Kalgoorlie mentioned a graph which was given to all members. I failed to get his point. He said it would have been fair to have had a number of these tests taken and then obtain an average. I think the graph points out clearly that a test can only be given to each individual meter and, if the meter shows that it is over 2 per cent. faster or slower than the previous test, then it is defective and has to be replaced. It is not practicable to get an average test taken of 20 or 40 meters and apply it as is shown on the graph. Under the Act a meter can have a 2 per cent. drop or it can be 2 per cent. above normal in its speed, and if it is within that percentage then it is an effective meter and can be installed in anyone's home. So it cannot be possible to have an average taken of a test of 40 or 50 meters and give that as an average of a test as shown on this graph.

Mr. Styants: It is the easiest thing in the world.

Mr. YATES: It is only possible to test each meter individually; this is only an example. Besides, this test was made by someone who has no connection with the State Electricity Commission. It was done by an officer in charge of the National Association of Testing Laboratories and would therefore have no connection with the State Electricity Commission. The test would be an accurate one of the meter which was tested.

Mr. Styants: There is no doubt about that.

Mr. YATES: Unless meters are tested under this system—that is to have each individual meter tested—the consumer would not know whether his meter was defective or not. That is one of the weaknesses of electricity distribution. Quite a number of householders may have defective meters which are responsible for the increased use of electricity in their homes. The member for Wembley Beaches told me what he pays each quarter for electricity and gas, and it is many pounds cheaper than it is at my place. I do not think we use any more electricity than he does and we also have the same charges to meet. My meter might be defective; I did not know of this test until it was given to us by the Minister tonight.

So a lot of these complaints regarding the increase in price charged for current which may possibly not have been used may be due to the fact that there has been a change-over from 40 to 50 cycles. It is possible that the meter might not be performing its task with the change-over. So until we have an accurate test

of each consumer's meter, which I think should be done at the same time as the department fixes up the electrical appliances to meet the change-over, I do not think the consumer will get any satisfaction.

Mr. Lawrence: The Minister said it could not be adjusted.

Mr. YATES: I did not hear the Minister say that. What I am getting at is that if the meter is defective, it should be replaced by a new one. The new meter could then be tested in the home under 50-cycles and, if it passes the test, then the consumer would be quite satisfied and would know that he is paying for what he is getting. At present the consumer is not 100 per cent. sure that he is getting what he is paying for. The member for East Perth also mentioned the question of gas. A lot of people are not aware of the fact that if they have a defective gas and the flame turns red and spits there might be water in the pipes. That happens quite often and we find that water is drawn off from the pipes.

Recently large quantities of water have been drawn from the mains in the streets and pumped into the gutter. Eventually this water mixes with the gas and causes fluctuation in the amount of gas the consumer uses in his various appliances. Admittedly the gas content of coal today might not be as good as it was many years ago; we might be on different seams of coal, and the quality of coal at Newcastle might have deteriorated a little. I think the processing is as good as it was before. It is not always possible to get it to the same standard and that is why allowance must be made for the B.T.U.

In conclusion I would like to say that I am satisfied with the administration of the State Electricity Commission. I do not think the member for Eyre has been altogether on the wrong track regarding some of the small things he mentioned, but I do not feel they require a Royal Commission. I am certain a Royal Commission could not achieve any more than the hon. member has by having raised these points in the House, and so giving members an opportunity to air what they know of the undertaking since it has been formed into a Commission. I am of the opinion, therefore, that a Royal Commission would not be justified at this time, but that the State Electricity Commission is ably handled by the present general manager and the staff.

MR. JOHNSON (Leederville) [9.11]: I remind the House that the subject before us is a motion to the effect that in the opinion of this House a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into the high charges for electricity and gas, also the administration of the State Electricity Commission. It would appear from the

speech of the member for South Perth that the major attack was being made on the administration, whereas in fact the major point is in connection with the high charges. The cost of electricity, and in particular gas, is a subject of general conversation throughout the district I represent. It comes up for discussion when one is going to work in the bus, and also when one has contact with householders. I am a householder in my own electorate, and, having gone home for my evening meal, I am able to produce a few electricity accounts.

This brings me to the point that the Minister gave figures showing the average price of electricity to the householder in the capital cities of the mainland. I understood him to say that he is not led astray by his general manager, but I presume the general manager gave him the two documents to which he referred. The Minister said that the average price in Perth for 620 units per annum was 3.323d. per unit. I doubt whether the average householder, excluding industrial users, does consume that number of units.

The Minister for Works: There are three categories.

Mr. JOHNSON: The charge for electric light is more than 6d. per unit—it is just on 6.56d.—and it has risen each quarter for at least the last six quarters. Whether the corresponding charges in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide are based on a different rating I do not know. Being on the "D" rate, as a good many householders are, I find that the Minister's figure of 3.323d. is approximately accurate, in respect to the last quarter, for people on that rate, who use about 620 units. For householders who are not on the "D" rate—and I think that applies to everyone in shared accommodation—these figures are inaccurate. I am unable to check from my own resources any of the other figures that have been submitted, but I am led to the conclusion that they have been specially prepared to support the argument which the Minister was to use to refute the necessity of a Royal Commission. If the figures used for that purpose are not accurately based, or are aligned to give an inaccurate picture, then I feel there is a great necessity for a Royal Commission.

The Minister for Works: They were not designed for that. They were given as factual.

Mr. JOHNSON: I think the Minister will admit that they are not truly accurate.

The Minister for Works: The same argument could be used for the figures you are putting forward.

Mr. JOHNSON: I have the figures here, if the Minister would like to see them; and they also came from the Commission. The Minister referred to a

graph concerning a meter—the member for Cottesloe by interjection said an efficient meter, but I cannot find the word "efficient" anywhere on it—supplied to be tested by a testing authority. What value is that? It does not state that the meter was taken at random from stock or that it was removed from a random house. It was a meter to be tested. I am not an electrical engineer, but I have sufficient knowledge of the subject to know that if I were asked to produce a meter that would give that result, I could do it. That may not have been done but it could have been done and, because there is no evidence to show it has not been done, the graph is also of doubtful value. These other figures are a smoke-screen, and anything that requires a smoke-screen, to my mind requires a Royal Commission. I support the motion.

HON. E. NULSEN (Eyre—in reply) [9.7]: I have listened most attentively to the debate, and I thank members for their contributions. The Minister naturally would have to defend the State Electricity Commission. He said that the allegations I made were untrue. As far as I am concerned, they were true. I am not an electrical engineer, but I have gone into the figures on a reasonable basis and, so far as I can align figures, I can deal with them. I have rather a difficult task, because the Minister's script comes from those working in the industry who have all the technical knowledge and data necessary.

The Minister for Works: That has always been the case.

Hon. E. NULSEN: On the other hand, I doubt some of that data. The Minister referred to the "A" station as being obsolete. I know it is not in its infancy, but I do know that when the Wise Government resigned office the "A" station for the time it had been there—although it had passed its heyday—was still doing very good work, and so was the "B" station. The latter was doing excellent work because it was producing a kilowatt of electricity for 1½ lb. of coal. I say now that even the South Fremantle station, which is right up to date, is not doing any better.

That is how the quarrel first started as far as the general manager is concerned. He condemned the past administration of East Perth. He said that everything there was out of order and dilapidated, so I attacked him through the Press. He did not reply because he knew that what I put forward was fact. The late Government and the administration of the department at the time were very efficient. Mr. W. H. Taylor was a very efficient engineer who had been in the engineering profession all his life. He was about the first electrical engineer to come to this State. He was here from about 1913 and the work he carried out during the intervening years has been excellent.

Now there is a new engineer in charge of the electricity supplies of the State who has had no experience in the generation of electricity, yet he saw fit to condemn the whole of the work of previous Governments in their past administration. He did that in a report he submitted to his then Minister, Mr. Seward. That Minister put a statement in the Press, and that is what I took exception to at the time.

In my opinion, the new engineer was trying to cover up his own inexperience and inefficiency by blaming someone else for the East Perth power station being out of order at the time. The reason for the plant being in that condition was that the chief engineer did not possess the necessary experience to deal with it. I do not say Mr. Edmondson is not a brainy man or that he is not a good manager, but I say that he is not experienced as an electrical engineer. The only experience he gained, after he passed out of the School of Mines at Kalgoorlie, was when he went to Gwalia for a few months in charge of the plant there. He was for 25 or 26 years out of the business associated with his profession.

The Minister for Works: Whatever his qualifications may be, his management of the undertaking has been efficient.

Hon. E. NULSEN: He gained his experience in running the Gwalia plant, but that experience was like that which I gain in running the plant at my hotel contrasted with the running of machinery on a big mine.

The Minister for Works: The fact remains that he is running the present power house very efficiently.

Hon. E. NULSEN: The Minister does not know that that is so, because he is not himself an electrical engineer. I do not blame him for his defence of Mr. Edmondson, and I certainly have nothing against that official from a personal point of view. All I say is that he does not possess the requisite practical experience. No man can succeed unless he has the practical experience necessary to carry out his job. No one can play cricket unless he practices. Bradman did not become a great cricketer because he merely read all about the game. He practised from his boyhood days, hence his efficiency. The same thing applied to Mr. Taylor who was in the electrical engineering business all his life. The member for South Perth referred to a man of Mr. Taylor's calibre being criticised; that was something he manufactured.

I referred to the East Perth power station and the fact that the engine at "B" station became unbalanced to such an extent that the tiles on the floor were shaken off. The employees kicked up a fuss and refused to carry on unless something was done about it. That was why some action was taken. The Minister

complained about the State Electricity Commission having to carry on the inheritance represented by the agreement entered into by a previous Government. He mentioned the Perth City Council being supplied with current in bulk at .75d., the workshops at Midland Junction getting it at .80d. and the Fremantle Municipal Tramways and Electric Lighting Board receiving it at .85d. That was only for a short period.

I remember questions being asked in 1949 by Hon. H. S. W. Parker in another place. He wanted to know what the deficit on the undertaking was up to 1948. At that time, despite the rates at which bulk current was supplied to the authorities I have mentioned, the deficit for two years was only £90,000. That was because the undertaking was not getting an adequate price per kilowatt for the electricity supplied. The Minister knows that the price of electricity has gone up considerably since 1948.

The Minister for Works: So have the costs of everything else.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Not to the same extent.

The Minister for Works: Yes, they have.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Not when we take into consideration the increased number of units generated. Members have reflected upon my action in criticising the State Electricity Commission, and I was accused of speaking in a derogatory manner regarding the members of that body. I do not want the Minister to be under any misapprehension. So far as the Commissioners are concerned personally, I have absolutely nothing against them, but I still say their administration has not been as efficient as it should have been. Had it been otherwise, we would not have so many complaints.

Since I first brought this matter before the House, I have received telephone rings from every electorate in the metropolitan area. From Cottesloe I have had four or five, and from South Perth six. Three persons have asked me to meet them tomorrow to discuss the prices of electricity and gas. Dissatisfaction is rife throughout the metropolitan area. I have received a great many letters, but I shall not read any of them. Each one sets out complaints about the charges for electricity and gas.

The Minister for Education: Of course people complain when charges go up. We all do that.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Yes, but not to the same extent. I have been in business for a long time and never before have I known of so many complaints about any public utility or any other business.

The Minister for Education: They must be complaining very loudly in Victoria.

The Minister for Works: And in New South Wales.

**Hon. E. NULSEN:** I shall not say anything about the position in any other State. I have said that the State Electricity Commission is a one-man concern, and I still say it is. I think the Minister has been misled with regard to the Auditor General's report. No suggestion was made at all, but merely the statement that the matter had been noted. The fact that control had been handed over to the general manager was noted.

**The Chief Secretary:** When you say it is a one-man concern, do you mean that as a compliment to the general manager?

**Hon. E. NULSEN:** The Minister may take it that way if he so desires. The other day I listened to a talk over the air by the Archer, and I noted that he condemned one-man control.

**Hon. J. T. Tonkin:** You do not take him seriously, do you?

**Hon. E. NULSEN:** No, but he belongs to the same class and holds similar opinions to members opposite.

**The Minister for Works:** Not by any means.

**Hon. E. NULSEN:** He has the same ideals and accepts the same ideology.

**The Minister for Education:** Every chief executive officer must accept a certain amount of responsibility and to that extent there is always one-man control.

**Hon. E. NULSEN:** But in this instance the Commission has handed over to the general manager the full control of the undertaking.

**The Minister for Works:** Not at all. Everything he does is subject to the approval of the Commission.

**Hon. E. NULSEN:** From a practical point of view, that is not so according to the report of the Auditor General. I am not referring to the report that should be placed on the Table of the House in accordance with Section 58 of the Act. I say definitely that the members of the State Electricity Commission have handed over the administration of that undertaking to one man, and thereby shed a very great responsibility. This action, I consider, has rendered the usefulness of the Commission null and void.

**The Minister for Works:** Not at all.

**The Minister for Education:** A general manager was appointed, but the Commission retains its authority.

**Hon. E. NULSEN:** Is there any provision in the Act justifying the handing over of the administration of the Commission to one man?

**The Chief Secretary:** That has not been done.

**Hon. E. NULSEN:** It has been done and the Auditor General has merely noted it. Of course, it has been handed over.

**The Minister for Works:** Not at all.

**Hon. E. NULSEN:** Ministers naturally must defend the Commission and the general manager. I wish now to refer to the change-over from 40 to 50 cycles. The Minister stated that there was no need for adjusting the meters for the higher frequency. At the beginning of the session the member for South Fremantle asked the Minister for Works a series of questions which, together with the answers, were as follows:—

- (1) With the conversion of the 40 cycles to 50 cycles supply, does the meter have to be adjusted?—No.
- (2) If so, have the meters in the Safety Bay area been adjusted?—No.
- (3) Have all meters in all areas affected been adjusted?—No.
- (4) Is it a fact that after the conversion, the number of units used should decrease if the same conveniences are used as were used before the conversion?—No.
- (5) If the meters require adjustment after the conversion and no adjustment has been made, what reconciliation of the accounts has been made by the State Electricity Commission?

No. 5 question brought a reply from the Minister, "Answered by No. (1)." I maintain that the meters do require adjustment and I intend to quote authorities who, I suppose, would be equal to those quoted by the Minister. I have a pamphlet issued by Atkins (W.A.) Ltd., 894 Hay-st., Perth, containing a statement by two of the firm's engineers, one of whom was chairman of the Institute of Electrical Engineers, Perth Branch, so he must be a man possessed of qualifications. I quote the following:—

The voltage coil is reduced by 20 per cent, i.e., in the ratio 40-50. On non-inductive loads such meters will register slightly slow, about 1 per cent., but will be within the permissible limit of plus or minus 2 per cent. On inductive loads at 0.5 P.F. lagging the reading will be approximately 3 per cent fast at full load. The variation in meter speed between the foregoing limits will be approximately proportional to the lagging power factor. At leading power factors the meter speeds will be slow to the same extent. All 40 cycle K.W.hr. meters should be adjusted for 50 cycles operation, particularly those metering inductive loads. This check is a meter test board operation against a standard meter and consists of adjustment of the "quad" loop. After re-adjustment for 50 cycles the accuracy will be as good as it was on 40 cycles.

Those are statements by two eminent engineers, and although I have not been authorised to give their names, I think it only fair to do so. They are—J. A. Smith, M.I.E.E., M.I.E., Aust., and J. M. Rosenberg, A.W.A.S.M., A.M.I.E. Aust. Yet the Minister told us there was no need for any adjustment. I wonder what the Minister has to say in reply to that. Has he any reply?

The Minister for Works: We have the evidence of a C.S.I.R.O. authority appointed by the Commonwealth Government.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I do not care by whom he was appointed. Here we have in print the evidence of two eminent engineers.

The Minister for Works: And the opinion of my authority is in print, too.

Hon. E. NULSEN: There is no doubt that a meter operating on 50-cycle current runs 25 per cent. faster than on 40-cycle current. For the Minister to quote the result of a test with one meter only was neither fair nor just. As was ably pointed out by the member for Kalgoorlie, one could not take very much notice of such a test. If the Minister cares to obtain a copy of the pamphlet from which I have quoted, he will find that the statement I have read is correct.

There has been a tremendous amount of criticism following the increase in the price of gas. The member for Collie has pointed out that the coal now being used for gas-making is not up to standard, the calorific value being very low. He told us that the B.T.U. of the coal being used was only 5,000. If that is so, we cannot expect to get gas of the requisite quality such as could be obtained from coal of higher calorific value. Thus the consumer is paying double or treble the amount for gas, because he is being charged an increased price for gas of inferior quality, necessitating the use of probably two or three times as much as would be needed if the gas were up to standard. No report by the Commission has been laid on the Table of the House.

The Minister for Works: All the reports required by the Act have been laid on the Table.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Has the Minister seen any report other than that of the Auditor General? Has any other report been tabled?

The Minister for Works: According to the Solicitor General, all the papers required by the Act have been tabled.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I have seen a bound copy of a report—not the Auditor General's report—that has never been laid on the Table of the House.

The Minister for Works: I have checked back and found that every paper required by the Act has been laid on the Table.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Has the Minister seen any report other than that of the Auditor General? If not, I shall bring one along for his information. I do not know who compiled it, but it was a nicely-prepared report of the State Electricity Commission and was sent to England. But it was not placed on the Table of this House. I am surprised the Minister has not seen the report. He needs to find out why it was printed, and in such a nice form, and not tabled here; though I admit that it did not contain a lot more information than was furnished in the Auditor General's report. I am not reflecting on the Auditor General, because his report is complete. But I want a report from the Commission so that we can readily see the exact position.

I want financial statistics and technical information which will indicate the situation at a glance and will obviate the necessity of going through the Auditor General's report to try to obtain necessary information, which I have found difficult. According to Section 58 of the Act, a report from the Commission is supposed to be tabled and not one that has been sent to the Commission from the Auditor General and then returned and tabled. I want a report by the Commission signed by the Commissioners.

The Minister for Works: My advice is that all those papers have been laid on the Table.

Hon. E. NULSEN: The Minister insists on that. Tomorrow, Sir, with your permission, I will bring along the other report to which I have referred and show it to the House.

Mr. May: Lay it on the Table on behalf of the Minister!

Hon. E. NULSEN: I have no authority; but the Minister was so convincing that the report I have here was the report made in connection with Section 58! It is not. He did not convince me by any means.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Does the Minister not think that some adequate report of the Commission's operations should be prepared and tabled?

The Minister for Works: That could be the subject of further discussion. I am only complying with the Act as passed by this House.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Act presupposed a much more adequate report than this.

Hon. E. NULSEN: In regard to the changeover from 40 to 50 cycles, eminent engineers have pointed out that there is speed variation of 3 per cent. That would probably make a gift to the State Electricity Commission to the detriment of the consumers of about £120,000. I have gone into the matter roughly and the figures I have are approximate. According to

the Auditor General's report, 224,000,000 units were sold in 1951. If we take 65 per cent. as being used for industry, that would leave 146,000,000 units. Taking the average price as being 2d., which is a conservative figure, the advantage to the Commission against the consumers would be over £121,000. The Minister can check those figures for himself. That lines up with the power unit overcharge to the public. I say that these meters, very definitely in many instances, are like some scales, in that they give short weight. Yet we have the Minister telling us there is no need to have them adjusted in the change-over from 40 to 50 cycles. Of course there is a need! The report by two eminent engineers, from which I previously quoted, bears that out.

The Minister also said that the Perth charge for electricity was cheaper than in any other part of Australia. I do not know the position in the other States except New South Wales and Victoria. I wrote to both those States and received information concerning the charges made there. Here is the comparison. In Perth the basic unit at the "A" rate is 6.55d. and for the "C" rate, 2.55d. In Sydney the primary unit is rated at 6.25d., as against 6.55d. here. The secondary unit rate in Sydney is 2.2d. as against 2.55d. In those two categories alone, there is a difference in favour of Sydney. For cooking purposes the secondary unit charge in Sydney is 1.7d., and for water heating it is 0.9d. (night rate) and 1.35d. (day rate).

The Minister for Works: You know there has been a rise in electricity charges in Sydney since the 1st November?

Hon. E. NULSEN: These figures relate to the period before the 1st November and are correct according to the information I received at that time. At Perth the domestic rate is 0.3d. more than in New South Wales, and the secondary rate 0.35 more. The water-heating night rate is 1.65d. cheaper in Sydney and the cooking rate is 0.85d. cheaper. So it will be seen that there is throughout a difference in favour of Sydney. But those figures were not taken into consideration in the average the Minister made out. He said that the people in New South Wales wanted to get rid of them.

The Minister for Works: I said that the Electricity Commission wanted to get rid of them.

Hon. E. NULSEN: So far as Victoria is concerned, the energy rate for Melbourne is 1.85d., compared with Perth's 2.55d., a difference of 37½ per cent. in favour of Melbourne. I have quoted the cost to the average domestic consumer, and if the cost to industry were taken into consideration, I venture to say that I could demonstrate that Perth has not the cheapest rates.

The Minister for Works: I venture to say you could not.

Hon. E. NULSEN: On the 9th November, 1952, there appeared in the "Sunday Times" a few comments in regard to the State Electricity Commission. The paper said—

Time and money of the State should not be wasted in appointing the Royal Commission suggested by Mr. Nulsen in his attack on the State Electricity Commission.

I disagree with that. I feel that there should be some sort of inquiry and it would be quite impartial if we had a Royal Commission.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Nulsen did not wake up years ago and seek a Royal Commission into the purchase of the old 40-cycle power plant which has inflicted so much loss and worry on the consumers of Western Australia.

What an idiotic thing to print in the Press! The 40-cycle equipment did a wonderful job from the time when it was installed in 1913 till the new station was constructed. It gave no trouble and was just as efficient as the 50-cycle equipment. I believe that we have changed over to 50 cycles not because it is more efficient but through a desire for uniformity. In Canada, they use from 25-cycles to 50-cycles and in England they have now gone from 50-cycles to 60-cycles, as far as Navy equipment goes, in order to fall into line with American practice.

The Minister for Education: You can hardly buy any modern machine tool equipment to run on 40-cycles.

Hon. E. NULSEN: That is probably because the big firms wanted to standardise equipment under their monopolies.

The Minister for Education: We should have a Royal Commission to investigate whoever installed 40-cycle equipment in Western Australia.

Hon. E. NULSEN: When Jack Scaddan was Premier of Western Australia in 1913, he had in mind the electrification of the railway between Perth and Northam—as well as the tramways—and the 40-cycle current was suitable for that. That is why the equipment was installed here.

The Minister for Education: What about the trouble Chamberlains have had with 40-cycle current?

Hon. E. NULSEN: The article continues—

Public confidence was amply demonstrated by the magnificent response of the public in over-subscribing to the recent loan.



I do not criticise that, and I repeat that I would have moved this motion much earlier but for the fact that my Leader said it would not be fair to do so while the loan was being negotiated. We are pleased that the loan has been such a huge success. To continue—

We should be proud of being the only State on the Australian mainland free from power rationing and the tone of Parliament should be rather of congratulations than carping criticism.

I admit that, but there is an inference that the present Government did all this by its own foresight and initiative, and that Mr. Edmondson is responsible for the present position, but that is not so. The Labour Government, right back in 1942, had Mr. Taylor on the job preparing plans and specifications, and at the first opportunity after the war, the Willcock Government sent him to England to get the machinery necessary to establish the South Fremantle plant.

The Minister for Works: You should have this argument with the "Sunday Times."

Hon. E. NULSEN: Who inspired this article? I think I know.

The Minister for Works: I do not know.

The Minister for Education: Was Mr. Taylor's proposal for 50-cycles?

Hon. E. NULSEN: Seeing that he was an Englishman and that 50-cycles is the custom there, I take it that it was. To continue—

The "Sunday Times" hopes that the Government will not waste public money in ordering a Royal Commission which plain facts show is entirely unwarranted.

The facts show nothing of the sort, but rather that there should be an investigation into the very high charges for electricity and gas. In view of the fact that the administration has received so much criticism, I believe it should be included in the inquiry. I think all members will agree with the motion and I am sure that all consumers of electricity and gas will support it. Since I moved the motion, my telephone has been ringing continuously, and my wife recently said to me, "I wish you would not get implicated in metropolitan affairs. I am running to the 'phone all day."

The Minister for Works: She is on our side.

The Minister for Education: That is where you fell in.

Hon. E. NULSEN: The correspondence, also, has been voluminous, demonstrating the depth of the dissatisfaction with the present high charges for electricity and gas, I have here a large advertisement by the Electricity Commission

in the "Sunday Times" on the same date as the paragraph to which I have just referred appeared. Did the Minister know that that advertisement was being inserted?

The Minister for Works: No, but probably it had been included in "The West Australian" supplement as part of the loan publicity.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I am speaking of an advertisement that appeared in the "Sunday Times," and I think that there must have been some friendship involved in it somewhere, seeing that the Electricity Commission has no competition to meet. Why should we waste good money on such advertisements, in the circumstances?

Mr. Bovell: Do you suggest that it was done for a mercenary reason?

Hon. E. NULSEN: Does the member for Vasse think that advertisement was warranted?

The Minister for Works: We will possibly have another loan to float and we want to keep the Commission before the public.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I wonder what fraction will be added to the formula to meet the cost of this advertisement. Without reflecting on the character of anyone, I say that the position warrants an investigation of the affairs of the S.E.C. They have written off £1,350,000 at East Perth, and I would like to know who is to pay for that.

Mr. Kelly: The people, of course.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Someone must pay for it.

The Minister for Works: There was no depreciation written off.

Hon. E. NULSEN: If they wanted to replace the equipment with other machinery of equal efficiency, it would cost twice as much today.

The Minister for Works: That is stretching it a bit.

Hon. E. NULSEN: No. The cost of everything has gone up. I would remind the Government that it has written off over £12,000,000 on the railways.

The Attorney General: That shows the rubbishy stuff that the department had.

Hon. E. NULSEN: The railways have done a wonderful job, but there are few people who understand it. I refer especially to those living in the city who make no contributions towards our railways.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Hear, hear! That pushes the Attorney General back on his heels.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	20
Noes	24
Majority against	4

Ayes.

Mr. Brady  
Mr. Graham  
Mr. Guthrie  
Mr. Hawke  
Mr. J. Hegney  
Mr. Hoar  
Mr. Johnson  
Mr. Lawrence  
Mr. May  
Mr. McCulloch

Mr. Moir  
Mr. Needham  
Mr. Nulsen  
Mr. O'Brien  
Mr. Rodoreda  
Mr. Sewell  
Mr. Sleeman  
Mr. Styants  
Mr. Tonkin  
Mr. Kelly

(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Abbott  
Mr. Ackland  
Mr. Brand  
Dame P. Cardell-Oliver  
Mr. Cornell  
Mr. Doney  
Mr. Grayden  
Mr. Hearman  
Mr. Hill  
Mr. Hutchinson  
Mr. Mann  
Mr. Manning

Mr. McLarty  
Mr. Nalder  
Mr. Nimmo  
Mr. Owen  
Mr. Perkins  
Mr. Read  
Mr. Thorn  
Mr. Totterdell  
Mr. Watts  
Mr. Wild  
Mr. Yates  
Mr. Bovell

(Teller.)

Pairs.

Ayes.

Mr. Coverley  
Mr. W. Hegney

Noes.

Mr. Oldfield  
Mr. Griffith

Question thus negatived; the motion defeated.

# **BILL—FREMANTLE MUNICIPAL TRAMWAYS AND ELECTRIC LIGHTING ACT AMENDMENT.**

## *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 12th November.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. D. Brand—Greenough) [9.54]: I have no opposition to offer in connection with this Bill. It has been introduced as a result of the change in status of the Fremantle Municipal Tramways and Electric Lighting Board and the sale of the undertaking which took place to the State Electricity Commission. The board is now being constituted as a transport board and certain amendments to the parent Act are necessary. There is also an amendment which permits the board to contribute, without limit, to a superannuation scheme. We have no opposition to offer to the measure.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

## *In Committee.*

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; Hon. J. B. Sleeman in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3—agreed to.

New clause:

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** As a result of the change in name which will take place when the Bill is passed, it has been found necessary to make another minor amendment to Section 22. I move:

That a new clause be inserted as follows:—

3. Section twenty-two of the principal Act is amended by substituting for the words "Tram-

ways Electoral Rolls" in line eleven the words, "Transport Electoral Rolls".

New clause put and passed.

New clause:

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I move—

That a new clause be added as follows:—

5. Section thirty-seven of the principal Act is amended by—

(a) substituting for the words, "third Wednesday" in line four the words "fourth Saturday";

(b) substituting for the words, "Municipal Institutions Act, 1900" in lines six and seven the words, "Municipal Corporations Act, 1906-1951"; and

(c) substituting for the words, "Seventh and Eighth" in lines eight and nine the words, "Eighth and Tenth."

All these amendments have been suggested by the Crown Law Department. In regard to the proposed paragraph (a), the original members of the Fremantle Municipal Tramways and Electric Lighting Board were elected at elections held on the third Wednesday, and it has been thought advisable to hold the elections for the Transport Board on the same day as municipal elections are held, that is the fourth Saturday in November. The proposals in paragraphs (b) and (c) are consequential amendments.

New clause put and passed.

New clause:

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I move—

That a new clause be added as follows:—

6. Section 38 of the principal Act is amended by substituting for the words, "the first day of December following" in line eight the words, "the appointment of his successor."

The Crown Law Department has suggested that this new clause should be added.

New clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

# **BILL—PLANT DISEASES (REGISTRATION FEES) ACT AMENDMENT.**

## *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**HON. J. T. TONKIN** (Melville) [10.2]: In order to reach a proper understanding of the proposal in the Bill it is necessary

for members to have some knowledge of the reasons which prompted the introduction of the legislation in the first place and how it operates. Originally, no registration fee was paid by a non-commercial orchardist.

The Minister for Lands: Are you sure of that?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes.

The Minister for Lands: I was here when the Bill was originally introduced.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Was the Minister?

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: In 1914?

The Minister for Lands: No, I was not here then.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

The Minister for Lands: The hon. member is as big a fool as anyone, so he should not try to be funny.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister should be sure of his facts before he rushes in.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Minister for Lands: The hon. member ought to talk about fools; he has made a fool of himself plenty of times.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister said I was wrong. The point is that in 1914, when the legislation was first introduced, it did not provide for the payment of a fee by non-commercial orchards or backyard orchards and the Minister was not even right with the date he suggested.

The Minister for Lands: Go on, get your cane out!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That provision was introduced in 1935 and became No. 10 in the 1935 Statutes.

The Minister for Lands: Oh, did it!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: In that Act provision was made for the establishment of a fruit-fly eradication fund to be built up by contributions from commercial orchards as well as non-commercial orchards—

The Minister for Lands: It was not!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: —and the fee imposed upon non-commercial orchards was 1s. for those less than one acre. By Act No. 39 of 1939 the charge for commercial orchards was increased to 2s. 6d. per acre with a maximum of £2 10s. In 1941 that fee was reduced from 2s. 6d. to 1s. 6d. per acre for commercial orchards and several types were exempted from the payment of that registration fee. In 1944 it became necessary to increase the fee of 1s. 6d. to 2s. per acre for commercial orchards and that is the figure ruling to-day. From the inception of this legislation it has been recognised that the owner of a commercial orchard should pay more for registration than the person who has one or two trees in the backyard.

The Minister now proposes to double the registration fee of the owners of trees in the metropolitan area who do not produce fruit for sale, and to leave the registration fee as it is for those engaged in the business of producing fruit. If his proposal is agreed to, the result will be on his own showing, that an additional £2,760 in revenue will be raised solely from those persons who are not owners of commercial orchards. In other words, the residents of the metropolitan area who have a few vines or fruit trees in their backyards will pay an additional £2,760 into this fund for the eradication of fruit-fly and the owners of commercial orchards, in whose interests this fund was established, will not pay an additional sixpence.

If the Minister's proposal is agreed to, this will be the final result: There will be an income from registration fees of £8,556 of which the non-commercial orchards will provide £5,520 or 64 per cent. of the total of the registration fees, leaving 36 per cent.—a little more than one-third of the money received from registration fees—to be paid by people engaged in the fruitgrowing industry. That is completely out of balance.

Mr. Ackland: Is not the backyard orchardist the biggest menace in regard to the spread of fruit-fly?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is not a question of his being a menace. When this legislation was amended in 1935 it was done for the reason that all persons with fruit trees should register with the department so that the trees could be regularly inspected to ensure that the owners carried out spraying and proper treatment of the trees to keep fruit-fly in check, and that is being done in the interests of commercial orchardist.

Mr. Hill: And the State.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is true. When the Minister introduced the Bill he was not at all factual because he said—

The Orchard Registration Trust Fund is augmented each year by the Government to the following extent:— It pays approximately £1,500 for the appointment of two inspectors, plus a grant of £12,000, which includes £3,000 for three fruit-fly baiting schemes.

That is not true; that is not the position at all. The Government does not pay £12,000 a year and never has. Going back to the year 1946-47, the year in which this Government came into office, I have taken from the reports of the Auditor General, who audits the trust fund, these figures—

Credit balance in the Fruit-Fly Eradication Fund at the 1st July, 1946			£	s.	d.
Receipts from registration fees			4,889	7	7
Total			£5,301	19	2

## Payments from the fund were—

	£	s.	d.
Salaries, pay roll tax and workers' compensation payments	3,569	2	4
Travelling expenses	938	5	9
Printing, stationery and postages	42	15	0
Sundries	71	15	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>£4,621</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>4</b>

This left, at the end of the financial year, a credit balance of £680 0s. 10d. It will be noticed that in that year there was no contribution from the Government at all. Yet the Minister says the Government has paid £12,000 a year! The figures for 1947-48 are as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Credit balance at the 1st July, 1947	680	0	10

## Receipts into the fund—

	£	s.	d.
Advance from appropriation advance to Treasurer	200	0	0
Registration fees	4,955	17	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>£5,835</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>

## Payments from the fund for the year were—

	£	s.	d.
Salaries, pay roll tax and workers' compensation payments	4,043	5	4
Travelling expenses	1,036	5	10
Sundries — printing, stationery and postages	187	12	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>£5,267</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

This left a credit balance in the fund of £568 15s. 2d., which was £368 more than the Government had advanced from the Advance to Treasurer's Account. In that year the payment from the Government was £200, and not the amount of £12,000 that the Minister referred to. The figures for 1948-49 were—

	£	s.	d.
Credit balance at the 1st July, 1948	568	15	2
Advance from appropriation advance to Treasurer	800	0	0
Registration fees	5,500	10	1
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>£6,300</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>

## The payments from the fund were—

	£	s.	d.
Repayment to Treasury	1,000	0	0
Salaries	4,506	16	11
Travelling expenses	819	11	4
Sundries	394	14	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6,721</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>

The repayment of £1,000 was to recoup the Treasury for the £200 it had paid to the fund in 1947-48 and the £800 it advanced in the year 1948-49. So the £1,300 was given back. The balance in the fund at this stage was £148 2s. 6d. The Minister made the statement that these registration fees had not been sufficient for the service from the inception. It is not true, of course, because for these three years the registration fees were more than sufficient to pay for the service which was being rendered. The figures for 1949-50 were—

	£	s.	d.
Credit balance at the 1st July, 1949	148	2	6
Grant from Revenue	1,700	0	0
Registration fees	4,622	13	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6,470</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>

This was the first time that the Government actually made a grant from Revenue which remained in the fund without being repaid, and the £1,700 so granted was a long way short of the £12,000 that the Minister referred to as being paid yearly. The registration fees for this particular year were only £4,622 13s., so I want to know what happened. Who fell down on his job? The registration fees in 1946-47, were £4,889 and in 1949-50, £4,622, a falling-off of £260. In 1947-48, the registration fees were £4,955, yet in 1949-50, they were only £4,600, or a drop of £350.

Mr. Ackland: It shows it was not policed enough; they needed more money.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No. There was a surplus in the fund. The inspectors who are paid from this fund do not police the collecting of the money. Somebody fell down badly there, and the following year, too. As I have already pointed out, the registration fees in 1948-49 were £5,500. Why did they fall to £4,600 in 1949-50? They fell by £900.

The Minister for Lands: Because they had not all been collected at the end of that financial year.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Is that the reason? They were not collected the following year, either, because the total the following year was only £5,169, and that was £400 less than the year 1948-49. No explanation is given by the Minister for that falling off. Those two years coming in between higher collections in the previous years and a higher collection in subsequent years show clearly that something was radically wrong in the collection of the fees in those years. Fancy a falling off of £900, when obviously the number of residences with fruit-trees and vines must have been increasing! There should have been a gradual increase in the amount of registration fees obtained.

The Minister for Lands: Do you not think that a lot of people are pulling their one trees out?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: They would not do it in just those two years. If they were doing it, it would be a gradual process. If they were going to do it, they would have done so immediately the impost was put on, not some years after they were paying it.

The Minister for Lands: You are telling me.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: They would not go on paying 1s. a year for some years and then pull their trees up.

The Minister for Lands: A lot of them have been ordered by inspectors to pull out fig-trees.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Is the Minister giving that as an explanation?

The Minister for Lands: I am trying to help you.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister is not helping me by making suggestions which have no factual basis.

The Attorney General: The acreage went down during that period.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The acreage where?

The Attorney General: In Western Australia.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: In those two years?

The Attorney General: Since 1948-49 and 1950-51.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is when the registration fees were £5,500.

The Attorney General: I say 1948-49 was high.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It did not go down in 1948-49.

The Attorney General: I say since 1948-49.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: How does the acreage of 1951-52 compare with the acreage of 1950-51?

The Attorney General: The year 1949-50 is 22,744 acres, and 1950-51 is 22,013 acres; a drop of over 700 acres.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: So the acreage in 1950-51 was less than in 1949-50?

The Attorney General: Yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yet the fees collected were higher. So there is something wrong there and that is not the explanation. The registration fees in 1949-50 were £4,622, but those in 1950-51 were £5,169; so that will not make the position clear. I think there is a responsibility on the Minister to ascertain from the department the reason for that very substantial falling off, which adversely affected the fund. However, I will proceed with the comparison. At the end of June 1950, there was a balance of £192 14s., and the contribution from the Treasury that year was £1,700. In 1950-51, commencing with

a credit balance of £192 14s., the receipts from revenue were £4,818. That was a fairly substantial contribution from revenue, but a long way short of the £12,000 a year the Minister mentioned. The registration fees came to £5,169, making a total income of £9,987 0s. 4d. Payments were: Salaries, etc. £7,939 6s. 2d.; travelling expenses, £1,699 18s. 3d.; sundries, £280 12s. 9d. That left a credit balance to the 30th June, 1951, of £259 17s. 2d.

For the year 1951-52, commencing with that credit balance of £259 17s. 2d., the receipts were: Grant from the Treasury of £5,600 and registration fees, £5,796 6s. 5d., making a total amount in the fund of £11,656 3s. 7d. Payments from the fund were: Salaries, £8,415 8s. 9d.; travelling expenses, £2,362 7s. 6d., and sundries, £351 7s., leaving at the end of the year a credit balance in the fund of £527 0s. 4d. It can be seen that not in any single year did the Government contribute anything like £12,000. For three of those six years, the contribution was nil. For the other three, the contribution did not exceed £6,000. So I am wondering who supplied the Minister with the figures he used here. If one refers to the Estimates for this year, one finds on page 103 under "Minister for Agriculture," Item No. 8, "Research and Control Fruit-fly." The Vote for 1951-52 was £10,000, but the expenditure was only £9,114.

The contribution from revenue to the fruit-fly eradication fund was £5,600 and there was the grant from the department for research into fruit-fly control. It was never intended that money for research should come from this fund because the Department of Agriculture carries out all sorts of research into insect pests and diseases, and the money is provided from general revenue. It was never intended that licenses for the registration of orchards should provide money for research into fruit-fly control. So, even if we take the full £9,000 spent last year, it still falls a long way short of the £12,000 a year mentioned by the Minister. I do not say the Minister did it intentionally, but he definitely misled the House by using those figures, because in no year has the Government provided £12,000 for this work.

It is that in the last three years it has been made plain that there is an increasing call upon the Treasury to assist this fund because, whereas in the initial years registration fees were sufficient to pay the cost of this work, latterly, because of increased costs, the money has not been sufficient. I ask members, is it fair to levy a registration fee on the commercial orchardist as the figure is at present and has been since 1944, and yet seek to obtain this increased revenue from the back-sellers whose only interest in this legisla-

tion is that they have to register so that the position of their fruit-trees will be known to the department?

The Minister for Lands: You know quite different from that. You know they are breeding the fruit-fly.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not know that.

The Minister for Lands: Of course you do.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not.

The Minister for Lands: And you know that the commercial orchardist is baiting to preserve the industry.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He has paid 2s. per acre, which rate was fixed in 1944.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, and the other fee has not been touched at all.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The non-commercial orchardist was paying a fee of 1s. in 1944.

The Minister for Lands: That is so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What justification has the Minister for suggesting that the rise in costs has been responsible for doubling the registration fee for the man who is not getting his living from his fruit trees, and leaving the fee the same for the man who is carrying on his orchard on a commercial basis, seeing that the registration fee levied upon the non-commercial orchardist is simply to let the department know where his fruit trees are so that the inspectors can check up?

The Minister for Lands: And police the fruit-fly, which that type of orchardist is breeding.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Oh, no!

The Minister for Lands: Oh, yes! You do not know everything!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister said that the number of inspectors employed was adequate.

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: For what?

The Minister for Lands: The two inspectors are adequate to carry out the inspections in the metropolitan-suburban area.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: And you say those people are breeding fruit-fly!

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: How can the Minister say they are breeding the pest?

The Minister for Lands: Do not be so silly!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister is the one who is being silly.

The Minister for Lands: Do not be funny!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If the Minister says the number of inspectors is adequate I ask—adequate for what?

The Minister for Lands: To carry out the necessary inspections.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is not a matter of carrying out inspections but of seeing, when the inspections are carried out, that the owners of the fruit trees are taking the necessary steps to deal with the fruit-fly and keep the situation under control.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, to control the position—but they still go on breeding the fruit-fly.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister cannot have it both ways. If, as he says, the backyard orchardists in the metropolitan area are breeding fruit-fly, then obviously the number of inspectors is not adequate. If the number is adequate, that suggests to me that the job is being done.

The Minister for Lands: Of course, you know different from that!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I leave it to the commonsense of members to judge the argument the Minister desires to use. He wants to say that the number of inspectors is adequate and then to say that fruit-fly is being bred in the backyard orchards in the metropolitan area. My view is that if fruit-fly is being bred in the metropolitan area, then the inspections are not adequate. To my mind, it is quite wrong to expect the revenue from this fund to be provided in the proportion of 64 per cent. from those who have one or two trees and a few vines and 36 per cent from those engaged in the industry commercially who stand to benefit most from the operations of the fund.

A fair thing is a fair thing, and what is proposed by the Minister is the very antithesis of the usual practice. Ordinarily we expect the greater contribution from those who get a living from the industry, and we give those people more assistance than we do to those who are doing something similar but are not gaining their living from their work. The proposition of the Minister seeks to reverse the procedure that has operated until now. Prior to this stage being reached, more than 50 per cent. of the revenue was obtained from those engaged in the industry commercially. The Minister's proposal will change that, and 64 per cent. of the revenue will in future come from those not engaged in the business commercially.

Mr. Ackland: Do you not realise that those engaged in the industry commercially police it themselves and see that the fruit-fly is not allowed to spread.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But they do not do that!

Mr. Ackland: The majority of them do, because they would lose their incomes if they did not.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: They get the benefit of the fruit baiting scheme.

Mr. Owen: Only a few of them.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Those who desire to benefit from that subsidy derive that advantage.

Mr. Hill: Can you tell me how many are responsible for the necessity for inspections of backyard orchards?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There are 55,239 that have to be policed, and the Minister says the number of inspectors is adequate.

The Minister for Lands: That is, over all.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That was a statement made by the Minister. If they are adequate, there is no necessity for increased fees because the expenditure of more funds would be so much waste money.

The Attorney General: I do not think you could inspect a local tree for 2s.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am certain it would be possible to do it for 2s.

The Attorney General: I should not have thought so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is just a matter of going from one backyard to the next.

The Minister for Lands: There are many expenses incurred in the work. There is car mileage and so on.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The figures I have quoted are not mine, but have been furnished by the department and they prove that for a number of years the amount received from registration fees was sufficient.

The Minister for Lands: The fees received have never been sufficient.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If the Minister wants to adopt that attitude—

The Minister for Lands: You know that the amount received has never been sufficient.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Does the Minister know if, for instance, during the years 1946-47 there was any contribution to the fund from Consolidated Revenue?

The Minister for Education: You say there was not, so why ask the question?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister said there was.

The Minister for Education: He did not say there was.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister said that in no year was the amount of the registration fees sufficient to meet the cost of inspection.

The Minister for Education: He did not say there was any contribution from the Treasury for that year.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister inferred that.

The Minister for Education: You infer a lot.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister for Education will not be so obtuse as to say that is the position. He knows that the only revenue comes from the registration fees, and if there is a surplus in any one year, it means that the fund was sufficient to pay the cost of inspections and so forth.

The Minister for Education: There might be a variety of reasons for a surplus being carried over from the previous year. I do not know if that is the position.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If there is a surplus at the end of a year that is bigger than that with which the year commenced, and bearing in mind that the only revenue available comes from registration fees, how can it be said that the revenue of the fund was not sufficient to cover all payments? It is idle for the Minister to adopt such an attitude in view of the information I have given. It is perfectly clear that in 1946-47, 1947-48 and 1948-49, taking the three years together, there was sufficient income without any contribution from revenue. I have already pointed out that in 1947-48 there was an advance from revenue of £200 and in 1948-49 an advance of £800, but in 1948-49 there was repaid from the registration fees the £800 advanced in that year and the £200 advanced in the previous year. Therefore it is of no use saying that the registration fees have never been sufficient to pay for the work done.

From then on, I agree that the Minister was right because in 1949-50 a contribution of £1,700 was required from the Treasury, in 1950-51 a contribution of £4,818 and in 1951-52 a contribution of £5,600. The cost is now increasing steeply, and making a greater demand on the Treasury. It would seem that the year in which a proposition like this should have been brought forward was 1949, the first year in which it became necessary for the Treasury to make a substantial contribution to the fund. In that year, £1,700 was required for the first time and in the following year the Treasury had to find £4,818. I suppose the position then was that the Government had plenty of money and did not worry.

Now that it is hard pressed for funds, it cannot contemplate a payment of several thousands of pounds to the fund and so proposes to get the money by increasing registration fees. The Government's contribution last year was £5,600; this proposal will yield only £2,760. If the Minister is genuine in his statement that the fund ought to finance itself and pay the cost, then he should also increase the figure that has obtained since 1944 for those commercially engaged in the business and let the increase be shared throughout.

The Minister for Lands: I never said that the fund should finance itself. If you want to know my opinion, I do not think the growers should have to contribute. It should be a direct charge on revenue. If the growers are prepared to assist in financing a scheme to eradicate the pest and find a big proportion of the money, they are a damned lot of fools. The money should come out of revenue, the same as other things are financed.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is a most interesting statement.

The Minister for Lands: That is my opinion.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Does the Minister think that the commercial growers should not contribute anything, but that the people in the metropolitan area who have a few vines should be compelled to contribute to the fund?

The Minister for Lands: I did not say that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Does the Minister think that?

The Minister for Lands: Ask yourself.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I think the Minister should be fair.

The Minister for Lands: I am fair.

The Minister for Education: What he said that all of it should be paid out of revenue.

The Minister for lands: That is so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I understood him to say that he considered the growers were fools in contributing to the fund, that they should not have to contribute and that the money should be provided out of revenue. I took it that he was drawing a distinction.

The Minister for Lands: No, they are all growers.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then I should like the Minister to tell me whether it is his opinion that there should not be a license fee for anyone and that the fund should be wiped out.

The Minister for Lands: Oh, no!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then who is going to provide the money for the fund?

The Minister for Lands: I wonder how you manage to lie straight in bed at night.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What the Minister means by that, I do not know.

The Minister for Lands: You must always be thinking out something.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is my job to analyse these propositions.

The Minister for Lands: You stagger me. You agreed to all these things when you were Minister for Agriculture.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I never agreed to a proposal that required a greater contribution to the fund from people not engaged commercially in the industry, compared with those who were.

Mr. Bovell: The whole point is that the backyard orchardist is a great danger to the industry.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: How is he a danger?

Mr. Bovell: I am a backyard orchardist. I have a vine and a few almond trees.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If the hon. member is a danger to the industry, I cannot help it. The Minister said the inspectors were quite adequate and that their job was to inspect the backyarders and see that they were keeping their trees clean. If the inspectors are quite adequate, I assume that they are doing their job. Therefore the backyarder cannot be blamed. Now we get back to the proposition suggested by the Minister, and it might surprise him to know that I am going to agree with him when I find out exactly what he proposes. If he proposes that the license fees should be abolished in respect to everybody and the money provided from revenue, I say that is fair enough.

Mr. Hill: Your party refused that when you had to face the proposition, and we had to introduce legislation so that we could tax ourselves in order to raise the funds.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: When Mr. Wise was Minister for Agriculture—

Mr. Hill: It was before his day.

Mr. SPEAKER. Order! The member for Albany can speak later. This is becoming like a quiz session.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Labour Governments were not up against a proposal for the setting up of a fund. I remind the member for Albany that the Labour Government was responsible for bringing in the legislation that first required a contribution from the non-commercial grower. Now what has the hon. member to say?

Mr. Hill: I shall do as the Speaker suggested—make my speech later.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It was in 1935—

Mr. Hill: No, in 1927.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It was in 1935 when the Act was amended to make the provision to which I have been referring. The Plant Diseases Act Amendment Act of 1935 provides that—

- (1) For the purposes of this Act there shall be established a special fund, to be administered by the Director of Agriculture through a separate trust account, and to be known as the Fruit Fly Eradication Fund.



(2) The said fund shall consist of all fees received by the Director of Agriculture from the registration and the transfer of the registration of orchards under this Act, and of any other moneys appropriated by Parliament to the purposes of such fund. All such fees and moneys on the receipt thereof by the Director of Agriculture shall be placed to the credit of the said fund.

(3) The moneys in the said fund shall be deposited in the name of the fund at the Treasury, and, subject to this Act, shall be operated on by the Director of Agriculture.

There it is for the member for Albany to read. Section 4 reads—

Section thirty-five of the principal Act is amended as follows:—

(b) by deleting the proviso to paragraph (c) of subsection (a) and inserting in lieu thereof a proviso as follows:—

Provided that the fees for the registration of an orchard and for the transfer of the registration of an orchard shall be fixed at one shilling, and that other registration fees may be graded from two shillings and sixpence upwards, according to area.

That was what fixed the charge of 1s. on orchards of less than one acre.

The Minister for Lands: Did not your original Bill provide for a 5s. registration fee for backyard orchards?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Not to my knowledge. What does the Minister mean by "original Bill"?

The Minister for Lands: You know it did.

Mr. J. Hegney: It did not. I supported that Bill.

The Minister for Lands: Do you not remember the late member for Subiaco getting up and holding forth on that matter?

Mr. J. Hegney: No. That was a long time ago.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If the Minister has got hold of something, let us have it. He asks if I do not remember a Bill. What Bill, or what Act? We have the same result each time. When we want to get right down to the facts, the Minister will not play ball.

The Minister for Education: What purpose is served by getting down to the facts?

The Minister for Lands: I asked you a simple question: Whether you remembered it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not, and I do not think it ever existed.

The Minister for Lands: You do not?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Does the Minister?

The Minister for Lands: I do.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What causes the Minister to think it? He must have some basis for the thought. I am telling the Minister that so far as I can recollect no such Bill ever existed.

The Minister for Lands: Then that is the answer to my question. Why do you want to go any further?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Of course the Minister's interjection immediately created an inference that a Labour Government at some time or other had a mind to impose a license fee of 5s. on somebody. I say that is an unfair inference because it never existed.

The Minister for Lands: All right.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Plant Diseases Act Amendment Act of 1935 was Labour's original proposal and it established a fund for the purpose of eradicating the fruit-fly. I am thoroughly in accord with the proposal that General Revenue should find the necessary money for a scheme that will benefit not only the producers but the whole State. But if the Government decides that it cannot find the money and has to raise it from the people who have fruit trees, I think it should do that equitably; and it does not appear to me to be fair to say that the growers should not pay it, but somebody else who has one or two trees ought to pay it because it cannot be found from General Revenue.

If the Minister's proposition in this Bill was for a general increase in costs because General Revenue could not find sufficient money, I would say that was fair enough. But it does not appear to me to be fair to leave the figure for a commercial orchardist as it is. At one time it was higher than it is now, for it was 2s. 6d. per acre. It does not seem to me to be just to say that the figure fixed in 1944 for a man who gets his living in the industry shall remain at 2s. per acre but that those persons in the metropolitan area who have a few vines or trees shall pay an increased registration fee.

I will admit that the amount involved is trifling—1s. a year extra. But there is a principle involved; and I think it is reasonable that if additional money is required, the Minister should obtain all that is needed. He will not get it this way, but he would get it if he imposed the increase on everybody who had fruit trees. In that way the Treasury would be relieved of the responsibility of having to find this money and would get it from those who have fruit trees, and I would not object. I would say that all those per-

sons who have been registered under the Act must pay more now because costs are higher. But it does not seem to me to be fair to say that we will get half the money necessary by taxing those who are not engaged in the business commercially. It seems to me that the Government wants the money but is afraid to put a tax on those it feels it represents.

The Minister for Lands: The tax on the commercial growers was increased.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: When?

The Minister for Lands: In 1944.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Oh, no! It was higher than that before then. It was at one time 2s. 6d.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, but it was only a nominal registration when it was first brought in and the metropolitan-suburban orchardists continued to pay 1s. per acre, though the levy on commercial orchardists was increased.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, in 1944. It was down to 1s. 6d. in 1941 and then went to 2s. per acre in 1944. I submit that the increase in costs has been greater between 1944 and 1952 than it was between 1941 and 1944.

The Minister for Lands: I agree.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: So if it is necessary to recover those costs, they should be recovered from all the contributors to the fund. Let us see some of the items the Minister mentioned as involving increased costs. He referred to postage and said that in some cases persons wrote in for cards which had to be despatched to them and that cost 3d. When they sent in their cards the registration certificate had to be despatched and that cost another 3d. That extra cost would be incurred in respect of people engaged commercially in the industry in most cases.

The Minister for Lands: No.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Who would it be?

The Minister for Education: A great number of metropolitan-suburban people.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not think many metropolitan people would write in for cards and have certificates posted back to them.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, they do.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, that is so. The commercial orchardist is up for a pretty fair sum and has to pay it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What is the sum he is up for? It is 2s. per acre.

The Minister for Lands: I pay £2 18s. 6d. a year.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Does not the Minister's orchard return that?

The Minister for Lands: Do you think I would be running it if it did not?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: A man who has a few trees in his backyard does not derive any income from them at all, but he has to pay a registration fee even if he has only a passion vine.

Mr. Manning: Two shillings.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It seems to me quite reasonable and fair that if the Government has to increase the revenue from this fund it is entitled to obtain that revenue from all the growers of trees and vines and not a section of them, and that the people who ought to contribute the greater portion to this scheme are those who obtain their living from the industry. If we require a contribution from those who have trees, what justification can there be for asking that the ones who are not engaged commercially shall pay the bulk of the revenue?

Mr. Hill: Because they have most of the fruit-fly.

Mr. Manning: Because it costs no more to check up on a commercial orchard than a backyard orchard.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Is the proposition that it costs no more to look at one tree than to look at a hundred trees?

Mr. Owen: There is the cost of collecting the money.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There is no cost involved there because a person fills in a form at the counter, hands it in and takes the registration certificate with him.

The Minister for Lands: And extra staff is put on for the purpose each year.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What does that involve?

The Minister for Lands: Quite a lot.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: According to this it does not involve much. It would come under the item—sundries, postages, telegrams and stationery. The total for that in the highest year—1951-52—was £351 7s. The bulk of the money is spent on salaries which last year amounted to £8,415 8s. 9d.

Mr. Owen: Many of these officers have to visit the backyard orchard to collect the 1s.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Do they?

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Do they not fine the backyard orchardist and collect several times the 1s., when he does not register? I can remember an hon. member of this House being fined for not registering his orchard.

The Minister for Lands: Many of the fees are collected. It is only when a person refuses to pay that he is brought before the court.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I can recall instances of people being brought before the court for neglecting to pay, not refusing to pay.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, after being warned. The fruit-fly inspector had warned them and they still had not paid, and they were then brought before the court. But that seldom happens.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: When it does happen, it does not cost the Government any money.

The Attorney General: The Government would not make much out of it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Who gets the fine?

The Attorney General: What do you think it costs to issue a summons out of the court?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Attorney General cannot tell me that the Government loses money on it.

The Minister for Lands: You occupied the position as Minister, and you know as well as I do what happens.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, and I am telling the Minister what happens. I am quoting from the record of the working of the fund. I disagree with what the Minister wants. He is changing the principle. When this matter was first introduced, no contribution was obtained from the non-commercial orchardist. It was regarded as an idea for the eradication of fruit-fly, and those who had orchards were required to register, and had to take out a license. In 1935, the then Labour Government decided, as a greater control measure, to extend the licenses to people in the metropolitan area and country districts who had fruit-trees but did not have commercial orchards.

The Minister for Lands: When did the commercial orchardist start to pay?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: In 1914.

The Minister for Lands: No, he did not.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I stand corrected. When did he?

The Minister for Lands: I did not pay until about 1932. We never registered.

Mr. Hill: The Act was brought in about 1914.

The Minister for Lands: But did we register then?

Mr. Hill: Some did and some did not.

The Minister for Lands: Of course.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Of course, what?

The Minister for Lands: Of course we did not pay.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There does not seem to be any strong idea about the position. The Minister says he did not.

Mr. J. Hegney: They did not pay, but they were eaten out with fruit-fly before 1935.

The Minister for Lands: You do not know anything about it.

Mr. J. Hegney: I know as much as you do.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The initial legislation was brought down in 1914.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Melville is speaking on behalf of his Leader, I presume.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes. The plant diseases legislation was introduced in 1914 and it was subsequently amended in 1925, 1926, 1933, 1935, 1941 and 1944, so members can see it has been before Parliament quite a number of times. Whilst I am not absolutely certain about this, because I did not check the point, I am of opinion that when it first came in it required payment of a license fee. What the amount was I cannot say.

Mr. Hill: The amount was 2s. 6d. in accordance with Section 35(c) of the 1914 Act.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There is the question answered for the Minister, and if the Minister did not pay the fee he must have dodged the licensing officer.

The Minister for Education: He would not recollect having paid half-a-crown.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That proves the point I was making, that the policy has been turned completely round. When it was originally introduced, only the commercial orchardist paid a license fee.

The Minister for Lands: I did not have an orchard; I had a vineyard, and I tell you I paid nothing.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: In 1935, a Labour Government decided that a contribution was to be obtained from those persons who did not own commercial orchards but who had fruit-trees in their yards of less than one acre. But the Government did not require them to contribute the major portion, which is what the Minister now seeks, because he wishes that those not engaged commercially shall contribute the major portion of the money. I favour the original idea because I think it is the sounder method. For that reason, I oppose the Bill.

On motion by Mr. Hill, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).**

*Second Reading—Defeated.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH** (Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver—Subiaco) [11.10]: I am sorry the hon. member has introduced this measure, and I am sure that after due consideration he will realise that it would be an absurdity to place upon a board consisting of highly qualified and trained personnel one who is untrained. He read portion of the Act dealing with the board the other evening and I will quote again the composition of the board.

On it are the Commissioner of Public Health, Dr. Henzel; Dr. Thomson, Inspector General of Mental Hospitals; Drs. Nunn and Le Souef, both appointed by the B.M.A., and one of them an obstetrician; Mr. Scott, a trained man and secretary of the mental nurses organisation; Miss Cottrell, who is in charge of the Chest Clinic and is also highly trained; Matron Ediss of the Home of Peace; the Matron of the Royal Perth Hospital, Matron Siegal; and Matron Walsh of the King Edward Maternity Hospital. They are all highly trained people.

The hon. member must know that the Nurses Registration Board performs three main functions; the training of nurses, the laying down of the syllabus of training and the conducting of examinations. It is a board comprised of persons who can deliberate upon such matters, and that is essential, because they must ensure that the standards and methods are adequate to fit nurses to carry out their duties. The board must view nursing from above and not from below, and it undertakes the registration of qualified nurses, thus ensuring that the public is not imposed upon.

It also supervises the standard of professional conduct of nurses, and for the purpose of carrying out these functions it is necessary that the board be comprised of persons with expert knowledge and of high standing in the profession. The board is in no way an industrial tribunal and it is therefore not appropriate for a nursing aide to be a member of the board. When the member for Eyre was Minister for Health in 1946 he was approached by the A.T.N.A. and by the Nurses Union, for representation on the board. He denied it to them and his reasons, as given by him, were—

With regard to your claim for direct representation on the board, I would point out that if direct representation were given both to your Union and the A.T.N.A. such appointments could not compare as a choice of universal representation with any made by election on the suffrage of the whole body of nurses, which the Act now provides.

He further said—

If organisations of nurses by their very existence claim direct representation upon the Nurses Registration Board, all future organisations of nurses to whatever number may, with equal propriety, claim the right. If the members of the board were increased in the ways you desire, in the best interests of the public it would be necessary to increase the medical representation and the board would become unwieldy. There does not appear to be any obstacle to the views of your Union being brought before the board either by direct correspondence, or through members of the board.

If these people are granted the status of nursing aides there will be no obstacle in their way, either. I am sure that when the hon. member recalls what he said in the past he will not wish to continue with this measure. For these reasons I oppose the Bill.

**MR. GRAYDEN** (Nedlands) [11.15]: The Bill proposes firstly to increase the number of members of the Nurses' Registration Board from nine to 10 and, secondly, to fill the vacancy thus created with a person nominated by the Hospital Employees Industrial Union of Workers Western Australia.

Hon. E. Nulsen: That is not quite right.

**Mr. GRAYDEN:** Clause 2, paragraph (b) reads—

adding after subparagraph (iv) of paragraph (a) of subsection (4) a sub-paragraph as follows:—

(v) a person nominated by the Hospital Employees' Industrial Union of Workers W.A.

Hon. E. Nulsen: They are members of that union, but will be nominated by one in their own category.

**Mr. GRAYDEN:** There is no provision to that effect in the Bill.

Hon. E. Nulsen: The hon. member can move an amendment if he likes.

**Mr. GRAYDEN:** I do not desire to do so, but am just pointing out what the Bill provides. The member for Eyre may move an amendment if he so wishes. The three organisations interested in the Bill are the W.A. Nurses' Union, the Australian Trained Nurses' Association and the Hospital Employees' Industrial Union of Workers. There is at present before the Arbitration Court a claim for the nursing aides to be included in the W.A. Nurses' Association. An adjournment was granted after the Hospital Employees' Industrial Union of Workers had contested the claim.

We passed a Bill in this House a short time ago including these nurses under the Nurses Registration Act. The constitution of the Hospital Employees' Industrial Union of Workers specifically says that it does not include those who come under the Nurses Registration Act and so, if this Bill were passed, it would be tantamount to saying to the Arbitration Court that we believe the nursing aides should be taken under the wing of the Hospital Employees' Industrial Union of Workers.

Hon. E. Nulsen: That is where they have been for many years.

**Mr. GRAYDEN:** But it would be tantamount to this Parliament saying to the court that we believe they belong there, but under the Bill we passed a short time ago we are including them under the

Nurses Registration Act and that would exclude them under the constitution of the Hospital Employees' Industrial Union of Workers from belonging to that Union. It is hoped in the near future to amalgamate the Western Australian Nurses' Union and the Australian Trained Nurses' Association, which is the Western Australian branch of the Australian Nursing Federation and which, in turn, is affiliated with the International Council of Nurses. If we passed this Bill it would mean that these nursing aides could not be included in that amalgamated body.

Hon. E. NULSEN: That would depend on the Arbitration Court.

Mr. GRAYDEN: They would lose the professional standing which they enjoy under the Western Australian Nurses' Union. If the Nurses' Union did not have these people included in its organisation it would be, to say the least, wary of training them because they would not be bound by the same code of ethics that applies to nurses. They would be a different industrial body subject to different awards and so on, such as overtime for weekend work and the like. I feel that the best interests of nursing in this State will be served if we reject the Bill.

MR. READ (Victoria Park) [11.22]: I think it would be quite wrong to put an unqualified person on a professional board. This Bill proposes to allow a person nominated by the Hospital Employees' Industrial Union of Workers W.A. to have a seat on a professional board which has for its purpose the registration of professional people and deals with the proper training of our nurses. The board registers trained nurses who have to undergo a particular type of training and then pass examinations, and in my opinion it would be wrong to appoint a person nominated by a union whose members are not qualified to judge who should or should not be registered.

I do not think there would be an unqualified person on the Builders' Registration Board, the Medical Board, the Barristers' Board or any other board set up under an Act which is designed to protect the standard of that particular profession. The very wording of the proposed subparagraph—"a person nominated by the Hospital Employees' Industrial Union of Workers W.A."—means that the union need not nominate one of its members. Any person could be nominated.

Mr. Brady: They might nominate a doctor.

Mr. READ: They might nominate me, but I would not be qualified to sit on the board and discuss the standard of any trained nurse.

HON. E. NULSEN (Eyre—in reply) [11.25]: I can see the difficulties from a professional point of view but I do not see

any reason why these people, who have been fostered so long by the H.E.U. and are now being deprived of membership of that organisation, should not have a representative on the board. The H.E.U. has been the only organisation that has taken any interest in these people and there is no doubt that if the Bill becomes law the union will choose a representative from within its own category. It is only fair that the union should have representation.

The Minister for Health: A few years ago you denied that to the A.T.N.A. and the Nurses' Union.

Hon. E. NULSEN: Conditions are changing. They are somewhat different now from what they were at that time.

The Attorney General: You have not the responsibility. That is the change.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I am satisfied to accept my responsibility at any time; I am not afraid of it.

The Attorney General: I know, and it shows it.

Hon. E. NULSEN: All I am asking is that the representation should be increased to 10 and it is only reasonable that this union should have a representative. Of course, as has been pointed out, they will be only associates of the union; they will not be full members because they have not the qualifications although they have done fine work. It has been pointed out that these people would not have the ability to deliberate, but I know a number of learned men in this House who cannot debate or deliberate as well as some of the so-called uneducated people.

The Attorney General: Should they have a vote in connection with a trained nurse?

Hon. E. NULSEN: Why should they not? I do not think it would be *infra dig* for the members of the board to associate with people who, as assistant nurses, are doing such wonderful work.

The Attorney General: Why should they have a say in the qualification of a trained nurse?

Hon. E. NULSEN: Why should they not? However, there are many organisations where a representative does not have all the qualifications. The Attorney General knows that.

The Attorney General: That is quite apart.

Hon. E. NULSEN: No it is not. I know that the highly-trained nurse who becomes a sister is a very fine woman, and girls of that type have done a wonderful job. They have to study hard and especially in these days when the science of medicine has progressed so rapidly. Sometimes the ability of a nurse is equal to that of a doctor, and on occasions she

has to do work which demands the knowledge of a highly-trained person. On the other hand, I think that these nursing assistants, who have been members of the H.E.U. for so many years, should be permitted to continue as members of the union and have a representative on the board. We are not directing the Arbitration Court as to what it should do. This Bill will have no influence upon it. If it is passed, the only influence it will have on them is that they will have representation, but the decision is still left to the Arbitration Court. The Bill has nothing to do with the court but they must appear before it or a Conciliation Commissioner before a decision is reached on their registration.

The Attorney General: They do not have to go before the court.

Hon. E. NULSEN: No. However, I hope the Bill will become law and that these people will be treated in the same way in the future as they have been in the past. The only representation they have is through the Hospital Employees' Union.

The Minister for Health: And the nurses in the hospital.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I agree. I am not speaking of the nurses derogatively. No-one holds the trained sisters in higher esteem than I do. They are wonderful women and their educational qualifications are of an extremely high standard.

Question put and negatived.

Bill defeated.

#### ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1952-53.

##### *In Committee of Supply.*

Debate resumed from the previous day on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates; Mr. Hill in the Chair.

*Vote—Legislative Council, £5,702.*

MR. GUTHRIE (Bunbury) [11.33]: I wish to draw the attention of the Premier to the state of the estuary at Bunbury. The samples of the water taken near the plug which was placed close to the town show that it is becoming badly polluted. It is so bad now that the council has placed signs on the bank, warning people that they must not bathe there. The other matter to which I wish to refer is that relating to the cut from the estuary to the sea. By the formation of the plug and the silting at that point, all access from the estuary to the sea has been cut off. When the Tydeman plan was mooted, many people in the district thought it would prove to be a failure. However, it has turned out to be a tragic blunder and it now appears that nobody wants to carry the baby. I will have more to say on the departmental estimates.

MR. MOIR (Boulder) [11.34]: I wish to discuss a few matters affecting the people in my electorate and also those outside of it. Firstly, I will deal with the problem of miners who contract silicosis. I am disappointed that no reference was made to introducing an amendment to improve the legislation dealing with these men, and it appears that the Minister for Mines has no ideas on the subject. I think everyone will agree that the existing provisions are entirely inadequate for miners suffering from industrial diseases. Last year a Bill was introduced into this House which proposed to place those men on an entirely different footing but it had many shortcomings; so much so that following the debate in this Chamber it was withdrawn in order that a conference could be called of the parties interested with a view to bringing down a more suitable measure.

In the early part of this year that conference was held and it lasted a couple of days. Those represented were the Chamber of Mines, the Mine Workers' Relief Board, the State Insurance Office and the A.W.U. Full consideration was given to various proposals brought forward at the conference and, with the exception of the rates that should be paid, the parties agreed to them in the main. I attended that conference and I left it, together with other delegates, with the feeling that a Bill would be brought down during this session to give effect to the decisions that had been reached, bearing in mind, of course, that no agreement had been arrived at on the weekly payments. However, I was hoping that Parliament would decide on an equitable payment to be made for men.

After some time I discovered it was not the intention of the Government to introduce new legislation, which is regrettable indeed. It would appear that it is not greatly concerned about the miners who are suffering from this industrial disease. To miners in a certain state of health the Mine Workers' Relief Fund makes payment after those men have exhausted all the workers' compensation to which they are entitled. I would remind members that miners suffering from industrial diseases are governed by three Acts. One is the Miners Phthisis Act, which was the original legislation introduced and which does not provide for new cases, and the payments made to those men who are affected by that legislation are growing less and less each year. Another is the Mine Workers' Relief Fund Incorporated, which is known to workers as the voluntary fund. It was a fund contributed to voluntarily by workers who wished to become members. It was superseded by the present Mine Workers' Relief Fund, and the liabilities of the voluntary fund were taken over by the present fund. So far as its rules were concerned,

the old voluntary fund has been practically out of existence since 1932. No amendment can be made to those rules and consequently the amounts of weekly payments provided in them are the same as those provided today.

I thought that the Government, having decided not to go on with the pneumoconiosis Bill, would have given some attention to the Mine Workers' Relief Act in order that more adequate payments could be made to these workers and that they could be provided with the benefits at an earlier stage of their disablement. It will be remembered that the pneumoconiosis Bill made provision for a man at an earlier stage of his disablement than was the case under the existing legislation covered by the Mine Workers' Relief Act. The chief objection from Goldfields members at the time was that the worker was being asked to give up too much and being offered too little in return. Having thought that the Government would see fit to bring down amending legislation to the Mine Workers' Relief Act, I was surprised that there was no mention of it; so on the 30th September I put a question on the notice paper asking the Minister for Mines—

(1) Does he consider that the Mine Workers Relief Act provides for adequate payments to mine workers who have been disabled by silicosis advanced, tuberculosis, or silicosis with tuberculosis?

The answer I received from the Minister for Housing, who replied on behalf of the Minister for Mines, was—

The appraisal of benefits under this Act can only be determined on an actuarial basis.

I fail to see what that answer had to do with the question. I asked if he considered that the Act provided adequate payments, and the Minister told me that the benefits could only be determined on an actuarial basis. Of course, we all know that the solvency of any fund can only be determined on an actuarial basis, so his answer was quite beside the point. In answer to a question like that any reasonable man would have replied "No." That fund provides only for the payment of 30s. a week to a man if he is single and £3 a week to him and his wife if he is married; that is, if he is disabled to the extent that he has advanced silicosis tuberculosis, or silicosis with tuberculosis. I might say that when a man has advanced silicosis, he is accepted by the Commonwealth Social Services Department as being eligible for an invalid pension.

The other two cases for which the fund provides are for a man who has tuberculosis—and we know he is seriously disabled—or a man who has tuberculosis and silicosis. Those are the three categories catered for by the Mine Workers' Relief Fund. The old voluntary fund,

which has been taken over under the Mine Workers' Relief Act, did provide for a contributor to that fund when he had reached the early silicotic stage. For reasons I have outlined, the payments have not been altered, and cannot be altered; they stand as they were in 1931 at 25s. a week for a man and £1 a week for his wife. I also asked the Minister the following question:—

Does he not consider that provision should be made under the Act to enable a worker to leave the mining industry before his health has been irreparably damaged by silicosis early, silicosis advanced, tuberculosis or silicosis with tuberculosis?

The very wise answer I received was—

It is permissible for a worker to leave the industry at any time and he can be compensated up to the percentage of his disability under the Workers' Compensation Act if affected by the diseases mentioned.

I am well aware that miners are not prisoners; they are not sentenced to work in the mines; they can and do leave them at any time. I wanted to know whether the Government was prepared to do the decent thing by those miners, and to see that they received decent compensation for the diseases they contracted. It would appear that the Government is not prepared to do anything in the matter. I am afraid its attitude is the same as it is to all other questions affecting the Goldfields, namely, that it could not care less. Probably there can be a certain amount of understanding of that attitude in regard to other matters, but I fail to see why such an attitude is taken towards workers who have irreparably damaged their health working in the industry. I earnestly request the Government to give serious consideration to this matter and do something definite, because the position at present concerning those workers is deplorable.

Another matter with which I want to deal comes under the Workers' Compensation Act, and concerns the rehabilitation of workers who have suffered serious injury and cannot return to their normal physical state of health. We have quite a lot of workers that have been seriously injured in the industry, and are cripples for the rest of their days. A man who has been accustomed to working in a certain type of industry learns a particular job—it may be one requiring more muscle than skill. If he has been injured, he becomes more or less a human derelict and continues as such until his compensation cuts out. After that, he has to depend upon the invalid pension. He may be quite a young man. Serious consideration should be given to the provision of a rehabilitation centre where such a man could be taught some vocation, even if it

were one that would occupy his attention only part-time. If he could engage in some type of work he would be of some use to himself and the community generally.

At present many disabled workers are, in effect, a dead loss to themselves, their families and the community. I am aware that the Workers' Compensation Act makes provision for them in that subparagraph (iii) of paragraph (g) of Subsection (13) of Section 29 sets out that the board can do what is deemed necessary with a view to—

providing facilities for rehabilitation and re-employment of workers who have sustained permanent or temporary disablement from personal injury by accident within the meaning of the Act in accordance with the recommendations and estimates referred to in the last preceding subparagraph when those recommendations and estimates have been approved by resolution of both Houses of Parliament.

That provision was enacted, if I remember aright, in 1949, but absolutely nothing has been done in the meantime for the setting up of such facilities. I suggest there is necessity for action along those lines not only in the interests of injured workers but of the public generally. We must all have been appalled by the number of road accidents that are taking place in Western Australia as well as in the Eastern States. The problem is very serious and is difficult to do much about. Everybody must be concerned over the large numbers of people injured in accidents that have assumed alarming proportions, involving in many instances injuries of a more or less permanent nature. People in that category would benefit greatly by the provision of a rehabilitation course that would enable them to learn some vocation in which they could earn a competence for themselves.

I know many people who have sustained accidents in mines. Some of them have suffered from back injuries and can work only when sitting down. They could do that all day if only they had something to do with their hands. Not only would that enable them to keep themselves occupied, but it would create a feeling of confidence in themselves and engender more self-respect. If something along those lines could be accomplished, it would be a great factor at least towards partial recovery from their injuries. It would give them an added interest in life. Anyone who has been a victim of a serious accident tends to lose much of his self-confidence because of the psychological effect upon him. If something could be achieved to rehabilitate such sufferers, a great service would be done not only to that section of the community, but to the public generally.

Another matter that is causing concern on the Goldfields is that of assistance to the mining industry. That subject has been debated to some extent already during the session. The Estimates do not seem to contain provision for more assistance to the goldmining industry than the meagre amount that has usually been available in recent years. I say advisedly that the assistance has been meagre. When this matter was debated in the House a little while ago, the Minister for Housing, representing the Minister for Mines, made reference to what he described as a very substantial sum of money advanced last year to the goldmining industry. The figures he gave were entirely misleading and, in fact, inaccurate. He said—

I am advised that last year the Government assisted various goldmining companies to the tune of approximately £160,000. I notice that two or three of them received £20,000, others £7,500 and so on.

On page 78 of the Auditor General's report we find just how much assistance was given to the goldmining industry last year. The details show that the total amount was £9,976 9s. 3d.—vastly different from the amount of £160,000 that the Minister for Housing referred to. The report shows that the assistance given to lead mining totalled £1,615 16s. 3d. and to tin mining, £4,281 1s. 1d., making a total of £15,873 6s. 7d. I say that the Minister's statement that the goldmining industry received financial assistance to the tune of £160,000 last year was entirely inaccurate and represents a different picture altogether.

Financial assistance to the goldmining industry last year of under £10,000 was tantamount to no assistance at all. My reason for saying that is that when I look at some of the other items in the Auditor General's report and note that coalmining was assisted to the extent of £238,248 3s., I realise that that is a totally different story. I notice that one coalmining company in the last few years has been assisted to the extent of £473,732. I have no objection to a coalmining company being assisted, but I do take exception to the fact that more substantial aid is not being afforded to goldmining companies. Admittedly the coalmining industry is very important to the State, but so also is the goldmining industry, which will continue to be of great importance. There is a striking contrast between the assistance given to coalmining and to goldmining. Possibly the reason is that the goldmining industry is located too far from Perth, but there is nothing we can do about that.

Another matter that is causing concern on the Goldfields, particularly in the Kalgoorlie and Boulder areas, is the decision to transport coal from Collie to replace wood as fuel for the Kalgoorlie Power Corporation's plant. This matter was



raised in the Chamber earlier in the session and, as a result, Goldfields members waited on the Premier by way of deputation and discussed the position with him. They explained the effect that the change-over would have and asked the Premier to consider the matter. On the 10th November, I received a letter in reply and I am concerned chiefly with the penultimate paragraph, which reads—

This new coalburning plant cannot be utilised for any fuel other than coal, and it may be some time yet before the corporation can be assured of receiving adequate and regular supplies of coal. Once these supplies are assured, however, the Power Corporation, as a private company, is entitled, on the score of economic running and efficiency, to change from its firewood plant to coalburning plant—

I want members to note the concluding portion—

—and intervention by the Government to prevent this change-over would be entirely illegal and would, even if it were legal, be bitterly resented by the shareholders of the Power Corporation.

In view of the foregoing, I regret that there is no action which the Government can take to avoid the ultimate closing down of the firewood cutting operations.

As a result of the change-over from wood to coal fuel, 500 workers on the Lake-wood woodline and approximately 40 workers on the Kalgoorlie Power Corporation's plant will be thrown out of employment. There are 1,500 people living in and around the townsite of Lakewood, which will go out of existence. The Premier mentioned in his letter that the shareholders of the power corporation would bitterly resent any interference by the Government, but I should like to know whether he is more concerned about the bitterness of the shareholders than about the bitterness of the people who will lose their employment and who will have to leave their homes and seek houses and employment elsewhere.

Some years ago the Government guaranteed the bank overdraft of the firewood company to the extent of £160,000. Of this amount, £115,000 was for the purchase of the assets of the Goldfields Firewood Supply Company, £20,000 to provide working capital and £25,000 for mechanisation. The guarantee has been reduced by £40,000 and the present limit is therefore £120,000. If the company goes out of existence, presumably an amount in the vicinity of £120,000 of the taxpayers' money will go down the drain. I do not know whether the Government holds any security over the assets of the company but if it does, they would not be worth much because they would be of value only

while being used for the purpose of producing firewood. The equipment would not be of use for anything else. The company has well over 100 miles of light railway laid with 40-lb rails, and they have been down for about 40 years. Similarly with the locomotives and rollingstock; the locomotives were rejected by the Government Railways 35 or 40 years ago and, while they were suitable for the woodline work, they would be useless anywhere else.

Another aspect ought to be considered. The member for Kalgoorlie asked certain questions about the freight rate to be charged on hauling the coal from Collie to Kalgoorlie and, from the answers given, he estimated that the Government would be prepared to haul the coal at 1.26d. per ton mile which, allowing for 1,100 tons a week as the requirements of the power corporation, would represent an annual loss of £137,000. So the shareholders in the Kalgoorlie Power Corporation, the majority of whom do not reside in this area, let alone in the State, might bitterly resent any interference from the Government in the transport of coal. They must be very happy that the Government is going to make them a present of £137,000 a year. The taxpayers of this country, too, should bitterly resent the fact that in the first year the Lake-wood line goes out of existence and coal is hauled to Kalgoorlie, there will be a loss of £257,000 to the revenue of the State. The Government is not called on to interfere with anybody at all, but in agreeing what it has undertaken to do, it is responsible for a serious disservice to that area without any benefit accruing to the community on the Goldfields.

I have not heard one word from anybody concerned with the enterprise that power is going to be a fraction of a penny cheaper to the users in the Kalgoorlie and Boulder areas. It seems that it will be of benefit only to the shareholders in the Kalgoorlie Power Corporation. For the Government to undertake to carry coal there at such a huge loss as £137,000 is shocking.

The Premier: Whose figures are they?

Mr. MOIR: They are based on figures which were supplied to the member for Kalgoorlie in reply to questions he asked, and on which he made estimates. The figures disclosed that the coal would be taken there at a loss. It may be remembered that he could not be supplied with the exact information and he wanted to know how, if the correct figures could not be ascertained, the Railway Department could compute any rate at all. He is an experienced railwayman and has a very wide knowledge of freights, and he would be likely to be very careful in working out these estimates. I should say they were correct.

Mr. Styants. The estimated weekly tonnage is 1,100 tons and the freight rate is 1.26d. per ton mile. As the average cost on the railways is 3.25d. per ton mile, it can easily be reckoned out.

Mr. MOIR: Evidently somebody in authority is very generous to the Kalgoorlie Power Corporation at the expense of the taxpayers and the Government. We also have the question of rolling-stock. We have been told that the Government has to allow private transport to take over quite a lot of its haulage, simply because it has not the rolling-stock. Yet it is going to find locomotives and rollingstock to haul coal from Collie to Kalgoorlie! Evidently this company must have a tremendous pull to be able to persuade the Government to agree to what is to be done. The shortage in rollingstock has to be made up from somewhere, and I am wondering how the Premier will get on when the super carting season comes around and 1,100 tons of coal have to be hauled as far as Kalgoorlie. I take it that there will be more than 1,100 tons of super which the railways will not be able to haul in consequence.

Another matter to which I wish to refer is that of school amenities in my electorate. From time to time representations have been made in this connection, but I do not know of one single instance where we have met with success. We seem to be up against the problem of shortage of funds. Yet there are hundreds of thousands of pounds available for expenditure in certain parts of the metropolitan area!

The Premier: No.

Mr. MOIR: There seems to be no difficulty in finding hundreds of thousands of pounds for jobs at Kwinana and quite large sums of money for a steel rolling mill. These things are very necessary perhaps, but it is galling to know that at the same time it is not possible to obtain a shade shed for a schoolyard on the Goldfields to shelter children from the fierce rays of the sun. People complain, too, that they do not have proper facilities for cooling drinking water.

The Premier: You have had a lot of money spent on the Goldfields in connection with schools over the past few years.

Mr. MOIR: I do not know where it has been spent.

The Minister for Education: We will soon tell you.

Mr. MOIR: I would be very pleased to know. I spoke to the Minister for Education last year about certain very desirable improvements that were needed at the Eastern Goldfields District High School. I think something was done in relation to one building.

The Minister for Health: A great deal was done. I saw considerable difference when I visited it the other day.

Mr. MOIR: I know that certain things have been done, but there are others that badly need doing. Another matter to which I wish to refer concerns water supplies. I do not know whether the Government is tired of hearing me speak about this but I will continue to do so while the position remains as it is. I do not see that any provision has been made for enlarging the pipeline to give adequate supplies to the Goldfields.

The Premier: Would that not come under the Loan Estimates and not the Revenue Estimates?

Mr. MOIR: Yes.

The Premier: I will introduce the Loan Estimates on Tuesday.

Mr. MOIR: On Tuesday?

The Premier: I hope.

Mr. MOIR: Provision is being made for pumps, but if no steps are taken to get the water along the pipeline, it is not much use putting in larger pumps. We do not want to see these things happen in 10 years' time but in the reasonably foreseeable future. Earlier this session I obtained a number of figures from the Minister for Water Supply which showed a very poor position so far as the Goldfields are concerned. Next month water restrictions will be imposed there. That is nothing new for us. We have that every summer. The people are getting sick and tired of these restrictions. On the 11th September, the member for Mt. Marshall asked where certain 24-inch diameter mains were situated on the Goldfields pipeline. The answer was that they were on the Goldfields end. The Minister stated—

There is no immediate call for replacement of any of the sections of the 24-inch main in order to give increased capacity. There are other sections of the 30-inch main, particularly near Mundaring and Cunderdin, which must be replaced first to cope with increased pumping when the new pumping station is completed at Mundaring.

That may be so, but when the pipes have not the capacity to take water to the Goldfields, what would be wrong with enlarging them? According to the answer, there is a distance of about 35 miles of the small-diameter pipes. The exact distance is 32 miles 25 chains, according to the answer given by the Minister. We know that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and so the capacity of a pipeline is governed by the smallest diameter pipes in it. The present pipe has not sufficient capacity to deliver the water

that is required, and more demands are being made on it all the time. This also applies in the agricultural areas where the Government is proceeding to give the people the water they want.

Those people are entitled to water, but not at the expense of the residents on the Goldfields. After all, the pipeline was constructed to supply water to the Goldfields. If the Government wishes to make provision for the people in the agricultural areas, it should first see that all the facilities are adequate for lifting the water and supplying it to everyone who requires it. It is not good enough that people on the Goldfields should go on year after year having these serious water restrictions imposed on them. We must remember, too, that we pay more than enough for water in comparison with what people in the metropolitan area pay. I understand that the Government has set up a committee of inquiry to see whether it is feasible to institute a flat rate for water supplies.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 12.25 a.m.  
(Thursday)*

## Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 20th November, 1952.

### CONTENTS.

	Page
Questions : Milk, powdered, as to shortage of supplies, Goldfields	2196
Gas, as to heating value and consumption	2197
Railways, (a) as to payment to Midland Railway Co.	2197
(b) as to alterations to stock vehicles	2197
(c) as to timber used in truck construction	2197
(d) as to alterations to Vice-regal car	2198
State Electricity Commission, as to subscriptions to loan	2198
Hospitals, as to additions, Pinjarra	2198
Potatoes for export, as to movements of chartered ships	2198
Harbours, as to extension work, Bunbury	2198
Wundowie Industries, as to valuation of capital assets	2198
Workers' compensation, as to country hospital charges	2198
Traffic, as to Causeway regulations	2199
Betting, as to tax on winning bets	2199
Airport, as to name	2199
Personal explanation : Hon. J. B. Sleeman and interview with His Excellency the Governor	2199
Assent to Bills	2200
Bills : Factories and Shops Act Amendment, 1r.	2200
Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board) Act Amendment, 1r.	2200
Traffic Act Amendment (No. 3), 3r.	2200
Fremantle Municipal Tramways and Electric Lighting Act Amendment, report	2200
State Government Insurance Office, Act Amendment, Message, 2r.	2200
Bulk Handling Act Amendment, Message, 2r.	2200
State (Western Australian) Alumina Industry Act Amendment, Message, 2r.	2202
Annual Estimates, Com. of Supply, general debate, concluded	2205
Speakers on financial policy—	
Mr. Graham	2205
Mr. O'Brien	2210
Hon. E. Nulsen	2211
Mr. Hearman	2212
The Premier and Treasurer	2214
Votes and Items discussed	2222

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

### QUESTIONS.

#### MILK, POWDERED.

*As to Shortage of Supplies, Goldfields.*

Mr. O'BRIEN asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Is she aware that powdered milk is in short supply and urgently required on the North-Eastern and Murchison Goldfields, and particularly at Mt. Ida?